

THE ROAD TO ESQUIPULAS

Speech on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the
Signing of the Esquipulas I and II peace Agreements

By: Vinicio Cerezo

Before that all I want to thank the invitation I did my friend, the Secretary general, José Miguel Insulza, on behalf of the OAS, also thank to Interamerican Dialogue by sharing the vision of celebrating and give the importance that deserves to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the Esquipulas agreements, that marked the peace, democracy and the international insertion of Central America. I also thank to my friends Donald Soldini and Bill Goodfellow for their interest in our region.



The road to peace:

In the long days of hiding lived in the years prior to the democratic opening in Guatemala and in most of the countries of Central America, in thought and in discussions of political leaders that they were fighting through various means against authoritarian governments, arose a question and a discussion:

Do achieve the democratic opening, in a quick and efficient manner, after 30 years of armed and political struggle without results.? What was the strategy most appropriate to achieve with less violence and destruction, remove "old generals of power" and begin a stage of democracy that opening the political space and the possibility of economic development?.

It was then, when inspired by the thought of the Guatemalan and Nobel Prize for literature, Miguel Ángel Asturias and cited by a woman, Guatemalan and award Nobel peace, Mrs. Rigoberta Menchu, in "Testimony" Miguel Ángel, in the celebration of the 100th anniversary of his birth, inspired us to start the road to peace.

When Rigoberta wrote **"the life and work of our Guatemalan brother, his words written in literary pieces or articles and expressed in many public events, show with contextual arguments that the words and ideas, are more effective than weapons and violence"**.

That reminds me how we started the elaboration of the strategy **"The Long fight for democracy"**, which was an alternative to the guerrillas and repression of the army, it was to resist and work on democratic ideas, in the strengthening of citizenship and the resistance, we should be alive, and it was not easy more than 300 political leaders were killed, I myself am a miracle, God saved me from death in three attempts to assassinate me...

This strategy led to the political opening in 1982, then to free elections in 1985, and subsequently to the proposal of the meeting of Presidents at Guatemala to find a path to

peace which was registered in my inauguration speech, because there could be democracy in a region in conflict. Thus, the Presidents of the time, we met the same day after the takeover... Remember Napoleon Duarte, José Azcona, Daniel Ortega, Vice President of Costa Rica, submitted by the then President Monge and this server. At the same meeting we agreed to perform Esquipulas I, we would expect that Costa Rica chose a new President until May. Esquipulas I took place on 24 and 25 May 1986.

The meeting was held in Esquipulas, the capital of Central American faith, because we wanted to out an event unique, inspiring, with God's blessing, away from the press and special interests, is therefore that the cloister convent was the ideal scenario that Chairmen could talk for two full days, putting us agree on what would be the procedure to achieve the firm and lasting peace which would take a year to reach This procedure is Esquipulas II, signed on 7 August 1987 in the city of Guatemala;

It is important to highlight that we could not be commemorating the 25 years of Esquipulas II, without its cornerstone, Esquipulas I.

The situation was very complicated and difficult, all the countries of the region with the exception of Costa Rica, were involved in an internal war to confront the military and Governments subject to huge processes of repression that was intended to suppress guerrilla military opposition or the political through unlimited violence opposition

The cold war was at its last and groups of hawks of North America sought to turn Central America into a territory where confirmed its military and political hegemony and its objective was to Nicaragua. Therefore in these circles opposed to dialogue and agreements or because you supported this strategy, or because they did not believe that there was another way, to overthrow the military through guerrilla warfare.

It was then that "Contadora" and then "Rio Group" began a Latin American effort led by Mexico and Venezuela, Panama, Colombia and Brazil to find a Central American solution to the regional crisis and prevent the tragedy of a war; bookkeeper showed us that there was an exit door that we did a regional effort to find a solution other than destruction and war, because as I have repeated many times the war was a terrible business, cause "we put the dead and others sold us weapons."

A brief comment on the reason for the success of Esquipulas I and II:

In the 1980s the dialogue and agreement seemed in fact then discarded, the "concertacion" Word even used in Spanish, for this reason, when I proposed the meeting of regional Presidents in the inauguration speech, everyone heard me with suspicion and skepticism, nobody believed that it was possible, because nobody wanted to we were, wanted to solve the problems by way of violence and war.

President Daniel Ortega, recently, on 8 August at the meeting of Central American Presidents and the Caribbean, in which I had the privilege of being awarded the Rubén Darío presidential order expressed as a reason for issuance me it was that in a moment, and I quote his word "At a time when nobody wanted to we speak and communicate Vinicio Cerezo had the courage to summon us and bring us all together"", because this was the only way to do it".

Indeed, we were all or the process failed and led us to a war between the "Democrats"

and "revolutionary"; Therefore, at the meeting held in Guatemala on 15 January 1986, in meeting all the Presidents of Central America and the Vice President of Costa Rica sent by the Monge President who was with health problems, but with your query, we decided to wait until May 24 to the meeting in Esquipulas and wait for the new President, who was elected in February in Costa Rica leaving as President Arias.

The Esquipulas I and II agreements were successful and became an example and model of peace agreements, for the following reasons:

(a) because the Presidents signed them thinking about their people, their nation and their country's future, transcending their supporters; or personal interests

(b) because more beyond the political decisions of the moment, signed a procedure to consolidate agreements through the institutionalization of processes and

(c) because boosted a movement that had continuity and correctly interpreted by political and military leaders of the time, took decisions to consolidate these agreements through the signing of the peace agreements in subsequent years, with the demobilization and the signing of the peace in Nicaragua, in el Salvador and in Guatemala.

At this time, is required on my part in this 25th anniversary to recognize all the Presidents who took the decision to be the principal actors of this story, sacrificing their personal position and paying a huge political cost for its decision, which saved from war to the region and brought it along the path of democracy after the peace. All, President Ortega, President Arias, but especially Napoleon Duarte of el Salvador and José Azcona Honduras were fundamental and definitive to achieve this.

But would also like to pay tribute to the teams, all of our attendees in the shadow, they did the job of negotiating, organizing meetings, preparing documents, and support us in our decisions, but also with special recognition and tribute to all those who died with his life so that you achieve these 25 years of peace and democracy in Central America.

The Esquipulas agreements are then a historical use example: but now have to think in the present and the immediate future:

The Esquipulas agreements demonstrates that only with political decisions of historic importance we deal with chances of success the challenges we now face:

- 1) Violence and the institutional breakdown caused by new pathologies of the modern world, the drug trafficking and organized crime;
- (2) The Agenda pending the Esquipulas agreements, such as the Social marginalization and the inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, ultimately the debt with the majority of the population;
- (3) The political marginalization and Social of ethnic groups, women and young people without whose effective participation in institutional power, will be impossible to consolidate the democratic process and create in principle social inclusion, so that we can then talk of social cohesion.

With equal courage, commitment and concerted action must confront these challenges:

It is actually impossible to consolidate democracy, pluralism and political peace achieved twenty-five years ago, if not take the DECISION of give A step towards forward in the TRANSFORMATIONS needed to change for better our society.

I am totally convinced that only inspired by the dream of a new era announced in the prophecies of the worldview Maya, announcing now that ends the 13th Baktun, the coexistence of man and nature, the recuento with his brothers, a space in which a new culture of respect between us, effective participation of all in society policy decisions and in the enjoyment of the property and wealth of the nazcaonly in this way it will be possible to consolidate what they achieve with sacrifices in the 1980s and forever change our region;

Now it is time to face our demons:

Speaking of our demons speak of cultural attitudes that have led us to the separation and social marginalization to ethnic discrimination of gender and age, extreme poverty, social injustice and the absence of opportunities.

These demons have led to the lack of social cohesion, the absence of a spirit of national unity and of belonging to a community with its own identity and consequently the impossibility of constructing a project of nation collective, because the culture that we have between us, divides us and confronts us.

It is not possible as a reality that we press and divides us still hidden and continue to sustain a system which is formally democratic because we can freely elect our rulers, but has no mechanisms to efficiently allow the participation of all the sectors that define and identify the reality of our countries, which is complex.

Pretend to continue hiding it, only serves to hide social injustices, lack of opportunities and the concentration of opportunities and wealth, but what is worse, only serves to further undermining our society, attitude that is becoming the breeding ground for future confrontations, that socaban what we have built and that they only favor the groups outside the lawwhich aim to is to make to the State and society institutions failed, unable to resolve their disputes peacefully.

These confrontations can be dramatically bloody, they can translate in racial clashes, ethnic wars that divided the regions and peoples and social conflicts of such scale that could lead to campaigns "social cleansing" of which already had some attempts to perform between the years 2000 and 2004, that will destroy what is constructed in the last 25 years in democratic institutions"Rule of law emerging", in economic growth and in plural and peaceful coexistence.

Formal democracy we have, has opened the political spaces and social expression and this has caused, for the good of society and history, demonstrations in the community, asking to take them into account to make decisions in relation to the exploitation of non-renewable resources, environmental protection and recognition of the collective participation.

All this shows that there is a social dynamic forces us to see the future in a different way and this set of forces, this dynamic that is manifested in the open spaces for democracy and peace, may just be to destroy our historic successes, and to forge a new nation based on inclusion, social cohesion equity and social justice.

And what I'm saying to Guatemala, is valid for the entire Central American region and the Caribbean, but also for Latin America.

This therefore imposes a view regional, that extends from the South of Mexico to Panama, Colombia and Venezuela and all the Caribbean also imposed us the need to face it with a regional vision, to find effective solutions that can not be applied efficiently, with a local vision in each of the countries, as it has happened with the "Guerra contra las drogas in Mexico" that produced an increase of violence in Central America and was with the internal war in Guatemala, which resulted in the emergence of guerrillas in the South of Mexico.

The problems are global and regional and imposed us decisions, solutions and commitments of the same nature, this reality imposes also a different attitude, a different vision and different solutions, because this new reality is neither similar nor similar to that he lived in the 1980s.

It is now a reality exposed, and enlarged in their understanding and their possibilities for virtual; traditional communications media acquaintances of the written press, Television and Radio to which added the alternative media, social networks, Twitter, Facebook and the satellite TV, which we put us a day in real time about what happens in the world and in our society, creating collective consciousness in an exponential evidencemakes it all the time to give explanations, to make immediate decisions and influence our attitudes. In this world there is no secrets and that again the people and most vulnerable societies.

We then face the historic challenge of change to consolidate what has been achieved or refuse to face the necessary changes and see that earlier building destroyed:

We know our reality, we are sufficiently diagnosed, Central America is perhaps one of the most diagnosed regions, we know that half of our population is made up of native ethnic groups, that 60 percent are under 30 years of age and that the majority of our voters are women, our society cannot continue to organize but ignoring them, because we put them to fight to be taken into account and this fight, in all, many things will be destroyed.

Our task and our challenge is to face the Social redesign, the Refoundation of the State; dare to openly discuss their participation, young people, women and ethnic groups, to talk with them the future of our country, that we want to build, real Guatemala, real Salvador, real Honduras, real Costa Rica, real Panama, real Caribbean, dare to design the true Central American Region and the Caribbean, by way of peace the conclusion, agreements and participation that enables true democracy, it reaches the level of development where all will be benefited.

We need a new social contract.

We need, as underlined for the first time in 2008, the University of Toledo, an Esquipulas III, a new Pact that will allow us to deal comprehensively with our security problems, but

mainly the structural conflicts, so that we can move towards economic and social development with equity and not lose what so far have reached. For this reason I have never stopped working for the consolidation of peace, the strengthening of democracy and regional integration. For some years I do through the Esquipulas Foundation for Central American integration.

I would like to conclude by offering a prayer to heaven for all the people who gave their lives for peace and democracy in the region, by all those who had to flee their homes, also by my friends Napoleón Duarte and José Azcona, a greeting friendly and with appreciation for his role in the Esquipulas agreements to President Ortega, I assure you that it has much more merit that you have wanted to recognize and of course a also welcome President Arias, who we will have the pleasure of listening to.

We also have a hard work to do to link young people to the region, so valued and get familiar with the recent history of our countries and that something as important as it was the whole of the Esquipulas agreements is not lost in a generational gap.

In the Esquipulas Foundation for Central American integration each year activities we do with young people to convey a vision of integration, peace, democracy and appreciation for what is ours, so its commitment allow us to progress steadily.

Just last week we celebrate the third Esquipulas Regional Summit "Think Central America in a new Era" one of the goals was the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Esquipulas agreements and move all the importance thereof, but also get a vision for the future and possibilities for Central America.

Ladies and gentleman, and paraphrasing, the Popol Vuh, the Mayan sacred book: I invite you to we not join our ideas, but our purposes, agree, decide and work to build an Esquipulas III, this development with equity to strengthen for the future successful peace and democracy which we are living, national and regional institutions.

Thank you.

Vinicio Cerezo

Called by many the Central American Ambassador, former President Vinicio Cerezo focuses his experience and energy to create a regional awareness that allows to make Central America a strategic region in the world. Brief profile: First President in the modern democratic era of Guatemala, after military regimes, (1986-1991). Creator, promoter and one of the signatories of the peace accords in Central America, the Esquipulas I and II. Promoter of the creation of the Central American Parliament, of which he was a Deputy. Deputy several times to the National Assembly. Co-creator of the Social Agenda for democracy in Latin America. Permanent member of the Forum of Biarritz. International speaker. Founder and President of the Esquipulas Foundation for Central American integration, through which promotes Esquipulas III, the Plan for economic and Social development for the Region. It is lawyer and notary, democratic and integrationist of heart.

