



Fact Sheet

President Chávez in His Own Words

From September 22-25, 2009, President Hugo Chávez visited New York for the 64th Meeting of the UN General Assembly. In his speech to the General Assembly, interactions with different groups and conversations with the press, he insisted on the need for increased cooperation between countries for the cause of global peace.

In this context, President Chávez outlined his vision concerning the possibility of developing a closer working relationship with the Obama administration, but without ignoring past aggressions against Venezuela such as the 2002 coup and current threats such as the use of seven Colombian bases by the U.S. military.

President Chávez called upon the Obama administration to join forces to fight poverty, environmental destruction and social injustice. He also asked President Obama to join him in abandoning military-led strategies and instead advocating for measures that promote global peace.

It was within this larger framework that President Chávez also addressed a number of concerns that have been raised internationally about Venezuela. Here we bring President Chavez's responses in his own words.

On High-Level Dialogue with the U.S.

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "We want relations based on respect – relations of peoples where we are respected...We want to be brothers and sisters. We want respect and equality. In my first government, I had good relations with the Clintons. I came to the White House. We met here in New York several times. We spoke on the phone. And I said to Obama and I said to Mrs. Clinton in

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and military presence and equipment and technology of war against our people. See? There are two Obamas; I want the Obama of peace, to him I extended my hand and that is the Obama that we truly want and that world needs, a true leader that promotes peace and understanding in the world."

UN Press Conference: "Obama, let's get together. For what? To together fight against hunger, against misery, against the effects of climate change and the causes, to save humanity."

UN Press Conference: "Now, look, I don't think that he's two-faced, no. I don't want to accuse him of anything personal. When we met there was mutual esteem and chemistry."

On Being 'Anti-American'

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "Yesterday, I walked a little bit in New York. And the Secret Service people have been very gracious, very efficient...very kind. We walked with them, and we saw a group of people, women, elderly people greeting us. I love America the way I like Russia, Venezuela, Argentina. Baseball, Yankee Stadium, Walt Whitman. I love those."

Trinidad, we want – I want to be as close with you as I was with Mr. Clinton."

On President Obama

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "There is an Obama that yesterday spoke of peace, of promoting peace as one of the main pillars of his foreign policy. I accept that call, and we join in Obama's call. But there is another Obama, the one who only recently accepted the installation of seven U.S. bases in Colombia, and in that sense that is another Obama, the Obama of war, of using force



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On Suspending Oil Shipments to the U.S.

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "If I didn't do it when Bush was in office, much less will I do it now. Even during the [2002] coup we kept our commitments, and we sent oil to our company here in the U.S. It's business. Now we are also sending oil to China, we are sending oil to Europe, the Caribbean and South America. Let me tell you something, Larry – our oil reserves will last 150 years, and when the majority's of the world's oil is depleted there will be but four other countries with available oil, including Russia, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The world will depend on us and we want to have the best possible relations and invest the right resources to sustain the world's great energy needs."

On Colombia's Conflict

Speech to the UN General Assembly: "Well, President Obama, let's search for peace in Colombia, in our dear and sister nation Colombia...There is a historic and ancient conflict in Colombia, and the UN should recognize it and investigate it and we should all extend our hands to Colombia to get them out – while respecting their sovereignty, of course – to get them out of the tragedy that the people live through. The UN could designate a peace commission for Colombia, and Venezuela is on hand to cooperate, as I am sure all the countries that want peace are."

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "We have given Colombia our affection, an open hand and our hearts. More than that, I feel Colombian myself and wants for Colombia what I want for Venezuela, because Colombia was originally part of Bolivar's grand country to which we all belong. I told Obama when he graciously approached me in Trinidad and Tobago that we should do something for peace in Colombia, we should open a commission for peace in Colombia."

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On a U.S. Military Presence in Colombia

Interview with The Nation's Greg Grandin: "The seven Colombian military bases. They are a threat to Venezuela. Why hasn't Obama – and today at the UN he listed all the steps he has taken [to improve relations with the rest of the world] – eliminated the Fourth Fleet? It was Bush that reestablished the Fourth Fleet, a threat to all of Latin America, with the commander of the fleet saying that its purpose was to patrol South America's rivers. We are all worried about this in Latin America, and each country has expressed concern in its own way, Venezuela, Bolivia, even Brazil. Now with these seven military bases, the Colombian conflict is going to be spilling out across South America. Hopefully Obama will listen to other voices, and not just repeat what the Pentagon says, those same advisors of Bush..."

On Supporting Colombia's FARC Rebels

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "No. Of course not. Never. What I support is peace in Colombia. Look, Larry, the only times I have met with rebel leaders is when the Colombian government asked me to. It was President Pastrana 10 years ago who wanted peace, and now President Uribe asked me to receive some rebels and I did because I am seeking peace. My desire in Colombia is for peace, and I ask for help from this country to achieve it."

On a Venezuelan 'Arms Race'

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "Larry, for a long time, Venezuela has bought these F-16 planes manufactured in the United States. They do not sell us, however, the spare parts. So most of them cannot fly. Transportation planes – you don't sell us the spare parts; also, surveillance planes to fight against drug trafficking. The U.S. government does not sell us the spare parts. So



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we've had to look for other options to maintain a minimum of defense capacities. Now, let me tell you this, Larry, in Venezuela, our defense budget – and pay attention and I'll tell you this. Our defense budget is one of the lowest of the whole hemisphere. You know, Colombia has a very high defense budget thanks to the support of the U.S., the U.S. president, the Pentagon. Colombia has 10 times more expenditures in military weapons than Venezuela.”

“Seven U.S. military bases in Colombia, that is the real threat for Venezuela. We need to see that reality. The Colombian government, for example, bombed Ecuadorian territory more than a year ago under the pretext of preemptive war, the same pretext used by Israel to attack the Gaza Strip. Venezuela has the world's biggest oil reserves, and Venezuela has the right to defend itself. That's what we're doing. Who can criticize that? The U.S.? With what justification? That a country like Venezuela equips itself with the minimum tools of defense to protect the sovereignty of its territory, tell me if that's objectionable.”

On the Relationship with Iran

Interview with CNN's Larry King: “Well, we support each other and we have the right to do that...We are sovereign nations [and] we have an excellent cooperation relation in the field of health. We manufacture medicine, technology, technology transfer for food production in Venezuela; we're installing milk processing plants to develop agriculture, to produce food. Now, the internal situation in Iran is its internal situation, and I don't get involved in it.”

On the Government of Israel and Charges of Anti-Semitism

Interview with CNN's Larry King: “I respect the people of Israel, and I respect the Jewish people. In Venezuela there are many Jews and they are my friends; I have gone with them to pray, respecting their beliefs just as I

do Muslims. But one thing is the people of Israel and the Jewish people, the other is the people that govern there and kill people. Did you read the comments made by an Israeli soldier recently? He was regretting what they did in Gaza last December, shooting anything that moved. It was an order – women, children, the elderly. Peace, we just want peace.”

Interview with CNN's Larry King: “I don't deny the Jewish Holocaust. I condemn it!”

On Nuclear Energy

Interview with CNN's Larry King: “We have signed with Russia, with President Medvedev, an agreement to develop nuclear energy in Venezuela. Nuclear energy, that is not an atomic bomb. Who was the one who developed the atomic bomb? The U.S., and then came other countries. Now we're going to develop it for medical science and for energy purposes the way many other countries do, like Brazil, Argentina and France. Someday oil will run out, Larry. You won't see it, neither will I. But your grandchildren and mine will see it. For a world without oil it is necessary to invest resources and technology in developing alternative sources, and nuclear energy is an alternative source.”

On Climate Change

Speech to the UN General Assembly: “We doing away with our planet, let's recognize this and be conscientious and act as President Lula demanded yesterday. Lula said, 'On climate change there is no political will, the developed world does not want to make decisions.' Obama said he would, that now the U.S. would make decisions. Do so, President Obama, do so and turn words into action; let's save the planet, let's save the human race. Venezuela is ready to heed any decisions, and we make a call that decisions be made, for each country proportional to their responsibilities.”



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On Honduras

Interview with The Nation's Greg Grandin: "In Honduras, they had a sham democracy. It was run by elites, what was called a liberal democracy but in reality was a false democracy. Honduras has been governed by a small group that for a long time has been supported by the United States, which used Honduras as a military base against other countries of Central America, against Cuba, turning the country into a colony. Manuel Zelaya came from the ranks of the Liberal Party, he entered the government as an intelligent young man, breathing in the new winds blowing from South America, the winds of change, I would say even winds of revolution. It is different from the revolution of the 1970s. This one is carried out not with rifles but by a peaceful people, it is a democratic revolution. Montesquieu said that men needed to be able to ride the wave of events. And that's what Zelaya did. With his cowboy hat he climbed up and rode the wave. And as soon as he broached the question of convening a constitutional assembly to consult with the people about refounding the republic, the political class that has governed all this time, the Honduran bourgeoisie, became frightened. That is the fear of democracy."

On the Fight for Social Justice in Venezuela

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "When I became president, poverty in Venezuela was almost 60 percent. Today, it's below 30. We met the [UN Millennium Development Goals]. Extreme poverty was 24 percent, now it's seven percent, and it keeps on going down. Unemployment was close to 20 percent. Now it's close to six percent, better than the U.S. We have improved employment...and child mortality has improved. We have a health care system that's taking care of 15 million inhabitants and there's free distribution of food, donated to the poor people. Venezuela has changed in a dramatic fashion."

Interview with The Nation's Greg Grandin: "The standard of living has risen in Venezuela and according to the measures used by the United Nations Development Program we are in the top rank of human development. We are far from our goals, but we have left the inferno. Attention to the excluded, literacy, Venezuela is now a territory free of illiteracy. Poverty has been halved from it was ten years ago, which was one of the Millennium Goals. Access to potable water, we passed that Millennium goal a long time ago. In education, we have doubled the number of children going to school."

On the Venezuelan Media

UN Press Conference: "I was born in Venezuela and grew up in Venezuela in these 55 years of mine, and never has Venezuela enjoyed the freedom of expression it does now."

Interview with CNN's Larry King: "There are laws, and you accept that laws exist. If I have a car and I drive the wrong way down streets in New York, surely I'd be pulled over. If I wanted to drive on a New York City street at 140

kilometers per hour, surely they'd pull me over and take away my license. This is what's happening in Venezuela. There are laws, and those that violate them lose their right to use the public broadcast spectrum. But there are hundreds of TV and radio stations."

On the Sustainability of the Bolivarian Revolution

Interview with The Nation's Greg Grandin: "Many political analysts – the majority of them spokespeople for the right go around creating the idea that the government of the Bolivarian Revolution is on the point of collapse. The fall of the price of oil affected us in a



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way, but not fundamentally, not at the roots or the base of the process. We are passing through stages....”

“The communal councils for example, continue to extend, continue to grow, and they have evolved into a more ambitious project, a socialist commune. We are leaving behind – slowly, but steadily, not in a day, a year or five years – oil dependency, advancing the industrialization of the country. If some people here believe – people of good faith, readers of *The Nation* – that the Bolivarian Revolution is exhausted, tell them that it isn’t. You can tell them to come and see for themselves. Venezuela is of course a country that has problems, and its revolutionary government has failures, and has made mistakes, but it is an ongoing process.”

Conclusion

While President Chavez’s overarching message in New York concerned the need to work together for global peace, he similarly addressed areas where the media have been misinformed about Venezuela. From Venezuela’s relationship with the Jewish people to its position on Colombia and claims of a regional arms race, many false accusations against Venezuela have gone unanswered. During the visit to the UN, President Chavez addressed them all in hopes of correcting the record.

For more information visit our website:

<http://www.venezuels-us.org/>
prensa@venezuela-us.org

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