

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



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ACTA
DE LA SESIÓN PROTOCOLAR
CELEBRADA
EL 24 DE JULIO DE 2002

Para conmemorar el natalicio del
Libertador Simón Bolívar

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CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

ACTA DE LA SESIÓN PROTOCOLAR CELEBRADA EL 24 DE JULIO DE 2002

En la ciudad de Washington, a las once y quince de la mañana del miércoles 24 de julio de 2002, celebró sesión protocolar el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos para conmemorar el natalicio del Libertador Simón Bolívar. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Roger F. Noriega, Representante Permanente de los Estados Unidos y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajadora Margarita Escobar, Representante Permanente de El Salvador y Vicepresidenta del Consejo Permanente
Embajador M. A. Odeen Ishmael, Representante Permanente de Guyana
Embajador Denis G. Antoine, Representante Permanente de Grenada
Embajador Lionel Alexander Hurst, Representante Permanente de Antigua y Barbuda
Embajador Marcelo Ostría Trigo, Representante Permanente de Bolivia
Embajador Joshua Sears, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de las Bahamas
Embajador Valter Pecly Moreira, Representante Permanente del Brasil
Embajador Esteban Tomic Errázuriz, Representante Permanente de Chile
Embajador Blasco Peñaherrera, Representante Permanente del Ecuador
Embajador Juan Enrique Fischer, Representante Permanente del Uruguay
Embajador Lombardo Martínez Cabezas, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua
Embajador Miguel Ruíz Cabañas, Representante Permanente de México
Embajador Ellsworth I. A. John, Representante Permanente de San Vicente y las Granadinas
Embajador Eduardo Ferrero Costa, Representante Permanente del Perú
Embajador Raymond Valcin, Representante Permanente de Haití
Embajador Luis Enrique Chase Plate, Representante Permanente del Paraguay
Embajador Salvador E. Rodezno Fuentes, Representante Permanente de Honduras
Embajador Arturo Duarte Ortíz, Representante Permanente de Guatemala
Consejera Gwyn Ann Kutz, Representante Interina del Canadá
Embajador Luis Guardia Mora, Representante Interino de Costa Rica
Embajador Felipe A. Pereira León, Representante Interino de Venezuela
Ministro Jaime Casabianca, Representante Interino de Colombia
Ministra Silvia Meregá, Representante Interina de la Argentina
Consejera Margarita Riva-Geoghegan, Representante Alterna de los Estados Unidos
Consejera Jasmine E. Huggins, Representante Alterna de Saint Kitts y Nevis
Primera Secretaria Jennifer Marchand, Representante Alterna de Trinidad y Tobago
Segundo Secretario Henry Leonard Mac-Donald, Representante Alterno de Suriname
Consejero Trevor Vernon, Representante Alterno de Belice
Consejero José Elías Ramírez, Representante Alterno de la República Dominicana
Embajador Ricardo González de Mena, Representante Alterno de Panamá
Primera Secretaria Lisa R. Cummins, Representante Alterna de Barbados

También estuvieron presentes el Secretario General de la Organización, doctor César Gaviria, y el Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Luigi R. Einaudi, Secretario del Consejo Permanente.

PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO PERMANENTE

El PRESIDENTE: It is indeed a privilege to open this protocolary meeting in honor of Simón Bolívar. While my country is not considered one of the Bolivarian countries, few are aware of the influence that Bolívar had on my country and the influence that my country had on Bolívar. Many years ago when the Organization of American States awarded a prize for the best high school essay on the life of Bolívar, many realized for the first time that there were at least 11 towns and cities in the United States named after Simón Bolívar. The prize was awarded to a student from Bolivar, Missouri. I stumble on the pronunciation because, as Secretary General Gaviria knows—Attorney General John Ashcroft indicated this to him and John Ashcroft is a native of Missouri—that it is pronounced "bow-lay-var" in Missouri. [Risas.]

The Permanent Council also traveled to the town of Bolivar, West Virginia, to honor the Liberator. While most choose to remember that Bolívar on occasion had some misgivings with my country that he shared with the world, I choose to recall that he also admired Thomas Jefferson and the ideals that founded my country. He so admired them that he sent his nephew, Fernando Bolívar, to the University of Virginia, Mr. Jefferson's institution.

Simón Bolívar dreamed of a hemisphere united in the traditions of freedom and liberty in the exercise of democracy. He was the intellectual force that led to the convocation of the Congress of Panama. The ideals and ideas behind the Congress formed the foundation of our modern inter-American system.

Today, the inter-American system has renewed mandates from the Summit of the Americas; has new duties imposed by the new threats of our collective security; and has new legal instruments to implement our collective resolve to uphold democracy, the rule of law, and the observance of human rights and to fight corruption.

One might imagine that Simón Bolívar would feel very much at home in today's inter-American system. Our work in these halls, day in and day out, sets the stage to fulfill Simón Bolívar's dream of a hemisphere united in its belief in and defense of democracy and its commitment to improving the life of all citizens of the Americas.

PALABRAS DEL REPRESENTANTE DE BOLIVIA EN REPRESENTACIÓN DE LOS PAÍSES BOLIVARIANOS

El PRESIDENTE: The Chair recognizes Ambassador Marcelo Ostria Trigo, Permanent Representative of Bolivia, to make comments on behalf of the Bolivarian countries.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE BOLIVIA: Señor Presidente del Consejo Permanente, Embajador Roger Noriega; señor Secretario General, doctor César Gaviria; señor Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Luigi Einaudi; distinguidos señores Representantes Permanentes de los países miembros de nuestra Organización:

El generoso encargo de mis colegas que representan a los países bolivarianos me permite pronunciar estas palabras en homenaje del Libertador Simón Bolívar. Pero no puedo dejar de

mencionar que mi intervención va a estar influida por la tierra que me vio nacer, Bolivia, que se formó al amparo del genio liberador.

“Si Roma proviene de Rómulo, de Bolívar debe ser Bolivia.”. Este es el perpetuo homenaje de mi patria a su creador, quien, luego, habría de decir: “Boliviano, nombre que me pertenece antes de nacer”. Esa es una muestra de cómo el Libertador amaba a Bolivia, a la que, con ternura, llamó su hija predilecta, creada en uno de los techos más altos del mundo.

Esta es, desde 1986, la décima sexta vez que el Consejo Permanente se reúne en sesión protocolar, ya instituida, para rendir homenaje al Libertador Simón Bolívar al conmemorar la fecha de su nacimiento. Sé que desde entonces, de año en año, se han venido dando excepcionales homenajes al Libertador y que, por tanto, no es fácil decir cosas nuevas, ni descubrir inéditas facetas de su vida fecunda. Sé, por tanto, que voy a ser, en mucho, reiterador de lo ya dicho en esta Casa de las Américas.

Pero, como muchos lo han hecho, también quiero mencionar que tengo la profunda convicción de que el pensamiento bolivariano está plenamente vigente, con su fuerza y con su visión de futuro; que su mensaje de unidad sigue escuchándose como advertencia a esta generación y a las venideras, de que solamente juntos será como podremos construir el destino de nuestros pueblos, que lo queremos pleno de bienestar, de justicia y de libertad.

Ese sentido de unidad, de marcha conjunta, de preocupaciones comunes, está presente en nuestro hemisferio. Este es, ciertamente, un legado del Libertador.

Parece apropiado decir que él no estaba en la búsqueda de la uniformidad. Tenía, por el contrario, el ideal de la unidad en la diversidad, traducido en el empeño de construir juntos caminos para marchar hermanados en la historia, tomando en consideración las esencias de todos los rincones de esta América, vasta y a veces desconcertante, y en la que entonces todo estaba por hacerse.

El diplomático venezolano Tomás Polanco Alcántara, hace diecinueve años decía, en esta misma casa, que “...nadie puede dudar de la concepción americana de Bolívar. La expresión de ‘Nación de Repúblicas’ expuesta a O’Higgins, es un perfecto resumen de lo que él quería decir”. “Él (el Libertador) sintió que la unión fue más importante que el sistema unitario”, afirmó Gerald E. Fitzgerald.

En ello seguimos ahora, procurando recoger el mandato del Libertador de hacer que a esa unidad en la diversidad se la sienta como imperativo de cooperación, con responsabilidades y esperanzas compartidas. No es determinante que esto provenga de intereses coincidentes o de auténticos sentimientos de solidaridad. Lo importante es la acción conjunta orientada a preservar nuestras identidades republicanas, a proseguir en el esfuerzo común para alcanzar el bienestar, a preservar la democracia, a asegurar el respeto a los derechos humanos, a resolver pacíficamente nuestras diferencias y a enfrentar unidos tantos desafíos, como la única forma de alcanzar estos objetivos.

Todos los días vemos cómo esos retos son más grandes que eventuales aislamientos, cualquiera que sea la envergadura de las repúblicas del Hemisferio.

Nuestra forma de vida, nuestros valores e ideales y nuestra propia concepción de un destino compartido están siendo puestos a prueba.

Flagelos como la pobreza, que se ceba en tantos compatriotas de América; el narcotráfico, que envilece cuerpos y almas; la corrupción preocupante y, finalmente, el terrorismo con su perversa secuela de crueldad, requieren esa acción conjunta y hacer prácticos los mecanismos que ofrece nuestra Organización, que, al fin, es la que está hecha bajo la inspiración bolivariana de formar una liga de nación de repúblicas.

Pero no solamente la unidad se requiere para combatir, sino también para progresar.

Compartir responsabilidades es, por cierto, una manera de hacer frente a los peligros. Pero también es indispensable compartir avances, reconociendo que nada es resultado del esfuerzo individual; que el genio creador es, más bien, el producto de la unidad de hombres y pueblos. Es así que, aguzar el ingenio para delinear acuerdos de comercio, de desarrollo tecnológico, de investigación científica y en el diseño de mejores prácticas para la preservación de nuestro medio ambiente, así como del uso racional de los recursos naturales, es parte del pensamiento bolivariano.

Pero los caminos hacia el bienestar conjunto tienen que ser recorridos con iguales cuotas de sacrificio y aportes. Así es que no podríamos hablar de acuerdos comerciales justos entre nuestros países, sin que se aplique aquello de que, para que haya justicia, es necesario considerar desigualmente a seres desiguales; o sea que los aportes y renunciamentos deben ser mayores para los que tienen más, favoreciendo más a los que tienen menos. Esto es buscar la verdadera equidad, la auténtica igualdad de oportunidades y la adecuada proporción. Las exigencias de dudosas equivalencias suelen ser las que llevan injusticias ocultas.

Aún se producen declaraciones que se ven condenadas al olvido. Aún, con las evidentes ventajas que significarían para todos, no se cumplen ofrecimientos, como el de impulsar desarrollos alternativos a los que dan lugar las drogas ilícitas, abriendo mercados para hacer realidad ese impulso. Ese debe ser parte de un aporte que responda a la verdadera responsabilidad compartida. Eso sería marchar, en efecto, por un camino de unidad, justo y realmente equitativo. Solucionar los problemas con renunciamentos ajenos estaría lejos del pensamiento del Libertador.

Pero, ¿estaríamos hablando de estos temas que tienen que ver con problemas comunes, compartidos, sin la vigencia del pensamiento bolivariano? Probablemente no. Lo hacemos en esta Organización, que ciertamente ha sido diseñada teniendo presente al Libertador.

Es que los ideales que el Libertador llevó a Panamá en 1826 están permanentemente aquí, en esta sala, mostrando que solamente cuando se concretó la decisión de recorrer conjuntamente nuestros destinos hermanados, es que conformamos una organización que seguramente se asemeja al sueño de Bolívar. Ese es el éxito –en aquella época no percibido– del Congreso Anfictiónico de Panamá.

Pero cuando el sueño se hace realidad es que comprendemos que también nos corresponde imaginar nuevas formas de cooperación. La crisis ya se ha hecho presente en un país hermano, y los peligros de su generalización, no podrán tener otra respuesta que la acción conjunta.

Esto estaría claro para un Bolívar. Pero, ¿lo está para quienes tienen en sus manos la contribución para resolverla, lo que, al fin, resultaría en su propia defensa y provecho?

Señor Presidente, con belleza en el decir, Unamuno preguntaba: “Llegaría Bolívar a sentir la angustia metafísica de todos los grandes, la terrible voz que surge del silencio de las eternas tinieblas y nos dice: y todo ¿para qué?” Estoy seguro de que nosotros, en este recinto, diríamos que todo fue para algo sublime: alcanzar la libertad y realizar un esfuerzo conjunto hacia un porvenir de grandeza.

Estamos también seguros de que nuestras ansiedades, nuestras preocupaciones, servirán de acicate para ir más allá; para hacer cosas hasta ahora no hechas, para superar nuestros logros, pequeños o grandes, y para comprometernos, cada vez más, en seguir dentro de los ideales bolivarianos, que son los ideales de América entera.

Señor Presidente, en Bolivia siempre se habla con reverencia del Libertador. Y cuando se lo hace está presente el nombre de otro insigne venezolano: el Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho, don Antonio José de Sucre. El propio Simón Bolívar, un 11 de mayo de 1828, decía de él: “Sucre es caballero en todo; es la cabeza mejor organizada de Colombia; es metódico; capaz de las más altas concepciones; es el mejor general de la República, y el primer hombre de Estado”.

El creador de mi patria, Bolívar, así ensalzó al Presidente de Bolivia, el Mariscal Sucre, que dio su nombre a la capital de la República. No hay duda de que el Libertador, dentro de su genialidad, tenía un enorme lugar para la generosidad y la grandeza.

Y como la forja de países es siempre tarea inacabada –“Bolívar es la lucha que no acaba”, afirmó Miguel Ángel Asturias–, deseo leer lo que el gran Neruda, luego de más de cien años, le dijo al Libertador:

Tus ojos vigilan más allá de los mares,
más allá de los pueblos oprimidos y heridos,
más allá de las negras ciudades incendiadas.
Tu voz nace de nuevo: tu voz otra vez nace;
tu ejército defiende las banderas sagradas;
la libertad sacude las campanas sangrientas
y un sonido terrible de sonidos precede
la aurora enrojecida por la sangre del hombre.

Y José Martí nos dejó dicho a nosotros:

¡Pero así está Bolívar en el cielo de América vigilante y ceñudo, sentado aún en la roca de crear, con el inca al lado y el haz de banderas a los pies! Así está él, calzadas aún las botas de campaña, porque lo que no dejó hecho, sin hacer está hasta hoy: porque Bolívar tiene que hacer en América todavía.

Repito: ese es nuestro legado y tarea.

Muchas gracias, señor Presidente.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank the Ambassador of Bolivia.

PALABRAS DEL REPRESENTANTE DE GUYANA
EN REPRESENTACIÓN DE LOS PAÍSES DE CARICOM

El PRESIDENTE: In accordance with the order of business, I give the floor to Ambassador Odeen Ishmael, Permanent Representative of Guyana, to speak on behalf of the member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE GUYANA: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Today, I want to express sentiments on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) delegations as we pay homage to the memory of Simón Bolívar. Mr. Chairman, I will be making an abridged statement. I request that the full text, which will be distributed later, be read into the minutes as my official presentation.^{1/}

Today we honor the memory of the Liberator, the great Venezuelan and South American patriot, Simón Bolívar. In paying this tribute to Bolívar, I want to touch on two main issues. I will review the influence of the Caribbean region on the career of this legendary leader of the independence struggles of the peoples of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. After this, I will examine, in the light of the Bolivarian experience, some current issues as they affect the growth of economic and political unity and democracy in the Hemisphere.

As a 27-year-old military officer in 1810, Bolívar inspired uprisings against Spanish rule. He led his loyal forces in spectacular military victories, and soon the battle cry for independence resounded from the flat *llanos* of eastern Venezuela and down the Andean backbone of South America.

But there were early setbacks. In 1814, the Spanish forces recaptured Caracas, and the revolutionaries were in disarray. Bolívar escaped to Jamaica and during his sojourn in Kingston, he wrote his famous *Letter from Jamaica* on September 6, 1815. In this profound political document, he advocated a system of republican government throughout South America with checks and balances modeled after the British system of government.

He also expressed belief in a united and flourishing hemisphere, with opportunity for everyone to progress and to participate in national development. His call for the unity of the South American nations went beyond formulas or political systems. Actually, he declared that it was not possible for the people to develop a perfect and complete form of government; as a result, he advocated reaching a compromise on a system of government to prevent any form of tyranny. He stated: "Do not adopt the best system of government, but the one that is most likely to succeed."

Departing from Jamaica in 1815, Bolívar went to the southern city of Cayes, Haiti, where he and his companions received support from the people of the first Black independent nation of the Americas and also from their President, Alexandre Pétion. It was Pétion who first called him "the author for independence in South America."

Then, in early 1816, with the backing of the Republic of Haiti, which supported him with men and weapons, Bolívar launched an invasion on the Venezuelan coast. After making some

1. Véase anexo.

military inroads, he faced betrayal from his own commanders and was forced to escape again to Haiti and spent six months in the southeastern city of Jacmel. In 1817, he returned to South America and after many struggles and fierce battles, he and his army, made up in part of Haitian freedom fighters, defeated the Spanish imperial army in Colombia and won that country's independence in 1819.

Bolívar's army, it must be noted, included many British and Irish mercenaries who were veterans of the Napoleonic wars. With respect to this, a further Caribbean connection must be noted. These British and Irish recruits occasionally used Georgetown, the capital of Guyana, as their staging post for organizing their supplies. From there, they arranged with Guyanese boat owners to transport them up the Orinoco River where they joined the army of *llaneros* led by José Antonio Páez, Bolívar's able commander in the east. It was not unusual for some Guyanese at that period to team up with the British and Irish recruits and join the independence forces in the Orinoco province.

As we know, Bolívar overthrew the rule of the Spanish monarchy in South America and oversaw the formation of a number of new republics. In the English-speaking Caribbean region, the struggle for independence was more evolutionary in nature. However, from time to time, the British colonial masters put down with bullets, police suppression, and imprisonment a number of efforts by political independence movements that agitated for more freedom and for improved rights for the people. Despite the evolutionary nature of the Caribbean independence struggle, the process was nevertheless influenced by the ideals, heroism, courage, and sacrifice of history's freedom fighters, including Simon Bolívar himself.

Bolívar's vision of a united American continent, even though it has dimmed from time to time, continues to be gradually illuminated more brightly today. The Congress of Panama in 1826 planted the seed that was to later germinate into the Organization of American States. This body expanded, particularly in the period after the 1970s, and its influence is touching the lives of all peoples in all corners of this hemisphere.

We now see steady progress toward the formation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which will be the start of a firm economic union of all the countries of the Americas. As the peoples of the Americas draw fundamental benefits from this economic union, they will demand more closeness, and I predict that before the next decade, the leaders of regions of the Hemisphere will be seriously planning or at least thinking about regional political unions. It is easy to predict that not too long down the road, the political leadership of the various regions will surely begin talking seriously about what can be termed the "Union of the Americas."

But the expansion of hemispheric unity, economic or political, can only come about with expanding democracy. Our leaders and our peoples realize this fact, and that is why the leaders of the Americas established a mandate on democracy that resulted in the development of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Democracy has to be enriched based on the experience of our history. Today we talk about expanding democracy. In this hemisphere, we have reached a stage where we now boast of achieving representative democracy as expressed in the OAS Charter of 1948. It is now necessary for our elected representatives to move representative democracy a number of steps further to make it more qualitative. They must apply consultative and participatory democracy by involving minorities and women in the process. In so doing, a purer form of democracy will evolve.

We must remind ourselves, too, that everything is always changing. The doctrine that everything is in a state of change was debated as far back as during the era of the classical Greek philosophers. The process of change will have its pitfalls, and there will be times when it may be necessary for us to take one step forward and two steps backward. Plato summed up this doctrine very clearly when he wrote: “You cannot step twice into the same river; the fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.”

Today, despite the onward march of democracy in this hemisphere, it is still seriously challenged by forces that do not respect free elections and others that promote violent crime and terrorism. We must stress that the responsibility for maintaining democracy rests not only with the governments, but with opposition parties and civil society as well. While we agree that governments have a greater responsibility, they alone cannot guarantee democracy, particularly if opposition political parties make unfair demands and do not want to dialogue in order to reach a compromise.

Despite the limitations of elections, there should never be attempts to discard elections and try to arrive at governments by nonconstitutional means. Such attempts are very dangerous and destabilizing. Our citizens must defend democracy, but to do so, our societies have to develop a democratic culture to allow democracy to grow and for citizens to want to defend it.

Furthermore, we cannot have sustained democracy if we do not tackle the problem of poverty. How long can the poor people of our hemisphere continue to listen to our political leaders and international policymakers debate countless proposals to ease poverty? We must be reminded that when people have a perception that action is too slow, they will want to carry out their own actions, which can lead to destabilization and changes in the pattern of democratic development. Shakespeare summed up the feeling of the poor when in his historical play, *Henry IV, Part II*, one of his characters addressed the Chief Justice and declared: “I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not as patient.”

At the same time, the multilateral financial institutions have a moral duty to protect democratic governments. They must also have a democratic charter and mandate.

Mr. Chairman, as we commemorate the life and achievements of Simón Bolívar, we also have to reflect on the high regard in which he is held, not only in Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador, but also in other countries of the Hemisphere. The times of Bolívar were much different from today, but what remains common from those days to this day is the underlying problem of poverty. Countries of the Americas won political independence in different ways, but winning economic independence still poses a challenge. Due to the historical circumstances of his day, Bolívar had to utilize the military option to win independence. By gaining the desired objective for a large part of South America, he brought a sense of dignity and pride to the peoples of those lands. By chasing away the colonial oppressor, he set the stage for the generations that succeeded him to organize and develop a popular system of government to protect their political independence and improve the conditions of life for all. It is a challenge that still confronts the Americas.

And so today we express words of admiration for Simón Bolívar. Even though we may not agree with all the political methods he applied, he deserves glory for being a visionary and for taking the decisive giant step to win and influence political independence for so many nations in South America.

In closing, I quote again Shakespeare, who wrote in his play *Much Ado About Nothing* the following words that fit the qualities of Bolívar most aptly: “He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing . . . the feats of a lion.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

El PRESIDENTE: The Chair thanks the Ambassador of Guyana.

PALABRAS EN HOMENAJE AL HISTORIADOR
DOCTOR ALFONSO RUMAZO GONZÁLEZ, “BIÓGRAFO DE LOS
FORJADORES DE LA INDEPENDENCIA IBEROAMERICANA”,
POR EL REPRESENTANTE DEL ECUADOR

El PRESIDENTE: In accordance with the order of business, the Chair now recognizes Ambassador Peñaherrera of Ecuador.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DEL ECUADOR: Señor Presidente, señor Secretario General, señor Secretario General Adjunto, señores Representantes, Permanentes y Alternos, dignísimos Embajadores de los países observadores, amigas y amigos:

Luego de su breve pero enjundiosa intervención, señor Presidente, la voz autorizada del Embajador don Marcelo Ostria Trigo, distinguido Representante Permanente de la hermana República de Bolivia, ha enaltecido con verbo cálido y sapiente la memoria del Libertador por antonomasia, en cuyo homenaje se celebra esta sesión protocolar del Consejo Permanente de nuestra Organización. Igual lo ha hecho, con su acostumbrada brillantez, en representación de los hermanos Estados Miembros de la CARICOM, el distinguido Embajador Odeen Ishmael.

Me corresponde ahora, por gentil deferencia de los distinguidos colegas Representantes de los países bolivarianos, hacer propicia esta ocasión para rendir el tributo que merece un ilustre ecuatoriano, el doctor Alfonso Rumazo González, cuya tarea vital por excelencia fue la de recrear ante el mundo la personalidad y la gesta de los forjadores de la independencia iberoamericana y, de modo primordial, la de ese inmensurable ser humano a cuya visión de horizontes infinitos, a cuyo talento formidable y multifacético y a cuya voluntad heroica e incommovible debe nuestra América, en grado sumo, el inicio de su vida republicana y la configuración de un destino común de libertad, justicia y progreso al que, lamentablemente, no hemos podido arribar todavía.

Y la razón de ser de mi intervención es obvia. Refiriéndose al doctor Rumazo González dijo el intelectual cimero y gran escritor venezolano, don Guillermo Morón, que a lo largo de su milagrosa existencia –su reciente fallecimiento alcanzó, lúcido y vigoroso, la propecta edad de noventa y nueve años– había llegado a ser “el cronista mayor y el historiador moderno por excelencia del Procerato”, y añadió que sus obras fundamentales, sus ocho grandes biografías, Simón Bolívar (quince ediciones, una de ellas traducida al chino), Manuela Sáenz (dieciséis ediciones), Antonio José de Sucre (once ediciones), Francisco de Miranda (dos ediciones), José Martí (dos ediciones), Daniel Florencio O’Leary (tres ediciones), José de San Martín (dos ediciones) y Simón Rodríguez (tres ediciones), “son su monumento, su columna de mármol para la inmortalidad”.

Es que así como los grandes estadistas y los vencedores en las batallas por el mejor destino de nuestras naciones merecen la perennidad estatutaria, igual se la ha ganado quien, como Rumazo González, ha contribuido de modo decisivo para enriquecer y cimentar en la memoria colectiva el recuerdo de la magna epopeya de la emancipación, en la que se afinan las raíces sustentadoras de nuestra presencia en el mundo.

“La independencia americana es el hecho más grande del siglo XIX. La antigüedad no conoció nada semejante”, dijo el egregio tribuno español don Emilio Castelar, y reafirmó su criterio – con el que coinciden muchos otros pensadores europeos– con esta frase estupenda: “En un continente recién descubierto, que vino a completar la geografía del planeta, cien pueblos sometidos se irguieron de repente y formaron cien pueblos libres que, en el orden político, completaron el equilibrio del antiguo mundo y se constituyeron sobre bases sociales nuevas, distintas y aun antagónicas a las bases sociales de la monárquica Europa”.

El admirable historiador don Rufino Blanco-Fombona expresa que “esa revolución política y social cumplida en la cuarta parte del globo (...) tuvo por principal artífice al genio de Bolívar y no se realizó sin un esfuerzo asombroso”. Para apreciarlo en su más dramática magnitud, la del número de quienes sacrificaron su vida en el empeño, vale recordar –como lo hace Blanco-Fombona– que solo en la Gran Colombia, cuya vastedad territorial sobrepasaba la de todas las conquistas de Napoleón pero con una población total que no llegaba a los tres millones de habitantes, desaparecieron en el fragor de la lucha 596.284 existencias, de las cuales correspondieron 108.204 a la Real Audiencia de Quito; 171.741 al Virreynato de Nueva Granada, y 316.339 a la Capitanía General de Venezuela, donde se luchó más que en parte alguna de América y se derramó sangre sin avaricia por todo el Continente.

Ese esfuerzo de asombro se muestra en la obra de Rumazo González como una suerte de gran fresco pintado con espléndida nitidez y, por lo mismo, sirve de modo inigualable para la finalidad propuesta: la de afinar nuestro ser y nuestro destino. Porque la identidad de los pueblos y su proyección al futuro, como la de los seres humanos individualmente considerados, depende en gran medida de su arraigo en el ancestro, en la comunidad de los recuerdos, en la hondura de los afectos, en el impacto de los hechos y los ejemplos. Todo ello marca como impronta que reafirma o diluye voluntades; estimula, incita o disuade; define, en suma el ser-en-potencia, como diría Tomás de Aquino, de los pueblos.

Así entendió su tarea Rumazo González desde la apasionada y meticulosa preparación de su primera biografía publicada: “Manuela Sáenz, la Libertadora del Libertador”, la misma que fue calificada como “obra maestra” nada menos que por el insigne historiador venezolano don Vicente Lecuna, quien, por añadidura, le propuso al autor que se estableciera con su familia en Venezuela. Rumazo González residía en aquel entonces en la ciudad colombiana de Cali, como Jefe de Redacción del diario liberal “Relator”. Aceptó la propuesta, que implicaba el ingreso al personal docente de la Facultad de Humanidades de la Universidad Central, en la que le asignaron las cátedras de Historia de la Cultura, Historia de América, Arte Contemporáneo y Composición y Estilo castellanos, para una labor docente que duró dieciséis años, al cabo de los cuales dictó cursos de posgrado por siete años más.

Durante todo este lapso, la fecundidad de su vida como pensador y escritor es ciertamente admirable: 17 libros de historia; varios de crítica literaria y poesía; dos novelas; decenas de ensayos, estudios y monografías; más de seis mil artículos publicados en los más importantes diarios y revistas

de Hispanoamérica; prólogos a una veintena de libros; conferencias; discursos; en fin, todo cuanto puede hacer una inteligencia poderosa, una cultura profunda y vasta como pocas, y una voluntad de trabajo y sacrificio que solo dejó de actuar como dinamo incesante con la extinción de su vida.

Obtuvo así las más altas preseas de todos los ilustrados gobiernos de Venezuela –su segunda y bien amada patria– en la que en las tres últimas décadas se le otorgó el Gran Cordón de la Orden del Libertador, la Orden de Francisco de Miranda, la Orden Andrés Bello, la Orden Antonio José de Sucre, la Orden al Mérito en el Trabajo, la Orden Emilio Sojo, la Orden Cecilio Acosta y la Orden 27 de Noviembre de 1820, así como la Orden José de San Martín de Argentina y la Orden Nacional al Mérito de Ecuador.

Y, por fin, algo que cuenta tanto como los mayores galardones oficiales: la excelencia de su trabajo fue encomiada sin reservas por columnistas de los diarios más importantes de Iberoamérica, como el cotidiano *Ya*, de Madrid; *La Prensa*, de Buenos Aires, y *El Universal* y *El Nacional*, de Caracas; y por algunas de las figuras cumbre de las letras contemporáneas, entre las que cabe señalar a: Miguel Ángel Asturias, Juana de Ibarború, Vicente Lecuna, Matilde Pomés, Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero, Alejandro Vallejo, Alfredo Pareja Diezcanseco, Benjamín Carrión, Gonzalo Zaldumbide, José Luis Salcedo Bastardo, Leopoldo Zea, Ramón J. Velásquez, Luis Enrique Osorio, Enrique Santos, Ángel Felicísimo Rojas y Gloria Stolk.

Razones de sobra entonces justifican, señor Presidente y distinguidos señores Representantes, el hecho de que me haya permitido dirigirles estas breves palabras, las mismas que concluyo con la petición formal de que, luego del trámite correspondiente, la Sección de Biografía e Historia de la Biblioteca Colón de nuestra Organización, sea honrada con el ilustre nombre del doctor Alfonso Rumazo González.

Mil gracias.

El PRESIDENTE: The Chair thanks all of the ambassadors for their excellent presentations this morning, which have reminded us all that this great man, the Liberator Simón Bolívar, has influenced the thinking, history, and future of all of the countries of our hemisphere.

There being no objection, the full text of Ambassador Ishmael's presentation will be made a part of the record of this meeting.

There being no further business before this protocolary meeting of the Permanent Council, I declared the meeting closed.

ANEXO

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ODEEN ISHMAEL,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GUYANA TO THE OAS,
AT THE PROTOCOLARY MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
HELD ON JULY 24, 2002

INFLUENCING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN THE AMERICAS:
A TRIBUTE TO SIMÓN BOLÍVAR

Today we honor the memory of the Liberator, the great Venezuelan and South American patriot, Simón Bolívar. Much has been written and said about this great citizen of the Americas over the years, and I believe that what I am stating is already well known. In paying this tribute to Simón Bolívar, I want to touch on two main areas. I will review the influence of the Caribbean region on the career of this legendary leader who led the independence struggles of the peoples of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, and whose military exploits influenced those who aspired for independence in other lands on the South American continent in the early 19th century. After this, I will examine, in the light of the Bolivarian experience, some current issues as they affect the growth of economic and political unity and democracy in this hemisphere.

By the time he was 25 years old, Simón Bolívar had traveled extensively in Italy and France. During this period, he studied the philosophies of Rousseau, Locke, and Voltaire and was particularly impressed with the military achievements of Napoleon I. On his way home to South America, he took the opportunity to visit some areas of the United States, which had won its independence from Great Britain just over than two decades before. He had also followed the victorious independence struggle of the Haitian people, and by the time he arrived back in Venezuela, he was convinced that the time had arrived for the territories ruled by Spain in the Americas to become independent. He had also decided to take the leadership in the independence struggle that he knew had to be waged against Spanish domination.

That was to come around 1810, when as a 27-year-old military officer, he inspired uprisings against Spanish rule. He led his loyal forces in spectacular military victories, and soon the battle cry for independence resounded from the flat *llanos* of eastern Venezuela and down the Andean backbone of South America.

But there were early setbacks. In 1814, the Spanish forces recaptured Caracas and the revolutionaries were in disarray. Bolívar escaped to Jamaica, and during his sojourn in Kingston, he wrote his famous *Letter from Jamaica* on September 6, 1815. In this profound political document he advocated a system of republican government throughout Spanish America with checks and balances modeled after the British system of government.

In the *Letter from Jamaica*, Bolívar did not confine his view of freedom to a continent free of colonialism and the imperialist oppressions. He outlined the main problems of the Latin American

people and predicted how the nations he would liberate could move toward the ambitious aim of freedom and order, along with prosperity and peace for everyone.

He also expressed belief in a united and flourishing hemisphere, with opportunity for everyone to progress and to participate in national development. His call for the unity of the Spanish American nations went beyond formulas or political systems. Actually, he declared that it was not possible for the people to develop a perfect and complete form of government; as a result, he advocated reaching a compromise on a system of government to prevent any form of tyranny. He stated: "Do not adopt the best system of government, but the one that is most likely to succeed."

Departing from Jamaica in 1815, Bolívar went to the southern city of Cayes, Haiti, where he and his companions were well received by the people of the first Black independent nation of the Americas. He later traveled to the capital, Port-au-Prince, where he met with President Alexandre Pétion, who was well aware of Bolívar's cause and he offered him total support. It was Pétion who first called him "the author for independence in South America".

In the city of Cayes, Bolívar received a supply of weapons and ammunition and was granted permission by the Haitian Government to enlist Haitian volunteers who wanted to join in the struggle against Spanish rule in South America. The only condition President Pétion requested in providing assistance was for Bolívar to free the slaves in all the countries that he would set free from Spanish domination.

In early 1816, with the backing of the Republic of Haiti, which supported him with men and weapons, Bolívar launched an invasion on the Venezuelan coast. After making some military inroads, he immediately put his pledge to Pétion into action and began by liberating his own African slaves on a plantation he owned. However when he proclaimed general freedom for all slaves, all slave owners and even some of his own military commanders turned against him. He was forced to escape again to Haiti and spent six months in the southeastern city of Jacmel. In 1817, he returned to South America, and after many struggles and fierce battles, he and his army, made up in part of Haitian freedom fighters, defeated the Spanish imperial army in Colombia and won that country's independence in 1819.

Bolívar's army also included many British and Irish mercenaries who were veterans of the Napoleonic wars. With respect to this, a further Caribbean connection must be noted. These British and Irish recruits occasionally used Georgetown, the capital of Guyana, as their staging post for organizing their supplies. From there, they arranged with Guyanese boat owners to transport them up the Orinoco River, where they joined up with the army of *llaneros* led by José Antonio Páez, Bolívar's able commander in the east. It was not unusual for some Guyanese at that period to team up with the British and Irish recruits and join the independence forces in the Orinoco province.

As President of Venezuela and Gran Colombia, Bolívar in 1826 expanded his vision of a united Spanish America by convening representatives of the new South American and Central American republics at the Congress of Panama. Although little was accomplished, it marked the beginning of Pan Americanism. That Congress drafted the Treaty of Perpetual Union, League and Confederation, which was signed by the delegates but ratified later only by Gran Colombia (which today comprises Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela).

As we have seen, Bolívar overthrew the rule of the Spanish monarchy in South America and oversaw the formation of a number of new republics. In the English-speaking Caribbean region, the struggle for independence was more evolutionary in nature. However, from time to time the British colonial masters put down with bullets, police suppression, and imprisonment a number of efforts by political independence movements that agitated for more freedom and for improved rights for the people. Despite the evolutionary nature of the Caribbean independence struggle, the process was nevertheless influenced by the ideals, heroism, courage, and sacrifice of history's freedom fighters, including Simón Bolívar himself.

Bolívar's vision of a united American continent, even though it has dimmed from time to time, continues to be gradually illuminated more brightly today. The Congress of Panama planted the seed that was to later germinate into the Organization of American States. This body expanded, particularly from the period after the decade of the 1970s, with the entry of English-speaking Caribbean nations, and its influence is touching the lives of all peoples in all corners of this hemisphere.

We now see steady progress toward the formation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, which will be the start of a firm economic union of all the countries of the Americas. As the peoples of the Americas draw fundamental benefits from this economic union, they will demand more closeness, and I predict that before the next decade the leaders of regions of the hemisphere will be seriously planning regional political unions. It is easy to predict that not too long after, the political leadership of the various regions will surely begin talking seriously about what can be termed the Union of the Americas.

But the expansion of hemispheric unity, economic or political, can only come about with expanding democracy. Our leaders and our peoples realize this fact, and that is why the leaders of the Americas established a mandate on democracy that resulted in the development of an Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Democracy has to be enriched based on the experience of our history. Today we talk about expanding democracy. Democracy itself, as a pattern of government and a system of belief, has been going through an evolution ever since the idea emerged out of Greek political economy and culture nearly three thousand years ago. In this hemisphere, we have reached a stage where we now boast of achieving representative democracy, as expressed in the OAS Charter of 1948. It is now necessary for our elected representatives to move representative democracy a number of steps further to make it more qualitative. They must apply consultative and participatory democracy by involving minorities and women in the process. In so doing, a purer form of democracy will further evolve.

We must remind ourselves that everything is always changing. This doctrine that everything is in a state of change was debated even as far back as during the era of the classical Greek philosophers. The process of change will have its pitfalls, and there will be times when it may be necessary for us to take one step forward and two steps backward. Plato summed up this doctrine very clearly when he wrote: "You cannot step twice into the same river; the fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you."

Today, despite the onward march of democracy in this hemisphere, it is still seriously challenged by forces that do not respect free elections and others that promote violent crime and terrorism.

We must stress that the responsibility for maintaining democracy rests not only with the governments, but with the opposition parties and civil society as well. While we agree that governments have a greater responsibility, they cannot alone guarantee democracy, particularly if opposition political parties make unfair demands and do not want to dialogue in order to reach a compromise.

Despite the limitations of elections, there should never be attempts to discard elections and try to arrive at governments by nonconstitutional means. Such attempts are very dangerous and destabilizing. Our citizens must defend democracy, but to do so, our societies have to develop a democratic culture to allow democracy to grow and for citizens to want to defend it.

Furthermore, we cannot have sustained democracy if we do not tackle the problem of poverty. How long can the poor people of our hemisphere continue to listen to our political leaders and international policymakers debating countless suggested proposals to ease poverty? We must be reminded that when people have a perception that action is slow, they will want to carry out their own actions, which can lead to destabilization and changes in the pattern of democratic development. Shakespeare summed up the feeling of the poor when in his historical play, *Henry IV, Part II*, one of his characters, addressing the Chief Justice, declared, "I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not as patient."

At the same time, the multilateral financial institutions (MFIs) have a moral duty to protect democratic governments. They must also have a democratic charter and mandate.

Many poor countries became heavily indebted because the multilateral financial institutions granted large loans years ago to the then despotic regimes that had no interest in promoting democracy. In reality, the MFIs propped up these nondemocratic regimes which, after periods of long struggle by democratic forces, were replaced by democratic governments. Today, these democratic governments are being pressured to repay the heavy debt. Those that are negotiating debt relief are also constrained because of the unreasonable conditionalities by the MFIs—conditionalities that put pressures on their economic and social programs. By not being able to deliver quick development for the benefit of their people, the entire fabric of democracy becomes threatened because impatient people may turn against the very democratic governments that sympathize with their problems. Thus, we are left to wonder if the MFIs are really fulfilling their mandates because their slow process concerning debt relief for poor countries is not really helping to bring quick relief to those fledgling democracies.

As we commemorate the life and achievements of Simón Bolívar, we also have to reflect on the high regard in which he is held, not only in Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador, but also in other countries of the Hemisphere. The times of Bolívar were much different from today, but what remains common from those days to this day is the underlying problem of poverty. Countries of the Americas won political independence in different ways, but winning economic independence still poses a challenge. Due to historical circumstances of his day, Bolívar had to utilize the military option to win independence. In gaining the desired objective for a large part of South America, he brought a sense of dignity and pride to the peoples of those lands. By chasing away the colonial oppressor, he set the stage for the generations that succeeded him to organize and develop a popular system of government to protect their political independence and improve the conditions of life for all. It is a challenge that still confronts the Americas.

And so today we express words of admiration for Simón Bolívar. Even though we may not agree with all the political methods he applied, he deserves glory for being a visionary and for taking the decisive giant step to win and influence political independence for so many nations in South America. I paraphrase Shakespeare, who in his play *Much Ado About Nothing*, wrote the following words that fit the qualities of Simón Bolívar most aptly: "He has borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing . . . the feats of a lion."

