

**Address by His Excellency Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, First Vice-President of the Councils of State and Ministers for the Round Table named "Poverty, Inequality, Inclusion".**

**5<sup>th</sup> European Union – Latin America and the Caribbean Summit  
Lima, Peru  
May 2008**

Your Excellency,

Poverty, inequality and exclusion are the offspring of a world order based on greed and selfishness. Only solidarity and justice, within our societies and between countries, can lead to the inclusion of peoples in a just order.

Today's international order does not answer to the interests of the peoples of the world. It is our duty to change it.

The hunger, illiteracy, unemployment and poor health suffered by hundreds of millions of people are incompatible with the aim of building a better world, where the rights of all are fully respected.

The principle of sovereignty cannot be sacrificed in the name of an order that consolidates the hegemony of an aggressive superpower. A handful of industrialized nations cannot be permitted to continue to squander resources as scandalously as they do today, while trampling on the right to life and development of thousands of millions of human beings.

The gold, silver and riches which were the fruit of our peoples' sweat and blood financed the construction of the opulent palaces in the North's metropoli, palaces which remind us, each day, that the wellbeing of some was built on the profound suffering of others. And the worst thing of all is that, five hundred years later, the situation has not only persisted, but worsened.

Underdevelopment and poverty are the consequences of the conquest, colonization and slavery, of neo—colonialism and imperial domination and of today's egotistical and exclusivist order, which polarizes the world into luxurious squandering and extreme poverty.

What Latin America and the Caribbean live today is the opposite of the unjust privileges that allow the United States and the members of the European Union to engage in irrational patterns of consumption.

Europe still has a chance to show that it is truly interested in relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. Europe still has a chance to assume its responsibilities and to make an important contribution to the creation of an equitable and fair world. Europe must assume its relations with Latin America and the Caribbean modestly and without dogmas, in a fraternal and respectful manner.

Europe is in a position to assume the impact of decisions that could be decisive to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean, without enduring major economic and social repercussions.

The European Union should set an example and cancel the foreign debt of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. This debt has already been collected several times over.

The European Union should begin to reduce and ultimately eliminate its costly agricultural subsidies, which increase prices and affect producers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

So called partnership agreements cannot continue to be governed by unacceptable conditions and requirements that ignore the needs of our peoples.

If the European Union devoted 10 % of the money it destines each year to military spending to the construction of social projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, at least 30 billion dollars a year could be used to build schools and hospitals in our region.

If the European Union honoured its commitment to allocate 0.7 % of its Gross Domestic Product to Official Aid for Development, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean could benefit from a part of the 40 billion additional euros this would mean.

Cuba presents these arguments with the authority of a blockaded country with scant resources, a country that has shared what little it has with its Latin American and Caribbean brothers.

Today, more than 34,000 of Cuba's best health specialists are working abroad to save lives, in 27 countries around Latin America and the Caribbean. More than one million blind or visually impaired people from 30 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have been operated on, free of charge, by Cuba, in the last 4 years.

Nearly 15,000 students from 32 Latin American and Caribbean countries have graduated from Cuban centres of learning and universities. Cuba has not retained one talent and an additional 26,000 students, nearly 23,000 of whom are studying medicine, currently pursue studies in Cuba.

With Cuba's aid, over 3,000,000 illiterates have been taught to read and write in Latin America and the Caribbean in the last 5 years.

What we still need to create a world where solidarity and real justice for all prevails is political will. Cuba's modest example proves this. This is our respectful, though clear and direct, message to the governments of the European Union.

Thank you very much.