

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



OEA/Ser.G
CP/ACTA 1950/13
13 diciembre 2013

ACTA
DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA
CELEBRADA
EL 13 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2013

Aprobada en la sesión del 9 de julio de 2014

ÍNDICE

	<u>Página</u>
Nómina de los Representantes que asistieron a la sesión	1
Palabras de apertura de la Presidenta del Consejo Permanente	2
Palabras del Secretario General Adjunto	3
Palabras del Embajador de la República de Sudáfrica ante el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos.....	5
Intervenciones de los coordinadores de los grupos regionales.....	8
Intervenciones de las Delegaciones.....	13

CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

ACTA DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA CELEBRADA EL 13 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2013

En la ciudad de Washington, a las diez y diez de la mañana del viernes 13 de diciembre de 2013, celebró sesión extraordinaria el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos para rendir homenaje póstumo a la memoria del Premio Nóbel Nelson Mandela, ex Presidente de la República de Sudáfrica. Presidió la sesión la Embajadora Deborah-Mae Lovell, Representante Permanente de Antigua y Barbuda y Vicepresidenta del Consejo Permanente. Asistió la sesión el excelentísimo señor Ibrahim Rasool, Embajador de la República de Sudáfrica ante el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajador Bayney R. Karran, Representante Permanente de Guyana
Embajador Duly Brutus, Representante Permanente de Haití
Embajador Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua
Embajadora La Celia A. Prince, Representante Permanente de San Vicente y las Granadinas
Embajador Nestor Mendez, Representante Permanente de Belize
Embajador Roy Chaderton Matos, Representante Permanente de Venezuela
Embajador John E. Beale, Representante Permanente de Barbados
Embajadora Carmen Lomellin, Representante Permanente de los Estados Unidos
Embajador Allan Culham, Representante Permanente del Canadá
Embajadora Jacinth Lorna Henry-Martin, Representante Permanente de Saint Kitts y Nevis
Embajador Neil Parsan, Representante Permanente de Trinidad y Tobago
Embajador Leonidas Rosa Bautista, Representante Permanente de Honduras
Embajador Edgar Ugalde Álvarez, Representante Permanente de Costa Rica
Embajador José Rodrigo Viemann de León, Representante Permanente de Guatemala
Embajador Stephen C. Vasciannie, Representante Permanente de Jamaica
Embajadora Sonia Johnny, Representante Permanente de Santa Lucía
Embajador Joaquín Alexander Maza Martinelli, Representante Permanente de El Salvador
Embajador Arturo Ulises Vallarino Bartuano, Representante Permanente de Panamá
Embajador Emilio Rabasa Gamboa, Representante Permanente de México
Embajadora Nilda Celia Garré, Representante Permanente de la Argentina
Ministro Consejero Breno de Souza Brasil Dias da Costa, Representante Interino del Brasil
Judith-Anne Rolle, Representante Interina del Commonwealth de Dominica
Ministra Consejera Mayerlyn Cordero Díaz, Representante Alterna de la República Dominicana
Ministro Raúl Salazar Cosio, Representante Alterno del Perú
Consejero Pedro Israel Valenzuela Durand, Representante Alterno del Uruguay
Primera Secretaria Dayana Ríos Requena, Representante Alterna de Bolivia
Ministro José Luis Ramírez, Representante Alterno de Colombia
Consejero Frank Tressler, Representante Alterno de Chile
Consejero Kenneth J. Amoksi, Representante Alterno de Suriname
Consejera Marisol del Carmen Nieto Cueva, Representante Alterna del Ecuador
Ministra C. Inés Martínez Valinotti, Representante Alterna del Paraguay

También estuvo presente el Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Albert R. Ramdin, Secretario del Consejo Permanente.

PALABRAS DE APERTURA DE LA PRESIDENTA DEL CONSEJO PERMANENTE

La PRESIDENTA: Distinguished colleagues, special guests, we gather in the House of the Americas for this special meeting of the Permanent Council to pay posthumous tribute to Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and citizen of the world, who passed away on Thursday, December 5, 2013.

Please join me as we observe a moment of silence in honor of Madiba, this extraordinary individual.

[El Consejo, de pie, observa un momento de silencio.]

Thank you.

I wish to welcome the Ambassador of South Africa to the United States of America, His Excellency Ebrahim Rasool, who has joined us this morning.

The task of writing a tribute to Nelson Mandela is an almost impossible one. It is akin to seeking to capture sunshine in a bottle.

How can we begin to express our appreciation to an icon who not only changed a country but influenced the world?

How can we fully comprehend the magnanimity of a giant who waged war on hate and declared love through forgiveness, compassion, and humility?

How can we fully grasp the vision of a man who could harvest grace, majesty, and dignity from brutality and hardship, and who could see beyond the clouds and rain to a bright, sunny day; a day when the apartheid system would be abolished and condemned to the dust heap of history?

One man did. That man was Nelson Mandela.

The question then arises: how can we at the Organization of American States fully embrace the work of this citizen of the world, this sunshine of our souls, this icon, this giant? How can we at the OAS breathe the legacy of Nelson Mandela?

Mandela himself gives a clue. He writes: "Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity; it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."

The legacy of Nelson Mandela can be nurtured by strengthening the development agenda of the OAS.

Nelson Mandela stated us that education is the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world. We at the OAS must redouble our efforts to maintain our education and capacity-building agenda.

Nelson Mandela taught us that:

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

Through the two landmark instruments adopted at the forty-third regular session of the General Assembly—the Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance; and the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Intolerance—we, too, can signal that we are embracing the legacy of Mandela by becoming signatories to these conventions.

Colleagues, brothers and sisters, ambassadors: our icon, our citizen of the world, has passed. Long may his legacy live on in the work of our OAS.

Thank you.

PALABRAS DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO

La PRESIDENTA: I am now pleased to give the floor to the Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States. Ambassador Ramdin, you have the floor.

El SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, Ambassador Deborah-Mae Lovell, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda.

I recognize His Excellency Ebrahim Rasool, Ambassador of South Africa to the United States.

Distinguished permanent representatives, distinguished permanent observers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

We are here this morning to commemorate the life and celebrate the legacy of Madiba, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, a man who not only brought together the people of Africa and liberated South Africa from a heinous practice, but a leader and a giant who inspired the peoples of the Americas and had an impact on the world.

Madam Chair, Secretary General José Miguel Insulza regrets that he cannot be here because had to travel; therefore, he cannot take part in this special meeting of the Permanent Council personally. However, within hours of the passing of the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, the Secretary General issued a press release, which he has asked me to share with the Permanent Council.

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza, expressed his “deep sorrow” over the passing of the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.

“Mandela is a hero of our time,” said Insulza, “a man who marked an unsurpassed milestone of dedication and consistency in world history and who defended his ideas with no regard for the physical pain or the consequences to his health of the punishments he received

as a result. Perhaps because he loved life, he was able to offer it up to achieve freedom and human dignity.”

Nelson Mandela will be remembered not only for his leadership in the liberation of his people and the African Continent, but also for his message of tolerance and humanity, an example for all those around the world fighting for freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights.

The OAS Secretary General sent “to his wife, his family and the government of South Africa my heartfelt condolences” on his own behalf and that of the Organization he represents.

He added finally that “we greet the South African people with great affection, and thank you for having given to mankind the life of a man as illustrious and necessary as Nelson Mandela.”

Madam Chair, distinguished permanent representatives, Nelson Mandela belonged to us all. What he fought for, what he believed in, and what he represented are convictions, goals, and ideals shared by all who strive for peace, equality, and democracy.

Nelson Mandela was not only a freedom fighter; he was a leader among men who recognized that true peace requires commitment and sincere political will and that changing the course of history requires personal sacrifice and, most times, deep pain. He understood that winning the fight for equality and true freedom would mean sacrificing his own life.

Distinguished ambassadors, over the last few days, the world has watched as leaders from all corners of the earth and from different backgrounds have paid tribute to this great man and described him in the most eloquent terms. We have seen leaders who share no other bond but respect for Nelson Mandela come together to honor his life. We have seen the images out of Africa, not of mourning but, rather, of celebration in the streets, as the nation and people he fought for and represented—as a prisoner and as a president—honored their hero, a leader among men.

Ladies and gentlemen, as the world says goodbye to Mandela’s earthly and physical presence, I cannot help but wonder whether an era is over, and whether this kind of courage and conviction, which changed the course of the world, will be seen again. Who will join the ranks of great men of the last century, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela?

Madam Chair, ambassadors, even as we teach our children about the virtues of peace and share with them the legacy of Mandela and stories of his passion, his struggle, and his achievements, we must ask ourselves: are we ourselves prepared to receive the baton passed to us by Nelson Mandela? Are we prepared to make the sacrifices, go the distance, and labor toward goals that foster peace, the common good, and brotherhood, as opposed to individualism, personal interest, and gain?

Quoting a freedom fighter and making the sacrifices of one are different things.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world is changing, and while we have come a long way in the defense of human rights, the challenges to peace, justice, and equality remain. Today, as this

Permanent Council meets to reflect on the contribution of Nelson Mandela, I urge that we look at the challenges facing the Americas through his eyes.

It is my hope that today, we will reflect upon our commitment to the people of the Americas with determination to facilitate change; to make peace where there is none; to facilitate dialogue where it has been broken; to protect the vulnerable and those who are defenseless; and to speak for those who have no voice.

Let us renew our commitment to work together in a spirit of brotherhood to solve problems through means of dialogue. Let us recommit to upholding unity in diversity; to respect differences of opinion while always being willing to engage. Let us refocus our efforts now and in the coming year on the people of the Americas and on progress and peace.

Madam Chair, I thank you very much.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Ambassador Ramdin.

PALABRAS DEL EMBAJADOR DE LA REPÚBLICA DE SUDÁFRICA ANTE EL
GOBIERNO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

La PRESIDENTA: I am now pleased to give the floor to Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool of the Republic of South Africa. Ambassador, I wish to thank you so much for accepting my invitation to join us this morning and to participate in this special meeting of the Permanent Council. We therefore look forward to hearing your thoughts on the life and legacy of President Mandela. You have the floor, sir.

El EMBAJADOR DE LA REPÚBLICA DE SUDÁFRICA ANTE EL GOBIERNO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: Thank you very much, Ambassador Deborah-Mae Lovell and all my colleagues in the diplomatic corps. Thank you very much, Ambassador Ramdin, and the illustrious Organization of American States, which represents the peoples of the Americas. Thank you very much, all of you, for coming together to honor Nelson Mandela and, by extension, the country to which he gave birth, the Republic of South Africa.

Thank you also for the waves of solidarity we have experienced since the announcement of the passing of Madiba: those of you who have signed the condolence books, those of you who have attended the memorial, and those of you who have sent up all your prayers for Nelson Mandela's final journey.

As a country, we are humbled by the way you have responded, and that response has made our unbearable loss slightly more bearable, knowing that a leader whom our country has produced out of great adversity has found resonance in so many of you, so many of your people, so many of your countries, and certainly in this hemisphere that you represent.

It is no irony that Nelson Mandela passed on December 5 as we were completing our commemoration of World AIDS Day. It was no irony that on December 10, the world gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa, for a global memorial service, and that that day was International Human Rights Day. And it is no irony that Nelson Mandela will be placed in his final burial space on the eve of December 16, which in South Africa is a day of reconciliation. We have nothing to fear that the

OAS gathers on Friday the 13th because by commemorating Nelson Mandela, we will have no bad luck to fear.

Those three dates are very important. In a sense, they summarize the life of Nelson Mandela, a leader who inherited a country in which nothing was done for the raging pandemic of HIV/AIDS. No health system had been put in place. The lives of those carrying this disease were deemed useless and worthless, and he had to put out a raging fire that he had inherited.

That the world came together on International Human Rights Day summarized the essence of what Mandela stood for, what he lived for, what he was prepared to die for, and what he not only established in South Africa but perfected from all the lessons that your countries, amongst others, had taught us.

I look at the collection of countries here, and I see those that have shared a common colonial power with us; therefore, we bonded in a common anticolonial struggle. I see, in the names that are represented around this table, countries to which we have looked for inspiration about how we could create a world that was based on human rights—a better world that would care for the least amongst us as we struggled to establish a human rights agenda and a far more equal society.

But also, some of you have been pioneers in trying to establish a gentler, more caring society. The population compositions of so many of your countries reflect a common origin in Africa, which ensures that the umbilical cord between your countries and ours, between Nelson Mandela and your people, continues to throb and to reinfuse the world with the greatness of a continent which, despite tragedies like the slave trade, is on the cusp of prosperity.

I look around the table and I see, in the names of your countries, people who have never seen Nelson Mandela or heard his voice but stood up to demand his release from prison and freedom for South Africans.

My presence here today is not an act of self-aggrandizement by South Africa; it is an act of gratitude, of appreciation, and of thanking all of you very, very much for struggling so hard to have Nelson Mandela released from prison and his life sentence curtailed. As a result, he became the leader of our transition, our first President, and our guiding light until that moment at 8:50 p.m. on December 5 when he breathed his last breath.

So, I come here to say thank you very much because so many of you have made it possible for us to enjoy his wisdom, his leadership, and his moral clarity. I also come here today to make common cause with the great leaders you have produced, who have inspired us. I come here today to say that as we move forward, our work is not finished.

I think we need to see in Nelson Mandela an example of counter-instinctive and counter-intuitive leadership. We have far too many mainstream, business-as-usual approaches to solving the intractable problems of the world.

We admire Nelson Mandela and hold him up as an icon, but Nelson Mandela was always the first to tell us that he was not a saint and the transition he presided over was not a miracle. He did not do that because he was a materialist or anti-religionist; on the contrary, Nelson Mandela understood that if he succumbed to the notion of sanctification and to the idea that the South African transition

was a miracle, then we would take it out of the realm of the possible and abdicate it to the realm of the divine. We'd all be demobilized, waiting for intervention by the divine to solve the great problems that we face.

We admire Nelson Mandela precisely because we can achieve what he achieved wherever there is conflict, raging poverty, or inequality in the world; or wherever people are marginalized and isolated because they don't talk like us, they don't eat what we eat, they don't pray like us, they don't dress like us, and they don't look like us.

We need to continue building a world that isn't just nonracial or nonsexist or equitable, but a world that is fundamentally gentler, more caring, and more embracing of difference—a world, in fact, that is safe for difference. It is not enough, in the words of Nelson Mandela, simply to tolerate the other because they are different. The supreme act is to embrace each other and accept each other because that defines us as different from the fundamentalists and the extremists. That's the world in whose image we try to see Nelson Mandela's will being done.

So, we have made an addition to our newly renovated embassy by placing the statute of Nelson Mandela outside in order to complete a wonderful triangle of leaders who have shown a different way of solving problems in the world. We're linking up with Mahatma Gandhi down on Massachusetts Avenue and with Martin Luther King, Jr. at the National Mall. This city has fantastic monuments of those who deserve their place in history, but we need to triangulate the city with counter-instinctive leadership, with leadership out of the mainstream, and with leadership of conscience. That is what we are doing here today.

And so, in Nelson Mandela's life, faced with very few choices, he made one very important decision on the eve of going to prison:

I realized . . . that they could take everything away from me, everything, but my mind and my heart. Now, those things I would have to give away, and I simply decided I would not give them away.

In a world of diminishing choices, let's hold on to our minds and our hearts. Let's refashion a world that so many of your founders have dreamed of. They have made us the custodians of that dream. Let's live up to Nelson Mandela and to the instincts within our peoples, nations, countries, and leadership historically.

Thank you very much for this moment of honor for Nelson Mandela and the Republic of South Africa.

[Aplausos.]

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador Rasool, for your very stirring words as we reflect on our icon, the giant Nelson Mandela.

INTERVENCIONES DE LOS COORDINADORES DE LOS GRUPOS REGIONALES

La PRESIDENTA: I wish now to call on the regional coordinators to make statements on behalf of their respective groups. The floor is now open.

I am pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States. You have the floor, madam.

La REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Your Excellency Ebrahim Rasool, Ambassador of South Africa to the United States, welcome to this body.

Madam Chair, distinguished ambassadors; we are all touched in some way by the legacy and life of Nelson Mandela. It is fitting that the Organization of American States, dedicated to freedom, democracy, human rights, and peace, honor his memory, for those principles are the very same ones that guided Nelson Mandela's struggle for the dignity and equality of all South Africans.

This Organization can take pride in its efforts to exchange experiences with African nations on the promotion of democracy and human rights as a result of the Democracy Bridge initiative, which was launched in 2007.

Colleagues and friends, with the indulgence of the Chair, I now offer a video tribute to Nelson Mandela on behalf of the people of the United States, featuring the poem *His Day is Done* by acclaimed author and poet, Maya Angelou.

[Se muestra el video.]

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador, for that visual tribute to Nelson Mandela.

The Chair is now pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Canada. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DEL CANADÁ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the Ambassador of South Africa, Ebrahim Rasool, for his deeply stirring and inspiring words to us this morning, and I recognize that incredible tribute from our American colleagues to the life of Nelson Mandela.

Madam Chair, with the death of Nelson Mandela, the world has, indeed, lost one of its great moral leaders and statesmen.

Mr. Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years for his part in the struggle that would ultimately end the system of apartheid. Despite his long years of captivity, Mr. Mandela left prison with a heart closed to the calls for the settling of scores. Instead, he was filled with a longing for truth and reconciliation and for understanding between all peoples. He demonstrated that the only path forward for the nation was to reject the appeal of bitterness. His forbearance was legendary. His magnanimity spared all South Africans incredible suffering.

Nelson Mandela's enduring legacy for his country and the world is the example he set through his own long walk to freedom. With grace and humility, he modeled how people can transform their own times and, in doing so, their own lives.

Nelson Mandela was, indeed, a model of humility, grace, and forgiveness, who dedicated his life to the relentless pursuit of equality, justice, and freedom for the people of South Africa. This was a message he delivered with great passion and great clarity when he addressed the Canadian Parliament in February 1990. His life and teaching touched Canadians deeply. His legend and legacy will undoubtedly inspire people from all walks of life for generations to come.

Madam Chair, on behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to extend our condolences to Nelson Mandela's widow, Graça Machel, his entire family, and all citizens of South Africa. His last visit to Canada was in 2001 when he was granted honorary Canadian citizenship. As such, Canada mourns with the citizens of South Africa and of the world.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Ambassador of Canada. I am pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE TRINIDAD Y TOBAGO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, Assistant Secretary General, permanent and alternate representatives, permanent observers:

I wish to recognize His Excellency Ibrahim Rasool, Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa. Ambassador Rasool, thank you very much, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), for your very inspiring message this morning. Thank you also very much for reminding us of the significance of December 5, 10, and 16. They shall be etched in my memory for a long time to come.

This morning, I honor a life like no other, that of Mr. Nelson Mandela, more affectionately known as Madiba. It is almost an insurmountable task to eulogize a man whose character and contribution to humanity is of such magnitude.

Very few persons in the world have the ability to touch the lives and hearts of every man, woman, and child who has had the privilege of knowing even the tiniest detail of their lives. This is what Madiba accomplished in his 95 years of glorious life. God truly blessed this world when he not only gave us Nelson Mandela but allowed the people of South Africa and all of mankind to enjoy his presence for this lengthy period of time.

A boy raised herding cattle and tutored by the elders of his Thembu tribe, Madiba emerged as the last great liberator of the 20th century. This simple life can inspire us all: where we have come from is not nearly as important as where we are going and what we have set out to do in this lifetime.

We have all drawn upon the words and teachings of Madiba at some point in our lives. That light of inspiration and greatness was able to bring together over 90 world leaders and numerous

persons from around the world to mourn his loss and celebrate his life. From CARICOM, heads of government and government officials from The Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago attended Mandela's funeral.

The current Chair of CARICOM, the Honorable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, said:

Mr. Mandela displayed qualities which defined the zenith of human behavior. Forgiveness, humility, integrity, and undying love for his fellow human beings, particularly for his country and its people, were his hallmark. He led a life that made emulation almost impossible. His struggles, redemption, and victory took us to the zenith of human possibility and left a legacy of inestimable value to the world.

Madam Chair, I do not believe that anyone who was ever in the presence of Madiba was not charmed by his humility, joviality, and sometimes mischievous nature, or was not encompassed by his presence and his buoyant spirits. His ebullient sense of humor endeared to all a gentle personality that commanded respect and adoration.

The Caribbean Community was privileged to have Mr. Mandela grace the celebration of its 25th anniversary in Saint Lucia in 1998, at which time he was met by all heads of government.

Madam Chair, please allow me to reminisce on Mr. Mandela's visit to my own country in 2004, where he was praised by over 20,000 people shouting his name at a rally at the Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain. With incredible modesty, Mandela thanked the crowd and told them: "I came for two reasons: because I love you very much and because it is not easy to love an old man, so I urge you to love South Africa and to love this old man."

The only regret that Mr. Mandela appeared to have during his visit to Trinidad was not being able to meet the then West Indies cricket captain and my dear friend, Brian Lara. He asked, "Where is Lara?"

According to His Excellency Irwin LaRocque, Secretary-General of CARICOM:

The simplicity with which he conducted his life shone through in the manner in which he interacted with all who came into contact with him. His example of sacrifice for principle and ideals in defiance of unspeakable atrocities meted out to his people and denial of his own liberty has inspired millions around the world. His stature was defined by his policy of reconciliation without recrimination and bitterness.

Remarkably, after 27 years in prison, Mandela returned home more determined than ever and led an apartheid-divided South Africa into an all-race democracy, becoming the nation's first black President in 1994. The great former South African President will forever be revered worldwide for successfully shepherding his country towards a peaceful transition to a multiracial democracy after three centuries of white discrimination. Indeed, he freed his people, a feat that will never be forgotten.

On behalf of my country and the member states of CARICOM, I wish to express profound condolences to the Government and people of South Africa and to Madiba's family and close friends.

At this moment of profound sadness, we are one with the world in celebrating Madiba's extraordinary life. He was born on South African soil, leaving footprints of change, but his heart belongs to the entire world.

As we celebrate the life and works of Mandela, let us remember him in the way he desired. In 1994, in an interview for the documentary "Mandela," he said:

Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort, and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for eternity.

May God bless the memory of Nelson Mandela, and may he rest in peace.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago. I am now pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Belize. You have the floor, sir.

EI REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE BELIZE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It is indeed an honor for me to take the floor on this solemn occasion on behalf of the Central American Integration System (SICA) at the behest of the Coordinator of SICA, the distinguished Ambassador of Panama.

Allow me, also, Madam Chair, to join you in extending a warm welcome to the distinguished Ambassador of South Africa and to thank him for his very moving statement this morning.

I also wish to fully align myself with the intervention made by the Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago, Chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) caucus, which constitutes Belize's other subregional family.

Today, however, I speak on behalf of SICA to pay tribute and to honor the life of Nelson Mandela, who died just over a week ago on December 5 and is unquestionably one of the world's greatest advocates of racial equality and change through peaceful means.

Madiba, Tata, Khulu, are just a few of the many endearing names that Nelson Mandela was called. Madiba, a most transcending figure of our time, towered as a political and social giant, a bastion of justice and equality, and the embodiment of a true revolutionary. His name is one of the most recognized names throughout the world.

Across every ocean, through every valley, down every stream, people have heard of the life and work of the first democratically-elected black President of South Africa, Nobel Peace Prize winner, freedom fighter, husband, father, grandfather, and, above all, father of his people. At his funeral service on Tuesday, the world came to pay tribute, as 91 heads of state descended upon the city of Soweto to pay their last respects to a man who changed the world during our time.

Madam Chair, normally we do not discuss extrahemispheric events in this body, but it is undeniable that the passing of this most beloved world leader warrants our greatest attention and

respect. Given that we all know the life and history of Mandela, as has been so eloquently expressed throughout this week and by previous speakers, I do not intend to chronicle his life today. Rather, I wish to focus briefly on the man behind the movement and the impact of his legacy on our hemisphere.

To his fellow South Africans, he was known as Madiba. Madiba was Mandela's clan's name. In many regards, a clan name is much more important than a surname, as it refers to the ancestor from which a person is descended. It is considered an act of honor to refer to someone by the name of their tribe. Mandela commanded that respect.

Indeed, he was a most revered and honorable man, but, Madam Chair, this was not always the case. As is the case for all revolutionaries, during his time of struggle and hardship to liberate the people of South Africa from the injustices of an apartheid system that divided his great nation along racial and ethnic lines, Mandela was rebuked, deemed a conspirator against the state, and labeled as a terrorist by the international community. But, through the despair, the many attempts against his life and that of his family, and his imprisonment for over 27 years, he never lost hope that one day he could change the institutionalized racism, poverty, and inequality that plagued his nation.

Tata, as Mandela was also affectionately known by his fellow countrymen, means "Father." Mandela was considered a father figure to many and the father of the nation in many respects. Not only did the people of South Africa look up to him, but the world also revered him.

In every generation, there is a figure, good or bad, who seizes a nation, turns a country inside out, and changes the course of history of that society. Nelson Mandela did that to the world. He was that alluring figure. But he was also a man, an average man who defied every form of logic of his time and did what was perceived as the impossible. For 27 years, he languished in jail, only able to write to his family twice a year. Mandela himself would admit that during those years, he was not much of a father to his children, but in the irony of life, he eventually became the father to a people. He gave his life to the struggle for freedom.

As President of South Africa, he emphasized reconciliation amongst once divided groups. This was certainly not an easy task for the people of South Africa. Those who are now liberated wanted to exact revenge against their former oppressors, but Mandela was cognizant of the internal chaos and strife that this would bring to his fledgling nation. Instead, he used sports, education, and culture to bring his people together rather than tear them apart.

Today, Madam Chair, many of our countries find ourselves battling a range of social, economic, and political issues that divide us rather than unite us. Our societies are diverse, and in many respects, it is this heterogeneity that at times leads to division—that is, if we allow it to. We all have our histories—some good, some bad—but we must use that history to carve a better future, to let go of the past, and to work together to build a better society.

Mandela was, indeed, able to end apartheid in 1994, four years after he was released from prison and almost fifty years after it was first instituted. However, the scourge of racism and inequality still persists across the globe and in many of our nations in this hemisphere. Whether this is manifested through discrimination based on one's race, ethnicity, gender, culture, or economic status, we cannot turn a blind eye to the injustices and prejudices that still exist in our countries.

Mandela's act of courage and fortitude was certainly a watershed moment in race relations across the globe, but how far have we truly come in engendering all-inclusive societies? First, we must look within our house. Just this past June, after eight years of negotiations, the Organization of American States opened for signature two international conventions: the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Forms of Intolerance; and the Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance. The negotiations leading up to the adoption of these conventions were arduous and painstaking, at best, but in the end, we managed to let compromise reign and good faith prevail.

Madam Chair, although we're all sovereign, with differing political mandates, all of our countries have at some point placed on record our abhorrence of acts of discrimination or persecution that infringe upon the human rights of any person or group, and we have negotiated two international instruments that seek to address the inequalities that exist in our societies. These conventions were opened for signature in June 2013, and although only six countries have signed the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Forms of Intolerance, and only four countries have signed the Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance, it is our hope that more member states will do so once their internal processes so permit.

Mandela showed us that we can bridge the divide, whether that divide is of race, ethnicity, or language. We in the Americas have this political platform of the OAS that allows us to interact with one another and learn from one another in a way that would not be possible under other circumstances. While we may sometimes have language barriers, there are no barriers to sharing our cultures, our music, our food, and our dance. Whether it is the warmth and rhythmic sounds of the Caribbean, the lush rain forests and mystic Mayan heritage of Central America, the soaring mountaintops and breathtaking landscapes of South America, or the stellar seasonal changes and modernity of our friends in the North, we can all appreciate what makes us different as well as what brings us together.

As you stated this morning, Madam Chair, a very famous quote from Mandela reads:

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

This is the legacy of Mandela. May he rest in peace.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador of Belize, and I want to thank the regional coordinators who have spoken thus far.

INTERVENCIONES DE LAS DELEGACIONES

La PRESIDENTA: We see on the screen that other member states have asked for the floor. I thank them for their short interventions in this regard.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Nicaragua. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE NICARAGUA: Muchas gracias.

Señora Presidenta; señor Embajador Albert R. Ramdin, Secretario General Adjunto de la OEA; señor Embajador Rasool; señoras y señores Representantes:

La Representación de Nicaragua rinde homenaje póstumo al Presidente Nelson Mandela, luchador consecuente contra el Apartheid, régimen que lo condenó a cadena perpetua y a trabajos forzados en las canteras sudafricanas. El líder africano fue un héroe invencible que rompió las cadenas de la opresión, la injusticia y la segregación, conquistando los derechos, libertades y la dignidad de los pueblos originarios de Sudáfrica que lucharon junto con él y con el Congreso Nacional Africano para lograr sus ideales.

En su lucha contra el apartheid se destacaron la solidaridad de la Organización para la Unidad Africana, los Movimientos de Liberación Nacional de África y América Latina, y la firme y heroica solidaridad internacionalista de Cuba en los difíciles momentos en que Angola y Namibia luchaban por su independencia.

Mandela, el prisionero político, calificado y enlistado por ciertos gobiernos como terrorista, avanzó con su organización para lograr la liberación de su pueblo y convertirse en un estadista que priorizó el diálogo, la tolerancia, la reconciliación y la paz.

El 5 de diciembre el Presidente Nelson Mandela partió a la dimensión de los inmortales, precisamente a nueve meses de que el Presidente Hugo Chávez transitara hacia esa misma dimensión. Fueron ellos dos seres humanos excepcionales e inolvidables que ya forman parte de la memoria eterna de la humanidad.

El Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional de Nicaragua decretó tres días de duelo y el Presidente Daniel Ortega envió un mensaje al Presidente de Sudáfrica, Jacob Zuma, expresando que el compañero Presidente Nelson Mandela es patrimonio de África y de la humanidad, que vivió cada día de su vida luchando consecuentemente por la paz, la fraternidad y la dignidad humana, cuyo legado prevalecerá inspirando a los seres humanos que creemos que un mundo mejor es posible.

Señora Presidenta, Nelson Mandela es un icono y un símbolo de moral, de lucha contra la discriminación racial y la opresión. Como estadista promovió él y puso en práctica el diálogo, la reconciliación, la tolerancia y la paz para bien de Sudáfrica y para ejemplo de la humanidad, que lo guardará en su memoria sempiterna. Gloria eterna para el querido y respetado Madiba Nelson Mandela. Vaya el saludo solidario de Nicaragua a su familia, a su pueblo y a su Gobierno.

Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Ambassador of Nicaragua. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Venezuela. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE VENEZUELA: Gracias, señora Presidenta.

Largo ha sido el camino sembrado de mártires en la lucha contra el racismo. El gigante Mandela fue un sobreviviente, pero la mayor parte de su vida la transcurrió bajo el martirio.

Estoy recordando algunos personajes a quienes la vida maltrató y finalmente reconoció por el color de su piel: Marcus Garvey, Gandhi, Malcolm X, Patricio Lumumba, Martin Luther King y Steve Biko, quien murió salvajemente torturado por la policía blanca de Sudáfrica.

Hago esta mención porque es bueno que tengamos en cuenta cómo hemos llegado hasta donde nos encontramos hoy: poder ver cara a cara, sin desprecio, al contrario, con amor y con respeto a un embajador de Sudáfrica. Es un cambio sentimental muy fuerte, a pesar de que ya la evolución tiene unos cuantos años a partir de la liberación del cuerpo físico de Mandela, cuya mente nunca estuvo en prisión.

Y eso me hace recordar algunas experiencias que es bueno tener en cuenta también, porque el olvido genera reincidencia. En algún momento de mi carrera, precisamente estimulado por algunas cosas que me enseñaban en mi casa, donde se hablaba de la discriminación racial, del racismo, del apartheid, encontré la oportunidad de participar en los debates de las reuniones de la Comisión de las Naciones Unidas contra toda forma de racismo.

También, por representar a un país petrolero, participé activamente en el comité sobre las sanciones contra el crimen del apartheid. No era fácil la tarea. Era una forma muy efectiva de ejercer presión. ¡Ah! pero se establecían bases de petróleo en el Atlántico, en el Índico, en el Caribe, llegando finalmente el petróleo a Sudáfrica para ayudar a sostener al régimen racista.

El apartheid o el racismo, que todavía existe, es la peor forma de dictadura: si usted tiene la piel negra o marrón, probablemente no tenga manera de escaparse de una dictadura racista.

Un blanco perseguido por sus ideales políticos o por sus creencias puede ingresar a la clandestinidad, cambiar su apariencia física o, inclusive, simular que apoya a la dictadura en ejercicio donde quiera que ella esté. Pero no hacen falta delatores en el caso del racismo: el color de su piel es una denuncia permanente y, por lo tanto, no hay escape, como no lo había en Sudáfrica. Ir a un restaurante, caminar por una calle, trotar en un parque, entrar a un baño público eran impedimentos permanentes ante la brutal humillación del racismo.

El Embajador de Nicaragua señaló bien un ejemplo, porque la historia es algo que debemos tener presente. En el proceso de liberación de las colonias, en las guerras de liberación de las colonias portuguesas –lusitanas como dirían algunos– el aporte de las tropas cubanas por su libertad fue definitivo. Hubo una batalla famosa, creo que se llamó Rascarneválica. Se me ha ido de la mente su nombre en este momento, un lapsus, a pesar de que siempre lo he sabido.

Pero el golpe asestado a las tropas sudafricanas fue demasiado fuerte y eso precipitó, en su momento, la caída o la evolución, como lo quieran llamar, de la situación en Sudáfrica, permitiendo la liberación de Nelson Mandela, mas no de otros que no tuvieron su suerte.

Mandela, en el año 1984, recibió el Premio Simón Bolívar de la UNESCO, compartido, por cierto, con el Rey de España, una situación muy curiosa, pues al mismo tiempo un rey y un prisionero político comparten un reconocimiento internacional de parte de una de las ramas o instituciones de las Naciones Unidas.

Volviendo al tema de esa guerra, creo que el primer viaje que Mandela hizo al exterior fue a Cuba. Hay una foto impresionante que me recuerda, por la extensión del abrazo, a una foto famosa

anterior de una niña saludando a su padre, prisionero de guerra, quien llegaba después de haber recuperado la libertad. Así fue el abrazo de Nelson Mandela para Fidel Castro, en reconocimiento, diciendo entonces: “Sin Cuba no habría habido liberación de nuestro continente y de su pueblo del azote del apartheid”.

Amandla. Esa es una palabra que escuchamos en muchas ocasiones. Creo que el Representante del *African National Congress* en las Naciones Unidas, que se llamaba Ncatini o algo parecido y que muriera antes de la liberación de Sudáfrica, la decía mucho. Y la otra palabra es *awethu*. *Amandla* significando “poder” y *awethu* significando “pueblo”. Eso parece compendiar la famosa frase de Abraham Lincoln cuando dijo: “La democracia es el gobierno del pueblo, por el pueblo y para el pueblo”. Y esa es parte de la gigantesca herencia que ha dejado Nelson Mandela.

Se me olvidó decir que estoy hablando como Coordinador de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración (ALADI). Algunas cosas que he dicho pueden ser muy particulares, las cuales representan la política de mi país, pero otras representan a un grupo que tuvo una política meritoria a lo largo de los años en contra del apartheid.

Así como la lucha continúa, porque el racismo continúa. Hay algunas fortalezas del racismo que no hemos atacado convenientemente. En buena parte de los medios de nuestras Américas, incluyendo la televisión privada venezolana, en países donde somos de todos los colores y de todos los tamaños, usted puede llevarse la impresión de que todos sus habitantes son de origen escandinavo, donde todos son rubios, porque no hay espacio en las telenovelas, por ejemplo, para la gente de piel oscura o bronceada. Los niños de los comerciales envían un patrón de belleza que no se parece al común de los mortales.

Y ese es un mensaje de apartheid venenoso, generador de violencia y de resistencia, difícil de atacar porque entonces en esas expresiones contra la libertad de prensa se nos responde con la libertad de empresa. En los medios de comunicación en este continente usted tiene la posibilidad de mandar mensajes racistas sin que nadie se dé cuenta. Alguna vez estuve leyendo una revista de asuntos sociales como de sesenta o setenta páginas en un país y llamé a mis funcionarios y les dije: vean esta revista bien y encuéntrenme una persona que no sea blanca. Esto bien podría haber sido en mi país.

Por eso hablo de la tarea inconclusa de la lucha contra el racismo. En eso avanzamos grandemente en Venezuela con nuestro gigante Presidente Chávez en los últimos quince años, apareciendo en los medios oficiales, en las telenovelas y en el cine gente que no era rubia. Tenemos anclas en los noticieros que no son rubios. En cambio, en la televisión privada de mi país todavía es imposible encontrar un ancla que no sea del color favorito de los racistas. Esos son mensajes muy fuertes.

Más allá de eso, lo único que puedo decir es que estamos con ustedes los sudafricanos, que estamos con quienes han sido solidarios siempre con Nelson Mandela, porque la unanimidad es un fenómeno nuevo. Ahora todo el mundo recuerda a Mandela, pero cuántas inconsistencias en el pasado, incluyendo democracias occidentales que se hicieron de la vista gorda o que subestimaron la necesidad de enfrentar al régimen racista de Sudáfrica.

Algo muy curioso, lo que nos queda de Mandela es una estatua gigantesca, no sé si en Johannesburgo o en Pretoria, pero no importa donde esté en territorio sudafricano, sonriente, porque

en medio de todo fue un personaje risueño, lleno de amor y de consideración hasta con aquellos que lo maltrataron.

Alguna vez dije en un diario de Venezuela que Nelson Mandela era un santo laico, pero no un santo contemplativo sino un santo guerrero tipo San Pablo o el polémico San Ignacio de Loyola, pero con una vida de santidad dedicada a los demás, dedicada al sacrificio. Por ese sacrificio hoy todos estamos sufriendo su ausencia física pero celebrando una vida rica de entrega a su pueblo y a todos los pueblos oprimidos y perseguidos del mundo.

Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador. As we move forward with our list of speakers, I want to thank all delegations for indicating their interests in speaking at this special meeting and draw attention to the timeframe we have set for it.

With this in mind, I am pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

La REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE SAN VICENTE Y LAS GRANADINAS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, excellencies and alternate representatives, Assistant Secretary General, permanent observers, and our guest of honor, His Excellency Ebrahim Rasool: good morning to you all.

I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Rasool for the very moving words this morning and for the reminder of how we can best truly honor the memory of Nelson Mandela by living the principles that he has taught us.

Madam Chair, as we remember the life of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, we regard him a paragon of virtue, a tireless defender of human rights and dignity, and the embodiment of our human aspirations for a peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

Nelson Mandela was an African revolutionary; an iconic global fighter for equality, peace, justice, democracy; a world statesman of the highest quality; a former President of South Africa; the founding father of his nation; a most extraordinary human being and humanist; and a man after God's own heart. He remains an example to emulate, a continuing inspiration for service to humanity, and a leader worthy of being emblazed in the annals of history for posterity.

Mandela's story is one of immense struggle, triumph, humility, inspiration, leadership by example, and, most of all, forgiveness and reconciliation. He was the face of a movement that never detracted from the cause. He gave voice to the voiceless and empowered the masses.

South Africa and the world have suffered a great loss at Mandela's death, but we have gained so much more from the contribution that he made throughout his life.

Madam Chair, the Honorable Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Honorable Ralph Gonsalves, in his statement in commemoration of the life of Nelson Mandela,

recalled that many of his generation were particularly moved by Mandela's fortitude and high principles—so moved that they offered support for majority rule in South Africa and for his release. They formed African liberation committees and participated, accordingly, in political activities with these objectives in mind.

At Mandela's death, we remember the contributions of all these persons. Especially, too, we remember and celebrate the huge sacrifices of Mandela's comrades in arms, such as Oliver Tambo, Giovanni Mbeke, and Walter Sisulu, as well as other young warriors of blessed memory, such as Steve Biko. We remember also Joe Slavo and his wife Ruth First, and other committed compatriots who are not black African, as well as numerous governments around the world and ordinary people from all walks of life for their immense sacrifices in supporting the cause and their march and call for freedom.

The régime of apartheid was as vile as it was real: people raised in the land of their birth dispossessed, disenfranchised, disregarded, treated as less than citizens, and forced to live undignified lives. And all this was allowed to thrive because the law of the time clothed it in legality. Those who were the architects and facilitators of this repressive régime, and who live today, must hang their heads in shame when they see how the entire world mourns and reveres Nelson Mandela and that they were on the wrong side of history.

Madam Chair, if there is one lesson that we in this hemisphere should take away from a review and commemoration of the life of Nelson Mandela, it is that we ought not to let arguments of legality run roughshod over justice, human rights, and human dignity. We must remind ourselves that we ought always to strive to strengthen the ties that bind us instead of emphasizing our differences, thus fanning the flames of hatred, discrimination, and bigotry that inevitably lead to human suffering, indignity, and tragedy.

In the eternal words of this larger-than-life icon, Mandela, words that we have heard twice already today:

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

We are fortunate to have lived during the lifetime of a colossus, Nelson Mandela, our extraordinary Madiba. Mandela's global stature was reflected, in part, in the esteemed accolades he received worldwide, among them the Nobel Peace Prize, the Soviet Order of Lenin, the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Republic of India's Bharat Ratna.

On behalf of the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I express profound condolences to the Government and people of South Africa; to Madiba's widow, Graça; to his former wife Winnie; to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren; and to his entire family and close friends. At this moment of profound sadness, we are as one with the world in celebrating Madiba's extraordinary life. The entire world, including his former foes, rightly claims him as their own.

May Madiba's soul rest in peace, and may light perpetual shine on him.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador. The Chair is now pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Jamaica.

EI REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE JAMAICA: Thank you, Chair.

Madam Chair, Ambassador Rasool, ambassadors, representatives: I would like, first of all, to thank Ambassador Rasool for his moving presentation this morning. I would also wish to extend gratitude to Ambassador Parsan for his important intervention on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). I am moved to make a few remarks.

Jamaica honors and reveres the name of Nelson Mandela. We will miss this hero's commitment to racial equality; his determination to ensure freedom and human rights for all people; and his desire to promote a progressive, fair, and just society in South Africa. We honor the struggle to destroy apartheid. We celebrate his victory achieved through imprisonment, agitation, and solidarity, and we try, in our small corners, to give fulfillment to Mandela's legacy.

Jamaica was an early participant in the international effort to boycott goods from and limit contact with the racist regime in Pretoria which, thankfully, no longer exists. Jamaicans of all races celebrated the liberation and now note the challenges ahead as we sing praises to the man who led the long walk to freedom.

In a statement issued on December 5, Jamaica's Prime Minister, the Most Honorable Portia Simpson-Miller, hailed Nelson Mandela as a courageous fighter, an enlightened leader, and a quintessential statesman. For the Prime Minister and all Jamaicans, Nelson Mandela's life will inspire countless generations, and his illustrious legacy will endure.

Nelson Mandela devoted his life to the ideal that the dignity of the human person is a fundamental right that should never be denied or downtrodden. He led and inspired his country's epic struggle for freedom and democracy and will be remembered with special pride as the first President of democratic South Africa. His leadership in the struggle alone would have ensured his greatness, but he will also be remembered for what happened when apartheid was dismantled. For, although he had spent 27 years enduring the torture of apartheid's prison system, including solitary confinement on Robben Island, Mandela emerged without visible trace of rancor or hatred. He promoted forgiveness and reconciliation, denounced bitterness, and worked for truth and compassion.

The people of Jamaica consider Nelson Mandela to be an honorary citizen of our country. Mandela visited Jamaica in the early 1990s and witnessed an outpouring of love and respect that was our way of expressing gratitude for his lifelong struggle for dignity and justice and of honoring all of the martyrs in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, including Biko, Tambo, Sisulu, Slovo, and Ruth First.

We join the Organization of American States in paying homage to Nelson Mandela and grieve together with the Government and people of South Africa and the family of the late President.

The saint is dead. Long live the saint!

Thank you.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador. I'm pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico. You have the floor, sir.

[Pausa.]

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE MÉXICO: Muchas gracias.

Madam Chair, Embajadora Deborah-Mae Lovell, saludamos y aplaudimos su iniciativa de celebrar esta sesión en homenaje a Nelson Mandela, así como también saludamos y aplaudimos la presencia y las emotivas palabras del Embajador Ebrahim Rasool.

México mantuvo invariablemente una oposición a la política del apartheid e, incluso, llevó en su momento, en 1974, al retiro del consulado honorario que mantenía en Sudáfrica. Para agradecer nuestro apoyo a su causa, Mandela visitó México después de su liberación en 1991 y en el año 2010 le fue conferida la máxima Orden del Águila Azteca.

Con la partida de Nelson Mandela se va también una parte importante del siglo XX, ciertamente un siglo lleno de catástrofes y de calamidades, pero gracias al paso de hombres y mujeres como Mandela, un siglo también lleno de esperanza.

El gran sabio Madiba ha dejado un mundo en donde pasó veintisiete años encadenado y con grilletes y al que le dio, a cambio, posiblemente la más grande lección de libertad y de perdón jamás escrita. En 1964, durante el juicio que finalmente lo llevaría a la cárcel, sintetizó él en una frase el ideario político que nos legó:

He luchado contra la dominación blanca y he combatido la dominación negra. He promovido el ideal de una sociedad democrática y libre en la cual todas las personas puedan vivir en armonía y con igualdad de oportunidades. Es un ideal por el que espero vivir, pero si es necesario, es un ideal por el que estoy dispuesto a morir.

Por fortuna para Sudáfrica y para el mundo le correspondió vivir: vivir para poner fin al brutal régimen del apartheid; vivir para ser el primer Presidente negro de Sudáfrica; pero sobre todo, y en esto estriba su genialidad y grandeza, vivir para perdonar a sus agresores; vivir para gobernar con tolerancia y de esta manera lograr lo que se estimaba imposible: la convivencia y armonía social en su país.

Aunque no se conocieron en vida, resulta imposible no pensar en el paralelismo que hay entre Mandela y Martin Luther King. Casi al mismo tiempo que el líder sudafricano mencionaba la citada frase, el ícono de la lucha contra el racismo en los Estados Unidos decía aquí en esta ciudad y a los pies de la estatua de Lincoln:

Yo he soñado que un día, en los montes rojos de Georgia, los hijos de los antiguos esclavos y los hijos de los antiguos dueños de esclavos puedan sentarse juntos en la mesa de la hermandad.

Ambas frases, ambos discursos podrían haber sido pronunciadas por cualquiera de los dos, porque fueron, a la distancia, hermanos de credo, de lucha y de perdón.

Tantos años de racismo y de segregación, de dominación y de odio acumulado podían prever un conflicto inminente en Sudáfrica y, sin embargo, Nelson Mandela supo unir a un país con un discurso de perdón y de reconciliación, *a true masterpiece of statecraft and of human spirit*.

A partir de su lucha pacífica para abolir la segregación racial y lograr el perdón y la reconciliación en su nación, Nelson Mandela proyectó a una Sudáfrica incluyente. Por ello, el Premio Nobel de la Paz que recibió en 1993 representó el triunfo del espíritu humano sobre la desigualdad y la opresión.

En su discurso, el actual Presidente Sudafricano, Jacob Zuma, señaló: “Lo que hizo grande a Nelson Mandela fue precisamente lo que lo hizo humano. Vivimos en él lo que buscamos en nosotros”, un ejemplo de fortaleza y de humildad al tiempo que siempre tuvo claros sus ideales.

Rolihlahla fue el nombre tribal y original de Nelson Mandela, que significa coloquialmente “el perturbador”, término acertadísimo para quien perturbó las conciencias de millones de seres humanos, demostrando sin importar edad, raza, sexo, religión o nacionalidad, que la paz, la unidad y la igualdad son posibles.

Como señaló el Presidente Enrique Peña Nieto en los recientes funerales de Mandela, la mejor manera de honrar su memoria es continuar trabajando incansablemente en la lucha contra la desigualdad y, agregaría, contra la opresión y cualquier forma de esclavitud o sometimiento. Cuando Mandela liberó a Sudáfrica, también liberó moralmente al mundo.

Descanse en paz, Nelson Mandela.

Gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador of Mexico. I am pleased now to give the floor to the Delegation of Bolivia.

La REPRESENTANTE ALTERNA DE BOLIVIA: Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta. Buenos días tengan todos ustedes.

Permítannos unirnos a las palabras expresadas por el Coordinador de ALADI, el Embajador Roy Chaderton, y agradecer muy especialmente la presencia del Embajador de Sudáfrica ante los Estados Unidos. También deseamos reconocer el valor de sus sentidas y profundas palabras en esta ocasión.

“Los verdaderos líderes deben estar dispuestos a sacrificarlo todo por la libertad de su pueblo” dijo una vez el ex Presidente de Sudáfrica y líder mundial, Nelson Mandela. Pero no solo fueron palabras, Mandela vivió el sacrificio total al entregar su bien más preciado: su propia libertad por la libertad de su gente.

El Presidente del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, Evo Morales Ayma, expresó sus condolencias al pueblo y al Gobierno de Sudáfrica, al señalar que:

Los pobres y los antiimperialistas hemos perdido a un patrimonio de la humanidad, un patrimonio que era Nelson Mandela en esta lucha por la igualdad, dignidad, pero sobre todo por la paz. Mandela se fue, pero sus lecciones y mensajes quedaron para siempre, de eso no dudamos. Sus mensajes y luchas serán una guía para las nuevas generaciones que apuestan por la igualdad de los pueblos del mundo.

Las palabras y el tiempo siempre resultarán insuficientes para describir las extraordinarias virtudes de Nelson Mandela, destacándose dos de ellas: su integridad moral y su valentía heroica, las que lograron unir al pueblo sudafricano en paz.

Hoy rendimos homenaje a un hombre que desde su encierro hizo mucho más que millones de hombres en libertad y cuyo legado debemos tener presente en nuestras acciones y decisiones. Su capacidad de perdonar genuinamente a sus opresores y de acercarse a ellos a fin de construir una Sudáfrica unida conmovió e inspiró al mundo; superó a su propia naturaleza humana, sembrando perdón verdadero en su corazón y transformando el dolor y el sufrimiento que vivió por décadas en un motor para alcanzar su más grande anhelo: la libertad e igualdad de la Sudáfrica que él tanto amaba.

Esto no solo dejó un ejemplo de compasión y grandeza sin precedentes para los líderes políticos del mundo entero, sino que sentó una lección de vida para toda la humanidad. A diario todas y todos sufrimos las consecuencias negativas de la falta del perdón, del rencor, del orgullo, del individualismo y de la ambición desmedida. Si nos esforzáramos aunque fuera solo un poco por seguir el ejemplo de Nelson Mandela, canalizando lo negativo hacia lo positivo, podríamos convertir al mundo en algo cercano a un hogar.

Nelson Mandela fue, sobre todas las cosas, un hombre de paz que durante su vida se negó, a pesar de las más difíciles circunstancias, a emprender cualquier acción violenta en contra de otros, liderando el movimiento de resistencia más combatido y reprimido de los tiempos modernos con humildad e inteligencia. Bolivia pudo beneficiarse de manera directa de la sabiduría y experiencia de este gran líder mundial durante la preparación de su Asamblea Constituyente el año 2006. En esa ocasión, de la manera más generosa, el Presidente Mandela compartió con los representantes bolivianos su conocimiento y visión, mostrándoles el camino a seguir.

Hoy, sobre la base de su legado, construimos un Estado sin racismo y sin discriminación. Mandela representa para Bolivia y para otros pueblos la certeza de que es posible derrumbar las estructuras de segregación racial no importando a cuánto tiempo atrás se remonte y cuán hondo hayan calado en las mentes de las personas.

El pueblo sudafricano llora hoy la pérdida de su padre y en estos momentos difíciles el pueblo y el Gobierno de Bolivia están con él. Estamos seguros de que Sudáfrica honrará la memoria de Nelson Mandela, de Madiba. Cuando enfrenten algún desafío pensarán en lo que él habría hecho y encontrarán la mejor salida.

En nuestra Organización hagamos que esos pensamientos no solo sean del pueblo sudafricano, hagamos que sean nuestros pensamientos también. Honremos todos el legado de Nelson Mandela, pensando y haciendo lo que él haría en este mundo ahora en que ya no está con nosotros.

Que descanse en paz.

Muchas gracias, Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Bolivia. The Chair is now pleased to give the floor to the Delegation of Colombia. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DE COLOMBIA: Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

Acogiendo su solicitud de que seamos breves, queremos agradecerle a usted, al señor Secretario General Adjunto y muy especialmente al señor Embajador de Sudáfrica por la iniciativa de convocar esta sesión. Hacemos llegar a la familia de don Nelson Mandela y a todo el pueblo sudafricano nuestro más profundo sentimiento de admiración, aprecio y congoja en este momento.

Creo, señora Presidenta, que encontrar palabras en este momento que no se hayan dicho en este recinto o a nivel mundial es casi imposible para poder hablar y describir a ese joven de noventa y cinco años que nos dejó y a quien el periodista John Carlin definió como “poseedor de la sonrisa más hermosa del mundo”.

Solo voy a citar las palabras que mencionó el Presidente de Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, ahora cuando el señor Embajador de Sudáfrica presentaba esa imagen viva y de cómo el ejemplo de un hombre inspirador es aplicado en un país en este momento y en la coyuntura actual por la que está atravesando Colombia:

Hoy cuando nos ha dejado un gran hombre, ese símbolo de la libertad y la tolerancia que fue Nelson Mandela, los invito a reflexionar sobre una de sus muchas frases inspiradoras: Es muy fácil romper y destruir, los héroes son aquellos que hacen la paz y construyen.

Sobre ese tema retomo las comillas y la frase del Presidente Santos:

Seamos héroes. Seamos de aquellos que hacen la paz y construyen. Empujemos juntos, construyamos juntos un entorno de convivencia, de diálogo y de reconciliación, de verdad y perdón, donde nunca más nos matemos los hijos de una misma nación por el solo hecho de pensar diferente.

Esas fueron las frases del Presidente Juan Manuel Santos muy inspiradas en el ejemplo grande de Madiba. Creemos que no hay mejor forma de homenaje a esa figura inmensa de Nelson Mandela que la posibilidad de aplicarlas a la paz y a la reconciliación en Colombia.

Gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Delegation of Colombia. The Chair is now pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Saint Lucia. You have the floor, madam.

La REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE SANTA LUCÍA: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ambassador Rasool, sir, let me thank you for sharing your inspirational thoughts with us today.

Although the Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago has spoken on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I am moved today, Madam Chair, to take the floor to join with the rest of the world, on behalf of the Government and people of Saint Lucia, in mourning the loss of President Nelson Mandela, but also to pay tribute to one of the greatest heroes and leaders of our time.

Mandela is a symbol of unity and humility, as well as triumph over diversity, to all peoples around the globe. President Mandela's struggle for freedom defined his life. That very life, in turn, serves as an inspiration to us all. His contribution to democracy and to the building of a new South Africa, his passionate belief in the goodness of humanity, his unrelenting struggle for equal rights and justice, as well as his unwavering respect and love for all peoples, make the death of this iconic leader a loss to the world. In Madiba, we saw a quiet dignity and grace that touched all those who bore witness to his struggles.

Madam Chair, Nelson Mandela visited Saint Lucia in 1998 and attended the 19th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and I had the great honor of being introduced to him. I'm willing and happy to boast about that! Perhaps the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia expressed our country's love and respect for this great man in the best possible way when he said to the gathered heads of government:

Four hundred years ago, Africa came to the island in the form of slaves; tonight, Africa returns in the person of Nelson Mandela: Sentenced for life, but not condemned forever. Prisoner for 27 years but never imprisoned in spirit; the captive who finally set his captors free. . . . We have, in our midst, a man whose elemental qualities have so captured the conscience of an age that his name and his example will always be synonymous with dignity, justice, and honor. There is no other person who by example can inspire us to face the challenges of the future. President Mandela stands as the international image of resistance to oppression and discrimination. President Mandela provides testimony to the capacity of humanity to forgive transgressions in the pursuit of the higher ideals of love, respect, and dignity of mankind.

And speaking directly to President Mandela, the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia stated:

President Mandela, your life and work is an affirmation of the righteousness of believing in the principles of national self-determination and justice. Your wise counsel has enhanced our confidence in the process of accountability, morality in public affairs, the safeguarding of democracy, and the securing of the rights of the individual as the basis for any modern society. Your presence has brought to our community a rainbow of goodwill.

I do not despair for the future of the region. The people of the region cannot ask for an inspiration greater than you. The political leadership of the region cannot search for a motivation greater than you. Your life and work will continue to serve us as we face the future.

Madam Chair, the people of Saint Lucia honored in Nelson Mandela in life, as we shall continue to do in his passing. He was the larger-than-life figure who possessed a quiet dignity, peace, and grace. As I pay tribute to him today, let us all embrace the principles he espoused and recognize, as stated by the Governor-General of Saint Lucia, that "his life will long remain as a most powerful example of man's humanity to man."

To follow in his footsteps is not simply to pay tribute, Madam Chair, but we must also lift our drooping hands, strengthen our weak knees, and make straight paths for our feet so that what is lame, as far as we are concerned, may not be put out of joint, but, rather, be healed.

I thank you.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you so very much, Ambassador of Saint Lucia. I am now pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Argentina. Madam, you have the floor.

La REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE LA ARGENTINA: Ha muerto Nelson Mandela, un grande, un revolucionario capaz no solo de fundar su nación y asegurar un futuro a su pueblo sino también de transmitir al mundo un mensaje de dignidad, de ética, de coraje y de compromiso con la libertad, la igualdad y la justicia. Su activa militancia; la valentía de su denuncia del racismo, de la discriminación y del colonialismo; la construcción del Congreso Nacional Africano, la fuerza política que sería el instrumento para la convocatoria de miles y miles de hombres y mujeres que abrazaron la causa de la libertad llevaron a sus enemigos a condenarlo a prisión perpetua y trabajos forzados bajo el cargo de terrorismo.

Pasó en la cárcel en condiciones muy duras durante veintisiete años de su vida, rechazando en tres ocasiones libertades que le imponían limitaciones a su lucha. Él sabía que luchar contra los intereses poderosos tenía su precio y decidió pagarlo si era necesario para construir el ideal de una sociedad democrática y libre en la que se pudiera vivir en armonía y con igualdad de oportunidades. Dijo entonces Mandela: “Esa sociedad es un ideal para el que quiero vivir y al que quiero alcanzar, pero si fuera necesario es un ideal por el cual estoy dispuesto a morir”.

Afortunadamente no fue necesario y esos años difíciles, seguramente insoportables, agregaron a su capacidad de acción su coraje y su liderazgo, también capacidad de reflexión y de generar ideas, serenidad y habilidad política y una profunda visión estratégica que, cuando obtuvo su libertad, derrotado el apartheid, le permitió fundar la Sudáfrica de hoy, una democracia multirracial donde se respetan los derechos y libertades de los negros tanto como los derechos y libertades de los blancos.

Derrotar la desigualdad fue otro de sus permanentes objetivos y sobre esto decía Mandela: “La pobreza no es natural, es creada por el hombre y puede superarse y erradicarse mediante acciones de los seres humanos, y erradicar la pobreza no es un gesto de caridad, es un acto de justicia”.

La muerte no nos priva del todo de Mandela porque su ejemplo, su compromiso, su dignidad, su capacidad de transformación de una realidad perversa y sus ideas no solo se quedan con nosotros, sus contemporáneos, sino que iluminarán el camino de las futuras generaciones de Sudáfrica y del mundo todo.

En nombre de mi país, Argentina, y de mi pueblo, sentido homenaje a Nelson Mandela.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Delegation of Brazil. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE INTERINO DEL BRASIL: Obrigado, Senhora Presidente.

Antes de mais nada, gostaríamos de agradecer a presença do Embaixador da República da África do Sul e suas tocantes palavras. Gostaria, também, de me desculpar com o nosso Coordenador Regional, o Embaixador da Venezuela, mas realmente acredito que o legado de Nelson Mandela vale bem essa minha indisciplina.

Dito isto, Senhora Presidente, eu gostaria de lembrar que estamos aqui reunidos hoje, neste Conselho Permanente, para reverenciar o legado de um dos maiores líderes do século XX e, por que não dizer, do século XXI também, e para nos inclinar perante a grandeza de Nelson Mandela. Quaisquer palavras serão insuficientes para prestar homenagem à altura desse homem, para expressar a infinita admiração pelo exemplo de Mandela, o exemplo que ele representa na busca pela libertação do ser humano.

Para fazer jus a seu legado, acredito que esta homenagem deve reconhecer, sobretudo, Mandela como homem de ação, homem que liderou pelo exemplo, pela atitude perseverante e pela demonstração da força de seu caráter, que se provou muito superior ao poder e à força bruta de seus adversários.

Sua capacidade de perdoar e sua decisão, ou opção, de não buscar vingança foi tão sublime que o coloca mais além de nossa mera condição de seres humanos.

Como Mandela disse certa vez, sua luta não foi contra a dominação branca, não foi contra o *apartheid*. Sua luta foi contra qualquer tipo de dominação.

Como líder dessa luta no processo de emancipação do povo sul-africano, teve a rara chance de tornar-se Chefe de Estado, e soube evitar as tentações do poder. Compreendeu o que, muitas vezes entre nós, não parece ser claro. Saber abrir mão do poder e conquistar o coração dos cidadãos é a melhor garantia para se consolidar uma obra.

A inspiração de seu exemplo é particularmente forte porque Mandela não se dizia imaculado, não se colocava acima do bem e do mal. Ao contrário, se mostrava como um homem real admitia seus erros e a sua própria natureza humana. A inspiração que nos traz reside justamente na possibilidade de nos reconhecermos em seu exemplo, no caráter humano de suas lutas, na fraternidade de suas atitudes, e na percepção de que podemos ser seres humanos melhores, de que podemos construir sociedades melhores.

Nelson Mandela inspirou muitas lutas ao redor do mundo, e inclusive aqui em nosso Continente, pela liberdade, pela igualdade, pela justiça, e ensinou que a busca da verdade e do perdão devem ser pilares para a reconciliação, lição que certamente ressoa com força em nossos países no enfrentamento de nossos conflitos e desafios.

Que o seu legado possa continuar a iluminar nossos caminhos, no fortalecimento de nossas democracias e na luta pela justiça social.

Muito obrigado.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Delegation of Brazil. I am pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Saint Kitts and Nevis. You have the floor, madam.

La REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE SAINT KITTS Y NEVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Distinguished ambassadors and alternates; I wish to align myself with the words spoken on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) group by Ambassador Neil Parsan of Trinidad and Tobago. I also want to recognize Ambassador Rasool of the Republic of South Africa.

I want first to quote from a poem that was written about Nelson Mandela, in which his life in apartheid South Africa was equated with living in an inferno. He used that very fire to light a path to greater excellence and freedom.

Up from the depths of raging fires
Where hope burned endlessly,
Never to forget the woes he lived,
Scorched into memory.
A soul so strong survived the blast,
Clenched fist just barely raised
With purpose steadfast, full resolve
Still untouched by the blaze.

From 'midst the ruins of broken lives,
Cut down before the noontime of their day
Over bodies cold forevermore
His spirit stumbled on its way.
The fires burned within his soul
The spark ignited his will
It was not lost
The fight won't die
It was his duty still!

Saint Kitts and Nevis thanks Madiba—thanks South Africa—for the fact that Nelson Mandela recognized the role that was thrust upon him. We are eternally grateful for the humility and the dignity with which he compassionately carried forth the duty that was his and his alone.

I firmly believe that there is no one like Madiba in this century. It will be a long time before this world sees someone else who truly epitomizes brotherly world citizenship as Mandela did as he emerged from prison.

May I also quote from a statement by the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis on behalf of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis:

For much of the twentieth century, people of goodwill across cultures and religions, nationalities and time zones, used whatever means they had at their disposal to hasten the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Here in the Caribbean, governments and people, athletic, artistic, and other concerns remained steadfast in our support of black majority in South Africa as they fought to secure the rights that so many across the world had long taken for granted—the right to vote, the

right to live and work anywhere in the land of their birth unimpeded, the right to equal protection under the law.

Central to this Caribbean—and indeed global—outpouring of support were the African National Congress leaders wrongly imprisoned at Robben Island. And emblematic of the courage and determination of those courageous prisoners and the cause of black South Africa was Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Xhosa son of the Thembu Royal Family, whose brave and unbreakable spirit gave hope to his people, even as the apartheid régime strove to plunge them into deeper and more unrelenting despair. As remarkable as his courage was while in prison, however, even more so was his determination, upon his release from prison, to build up, as opposed to break down. Even more so was his insistence that all South Africans commit themselves to ensuring that stability, rather than chaos, become the hallmark of post-apartheid South Africa.

For this, the name of Nelson Mandela will live throughout the ages. Through this, he gave to leaders everywhere a governance model worthy of emulation. And from this, the people of the new, democratic South Africa have benefited and continue to benefit greatly.

On behalf of the Government and people of Saint Kitts and Nevis, I extend deepest sympathy to the family of Nelson Mandela and to the people of South Africa, whose now non-racial democracy will be forever indebted to the great man and the great spirit the world has come to know as Nelson Mandela.

We are humbled by his example. We are most thankful for his life.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Thank you.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador of Saint Kitts and Nevis. I am now pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Guatemala.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE GUATEMALA: Gracias, señora Presidenta.

Muy buenos días, señor Secretario General Adjunto; señor Ebrahim Rasool, Embajador de la República de Sudáfrica en los Estados Unidos; estimadas delegaciones:

A pesar de compartir el mensaje en nombre de la coordinación del Sistema de Integración Centroamericana (SICA), que fuera presentado por el Representante Permanente de Belize, la ocasión que hoy nos reúne es de tal magnitud que obliga romper el protocolo convenido para una muy breve intervención por parte de esta Delegación.

La República de Guatemala ya ha expresado oficialmente las condolencias al Gobierno y pueblo de Sudáfrica por el fallecimiento del Presidente Nelson Mandela. El 5 de diciembre se dio inicio a una nueva etapa del legado de este gran ser humano.

Las intervenciones anteriores han descrito extensamente las calidades humanas de quien hoy conmemoramos. Nos sumamos fácilmente a las menciones y reconocimientos expresados con

admiración por el impacto que su convicción y vida generaron no solo en su patria sino en el mundo entero. Sin lugar a dudas, la humanidad entera puede encontrar inspiración en el ejemplo de vida del Presidente Mandela, quien a sus cuarenta y seis años inició un cautiverio en defensa de sus ideales de igualdad y libertad. La isla de Robben lo tuvo retenido y tras su liberación en 1990, al ser inquirido sobre cómo era posible que después de su cautiverio no existiese en él odio o deseo de venganza, su lacónica respuesta fue: estaba ocupado preparándome. Vaya lección de humildad la que Nelson Mandela ha dado a la humanidad.

En las condiciones más adversas que se puedan imaginar para un líder político, aprovechó las mismas para construir y fortalecer sus convicciones que con perdón y profundidad, en el entendimiento de la naturaleza humana y de sus aspiraciones, permitieron con su ejemplo y con su Presidencia entre 1994 y 1999 la transformación de la realidad política de su país, y con eso también el cambio en el mundo entero. El ejemplo de su vida nos deja a todos el compromiso de edificar sobre su legado de cómo su memoria vivirá en la historia de la humanidad como uno de los grandes líderes que demostró que el poder de las ideas y el compromiso de vida de un solo ser humano es suficiente para mover al mundo entero.

Ocupémonos todos ahora en seguir el ejemplo de Nelson Mandela, en hacer de este mundo un mundo mejor. Que su alma descanse en paz y desde donde se encuentre siga siendo luz y guía para la humanidad. Guatemala rinde homenaje a su legado.

Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Honduras. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE HONDURAS: Gracias, señora Presidenta, Su Excelencia Embajador Ebrahim Rasool.

Celio Álvarez Casildo es un distinguido hondureño que ostenta el cargo de Secretario Ejecutivo de la Plataforma Cumbre Mundial de Afrodescendientes, quien me ha hecho llegar el mensaje enviado al mundo por su organización con motivo del sensible fallecimiento de Nelson Mandela. En esta ocasión en que el Consejo Permanente rinde homenaje a su memoria, a nombre de la Representación de Honduras me permito compartirlo con todos, agradeciendo la intervención del señor Representante de Belize, Nestor Mendez, a nombre del SICA, a quien le solicito disculpas por la indisciplina, como lo mencionara el Representante del Brasil:

Nelson Mandela, más alto que la esperanza, guerrero de las mil batallas que se unió al enorme ejército de los invencibles, a nuestros ancestros que nunca duermen, no se cansan, no lloran, siempre atentos alimentando el espíritu para doblegar las injusticias, la discriminación, el empobrecimiento. Nos enseñó a reconocer el camino de la lucha por la libertad, el amor por la humanidad y la solidaridad entre los pueblos.

Nelson Mandela no ha muerto. Es él una singular estrella cuyo brillo es infinito. África, Sudáfrica, la madre tierra llora, sonrío, canta, medita y se abraza a tu recuerdo y energía inagotable. Hasta pronto, gran maestro, gloria eterna a tu memoria.

Gracias, distinguida Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador of Honduras. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Delegation of Ecuador. You have the floor.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DEL ECUADOR: Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

Buenos días a todos y vaya un saludo especial al Embajador de Sudáfrica por su presencia y por sus palabras.

Mi Delegación se suma plenamente a lo dicho por el Embajador de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, en nombre de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración (ALADI) y en su capacidad nacional, desea manifestar el profundo sentimiento de dolor que tiene el Gobierno del Ecuador por la muerte de Nelson Mandela, cuyo legado es enorme. A lo largo de su vida luchó de manera sostenida contra la discriminación y la opresión racial. Fue un hombre extraordinario, un amigo de la humanidad.

En el Ecuador no olvidaremos su lucha contra el apartheid, pero no por la división sino por acercar a su pueblo. Fue un hombre que, después de veintisiete años de sufrir la cárcel y la segregación, fue capaz de perdonar, de incluir. Es un ejemplo maravilloso. En su ausencia deberían todos velar porque su lucha sea conocida y sostenida. El ejemplo de Madiba nos conmueve para seguir trabajando en la construcción de una sociedad más justa, solidaria e incluyente.

Tal como lo mencionó el señor Presidente de la República del Ecuador, el economista Rafael Correa Delgado, Mandela es un ejemplo de vida, de justicia y de fe renovada en la humanidad.

Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Representative of Ecuador. I am pleased to give the floor to the Delegation of Peru. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DEL PERÚ: Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

Mis primeras palabras son para agradecerle a usted, señora Presidenta, por esta valiosa iniciativa que nos permite participar en este homenaje a un gran hombre, a una figura que está construyendo las sociedades que tenemos en el siglo XXI. Quisiera también agradecer al Embajador Rasool por esas conmovedoras e inspiradoras palabras en las que nos ha dado todas las características y dimensiones de esta figura que es más amplia que la vida.

Nuestras palabras van a ser cortas porque nuestro Coordinador regional habló por todos nosotros. Pero también nuestra Delegación quiere complementar y ser de alguna manera un poco indisciplinada porque queremos decir que el señor Mandela es una figura como las grandes figuras de la humanidad que nos presentaron que el cambio social y la lucha por la justicia se pueden lograr también con la mano tendida, con la reconciliación y con la tolerancia y el perdón.

Creo que Nelson Mandela se levantó ante unas creaciones más crueles e injustas de la humanidad y lo deplorable lo convirtió en sublime. Esa es la gran contribución de Nelson Mandela con todos nosotros. Es que él nos da esperanzas de que se puede construir un mundo mejor, sostenible en el tiempo y de amplia participación, de respeto a la diversidad y que la discriminación ha sido

absolutamente dejada de lado por el sacrificio de toda una vida, que es lo que nosotros quisiéramos reconocer.

El Perú quiere agradecer a Madiba por darnos esperanzas, porque puede haber un mundo mejor con liderazgo como el que él nos demostró.

Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Delegation of Peru. The Chair is now pleased to give the floor to the Delegation of Chile. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DE CHILE: Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta. Parece que somos varios los indisciplinados acá.

Quiero agradecer al Embajador de Sudáfrica por su presencia y por sus palabras.

El hecho de ser indisciplinado y de ser uno de los últimos en hablar me permite ser breve y focalizarme en un elemento que creo que es fundamental, que es la virtud del perdón que tenía este gran hombre, Nelson Mandela, un perdón que no fue hueco y vacío, un perdón que fue transformador y que permitió reconciliar a la nación de Sudáfrica. Un perdón que nos expresa solamente en palabras o en escritos, un perdón que es capaz de ver en sus enemigos, en aquellos que lo torturaron, lo encarcelaron y lo reprimieron también víctimas de un sistema que le permitió sentarse en la misma mesa y tratarlos como iguales, como hermanos. Este es un elemento que tenemos que reconocer en este gran hombre, que permitió transformar a su gran nación en la nación que es hoy en día.

Recuerdo cuando fui recién ingresado en el servicio exterior de mi país, en los años noventa, cuando me tocó atender a una Comisión de Reconciliación de Sudáfrica, que vino a mi país para ver qué era lo que habíamos hecho nosotros. Me tocó, en el ámbito protocolar, acompañar a dicha Comisión a varias reuniones. Sin embargo, hoy en día puedo decir que somos nosotros los que tenemos que aprender de ese perdón que fue capaz de reconciliar a todo un pueblo después de haber estado dividido profundamente.

Por eso queremos agradecer este legado que nos deja este gran hombre, Nelson Mandela, y agradecerle a usted por haber podido estar acá para expresarse sobre dicho legado.

Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Delegation of Chile. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Dominican Republic. You have the floor, madam.

La REPRESENTANTE ALTERNA DE LA REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA: Muchas gracias.

Señora Presidenta, señor Secretario General Adjunto y señor Embajador de Sudáfrica en los Estados Unidos, deseo manifestar mis disculpas y mi agradecimiento al Embajador de Belize. Mi Delegación se une al mensaje que él ha expresado en nombre del Sistema de Integración Centroamericana (SICA).

Igualmente deseo unirme a las expresiones de condolencias por la pérdida de una figura tan relevante de la historia moderna. Se han visto reflejados en este homenaje póstumo a Nelson Mandela nuestra admiración por sus años de lucha y por el legado que nos dejó.

Señora Presidenta, tras conocerse la noticia del fallecimiento del ex Presidente Nelson Mandela, el Presidente Danilo Medina declaró tres días de duelo oficial en la República Dominicana. Con dicha declaratoria el Gobierno dominicano rindió homenaje póstumo a un hombre ejemplar que alcanzó la trascendencia universal por su actividad política, por su obra de estadista y por ser un luchador por la libertad y la igualdad.

Concluyo mi intervención dando lectura a la carta del Presidente Medina al Presidente Jacob Zuma.

En nombre del Gobierno, del pueblo de la República Dominicana y en el mío propio, reciba las más sinceras expresiones de condolencia por el sentido fallecimiento del ex Presidente de esa nación, Nelson Mandela, Premio Nóbel de la Paz 1993.

Deseamos, por su intermedio, extender nuestro solidario pesar al pueblo sudafricano y de manera especial a su viuda Graça Machel, a sus hijas Zenani y Zindiswa Mandela, nietos y demás familiares.

Nelson Mandela fue un héroe en la lucha por la implantación de la democracia multirracial en su Sudáfrica, producida con su elección en 1994, como primer Presidente negro de ese país, tras el desmantelamiento del sistema segregacionista del apartheid al que combatió valientemente durante sesenta y siete años.

La historia le recordará como un tenaz pacifista que a lo largo de su vida siempre colocó la reconciliación como una de sus mayores prioridades.

Rogamos a Dios por el eterno descanso de su alma y para que alivie la tristeza que afecta a sus seres queridos.

Muchas gracias.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Dominican Republic. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Costa Rica. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE COSTA RICA: Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

Excelentísimo señor Embajador de Sudáfrica, Embajador Rasool; distinguido señor Secretario General Adjunto; distinguidas colegas y distinguidos colegas:

Yo también pido disculpas al Coordinador, el Presidente Pro t mpore del Grupo del Sistema de Integraci n Centroamericana (SICA), Embajador Nestor Mendez.

Algunas de estas palabras pensaba decirlas en la sesi n que se iba a dedicar a los derechos humanos, pero al posponerse esta solo quiero hacer una r pida menci n. En este sentido homenaje a

Nelson Mandela, un hombre cuya dimensión es inagotable en todos los aspectos, deseo señalar en esta rapidísima intervención que un costarricense, don Fernando Volio Jiménez, contribuyó en su tiempo como Embajador de Costa Rica ante la Organización de las Naciones Unidas a diseñar lo que se denominó la política en contra del apartheid.

Don Fernando Volio, quien en 1996 fue invitado por el Presidente José María Figueres Olsen a acompañarlo a Sudáfrica, se reunió con don Nelson Mandela y le entregó su libro *El Apartheid*. Con don Fernando, discúlpenme la mención personal, tuve la suerte de estar siempre muy cerca. Y aquí hay una nota también con matices sentimentales.

Al regresar a Costa Rica sumamente emocionado y muy enfermo, don Fernando falleció. La última carta que escribió antes de su muerte, precisamente comentando algunos de estos aspectos, se la dirigió a este servidor. Don Fernando conoció a Nelson Mandela, quien desde luego, con la información que poseía, sabía a quién tenía al frente. El ex Presidente Mandela agradeció la lucha permanente de don Fernando Volio, pudiendo este partir a la eternidad con el consuelo de haber conocido a esta figura, repito una vez más, de dimensiones ilimitadas en todos los aspectos.

Muchas gracias.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of Haiti. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE HAITÍ: Merci Madame la Présidente.

Je voudrais d'abord remercier l'Ambassadeur de Trinité-et-Tobago qui a pris la parole au nom de tous les pays de la CARICOM, pour saluer la mémoire de ce grand homme qu'est Nelson Mandela.

Mais je pense que c'est aussi important, puisque tout le monde se donne à cœur joie, en ce grand moment et pour Haïti aussi, de prendre la parole pour saluer la mémoire de Nelson Mandela ; donc je demande à l'Ambassadeur Parsan de bien vouloir m'en excuser. Et je tiens aussi à saluer la présence parmi nous de l'Ambassadeur de l'Afrique du Sud.

Madame la Présidente, c'est avec un esprit empreint d'humilité et aussi avec une grande fierté que je joins ma voix à celle de la communauté des peuples et de tous les défenseurs de la démocratie pour rendre un hommage et saluer la mémoire à jamais vivante de Nelson Mandela.

Le nom de Mandela résonne avec courage, lutte pour l'égalité, la justice et l'émancipation. Il est le leader dans le combat qui aura le plus marqué le XX^{ème} siècle et ouvert la voie à un monde plus humain. Le combat de Mandela a été un combat universel. Sa vie a symbolisé un engagement pour l'égalité entre tous, quelque soit la couleur de sa peau.

La vie de Mandela a été entièrement dédiée à la justice, au respect des droits de la personne, à la démocratie. Une personne, un vote, réclamait-il pour son peuple. Mais ce faisant, ces exigences ont irrigué la lutte pour la démocratie dans tous les recoins du monde.

Je ne saurai donc insister assez sur ce que la voix de Mandela a signifié pour la lutte contre l'oppression et les inégalités dans les Amériques et notamment pour Haïti.

Permettez, Madame la Présidente que j'ose faire un parallèle entre les idéaux qui ont animé la révolution haïtienne et le combat de Mandela. Déjà au XVIII^{ème} siècle, les noirs de la partie occidentale de l'île Hispaniola se révoltaient contre le système esclavagiste qui maintenait l'homme noir dans les conditions d'esclave. Au XX^{ème} siècle Mandela a réalisé la grande prouesse de libérer le peuple sud-africain du carcan de l'Apartheid. Tout comme la révolution en Haïti, le combat de Mandela, bien que mené dans un cadre national, a été un combat pour l'humanité en ce sens qu'il a permis à l'humain d'atteindre un niveau moral plus élevé dans le respect de la liberté et de la différence.

Le nom de Mandela résonne aujourd'hui dans tous les cœurs. Le plus bel hommage qu'on puisse rendre à cet homme universel consiste à maintenir son esprit vivant dans la pratique de nos institutions.

Aujourd'hui, je voudrais rappeler que Mandela était un profond démocrate dans les actes. Sa vie était l'exemple même de ce qu'il prêchait. Nous notons dans ce sens que Mandela n'a pas voulu garder le pouvoir dont il s'est séparé et après un seul mandat, alors qu'il avait la popularité pour se maintenir au pouvoir. Quel exemple d'humilité, de grandeur et quelle leçon de démocratie! Cette capacité de transcendance est l'effort que beaucoup de ceux qui vénèrent Mandela aujourd'hui doivent mettre en pratique dans nos démocraties.

L'exemple de Mandela demeurera une lanterne. Il a tracé la voie à suivre dans la lutte non seulement contre l'Apartheid, les discriminations et le problème de couleur, Nous devons le porter haut pour la démocratie, la justice, l'égalité, la fraternité. La promotion de l'égalité et de la justice est un devoir moral pour nous qui avons vécu au temps de Mandela et pour les générations à venir.

Merci.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you, Ambassador. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Delegation of Paraguay. You have the floor, madam.

La REPRESENTANTE ALTERNA DEL PARAGUAY: Gracias, señora Presidenta.

La Delegación del Paraguay celebra la iniciativa de convocar esta sesión especial para rendir homenaje a uno de los más grandes luchadores por la libertad, igualdad y dignidad de todos sus compatriotas sudafricanos, Nelson Mandela.

La lucha y los logros de Mandela trascienden a su patria y constituyen su legado a la humanidad. Como estadista demócrata también dio él un ejemplo al cumplir su mandato presidencial no aceptando su continuidad.

El Paraguay expresa en este foro su profundo dolor y manifiesta, en la persona del señor Embajador de Sudáfrica aquí presente, sus sentimientos de admiración a Nelson Mandela, quien liberó a su patria del oprobioso régimen de la segregación racial e instauró la reconciliación en la familia sudafricana.

Gracias.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Paraguay. The Chair is pleased to give the floor to the Ambassador of El Salvador. You have the floor, sir.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE EL SALVADOR: Muchas gracias, señora Presidenta.

Voy a ser muy breve. No quería quedarme sin esta oportunidad de manifestar nuestra solidaridad con el pueblo y Gobierno de Sudáfrica, representados aquí en la figura del señor Embajador de Sudáfrica ante los Estados Unidos.

Queridos Representantes, señores Observadores y amigos todos, solo quiero intervenir para mencionar un dato histórico muy importante en la vida de Centroamérica. En la época de la independencia, precisamente en el Acta de Independencia de 1821, hay una mención a África y ya nuestros próceres, quienes a lo mejor pensaban y soñaban con Mandela. Y sé que Mandela en algún momento soñaba con Centroamérica, soñaba con las libertades que en ella se daban.

Me permito leer respetuosamente el numeral cuarto del Acta de Independencia de Centroamérica, del 15 de septiembre de 1821: “Que el número de estos diputados sea en proporción de uno por cada quince mil individuos, sin excluir de la ciudadanía a los originarios de África”. O sea, ya pensábamos en África y eso es importante. ¿Por qué? Porque la figura de Mandela es universal.

Comparto todo lo que aquí se ha dicho sobre Mandela y no voy a hacer un relato más. Pero sí, de todo corazón vaya un saludo a Sudáfrica. Para completar todo lo que aquí se ha dicho, quisiera hacer una propuesta, aunque dicen que en las sesiones extraordinarias de los Consejos no se pueden hacer propuestas: que precisamente los países aquí representados, como un acto póstumo, coloquemos una placa de reconocimiento a Mandela en el Salón de los Héroes de esta Casa de las Américas. Creo, señor Secretario General Adjunto, que usted es la persona indicada para coordinar esa actividad en un futuro.

Muchas gracias. Un aplauso para Mandela. Yo creo que eso es importante.

[Aplausos.]

Gracias.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Ambassador of El Salvador, for the confidence reposed in the Chair. The final speaker is the Representative of Uruguay. You have the floor.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DEL URUGUAY: Gracias, señora Presidenta.

El Gobierno del Uruguay hizo llegar oportunamente al Gobierno y pueblo sudafricanos sus expresiones de inmensa admiración a la memoria de Nelson Mandela y su más profundo sentimiento de dolor y congoja ante la pérdida del ex Presidente de Sudáfrica, Premio Nobel y líder histórico sin tacha en la lucha por las libertades fundamentales de la humanidad. Artífice de la reconciliación de su país, Mandela vivirá siempre en la memoria de todos los que luchan por la paz, la igualdad, la democracia y la justicia social.

Nuestro Presidente, José Mujica, definió a Mandela como el hermano mayor de todos los luchadores sociales de nuestro tiempo. Mandela es para la humanidad un reservorio de los mejores y eternos valores para tratar de impulsar el amor a la vida.

Muchas gracias, Presidenta.

La PRESIDENTA: Thank you very much, Delegation of Uruguay.

The Chair fully accepts the breach of protocol because, as we said in the opening statement, how can we capture the sun and put it in a bottle? How can we stifle the need to pay tribute to so great a man, an icon, a citizen of the world?

And so, Ambassador Rasool, you have seen the love, admiration, and affection that have been given to your son of the soil and our citizen. On behalf of the members of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States and on my own behalf, may I thank you for being with us this morning. You have certainly enhanced our fellowship as we pay tribute to our Nelson Mandela. Thank you once again.

[Aplausos.]

I wish also to thank the Ambassador of Peru for his graciousness. He has kindly agreed that the tributes that would have been paid to him in this august hall be delayed until another occasion, since we will have the reception in the Hall of Heroes.

The agenda items that would have been included in the order of business of the regular meeting of the Permanent Council have been deferred to the meeting of December 18.

Once again, thank you for your presence, and thank you, Ambassador Rasool, for being with us today. Thank you.

ISBN 978-0-8270-6172-9