

VENEZUELAN ALTERNATIVE

'No' to Market Totalitarianism

[Following is a slightly shortened version of a speech delivered by Jorge Valero, Venezuelan ambassador to the United Nations, at the September UN summit analysing the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals.]

Ten years after the Summit where the Millennium Development Goals were approved, the results are disappointing. The fulfilment of these goals is seriously threatened. Most developed countries have not fulfilled the commitment of allocating 0.7% of their Gross National Product to Official Development Assistance.

The global economic and financial crisis of capitalism of recent years has created more poverty, more inequality, and injustice.

The financial economy exercises hegemony in the world and increases the accumulation of billions of dollars without creating any good. It is the casino economy. It has subjected States, and intends to destroy the public sphere, privatising everything, from the public services to the war.

Market totalitarianism prevents the exercise of human rights and the right to development. In this context, there is no right to work or healthcare, only labour market adjustments, or private companies that provide health insurance. There is also no right to food, which depends on the international market that has turned food into objects of speculation through future transactions.

The reduction in social spending has affected the ability of States to ensure economic, social and cultural rights of the peoples. Not even the most vulnerable sectors of developed countries can escape the perverse effects of the capitalist crisis. A crisis caused by financial speculators, with the complicity of the world's most powerful governments and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The Bolivarian Revolution under the leadership of President Hugo Chavez Frias, promotes an alternative model of development, that is humanist and performs deep structural changes in favour of the excluded.

Although Venezuela has not escaped the negative effects of the crisis of capitalism, social investment has increased and, today, more Venezuelans have better living conditions.

Social investment has become a national strategy to achieve sovereign and integral development and, therefore, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. 60% of total tax revenue between 1999 and 2009 has been earmarked for social investment. [Venezuelans] are moving towards a universal social security system.

The Social Missions in favour of the most excluded sectors of society have helped to achieve, in a massive and rapid manner, social inclusion.

The poverty rate fell from 49% in 1998 to 24.2% in late 2009. And extreme poverty fell dramatically from 29.8% in 2003 to 7.2% in 2009.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has recognised that Venezuela is the country that has reduced inequality the most in the region. The unemployment rate in Venezuela fell from 15% in 1998 (before the start of the Bolivarian Government), to 6.6% in December of 2009.

The promotion of gender equality and greater involvement of women in economic and social matters in Venezuela has already been achieved. State policies entrench training and equal participation of women in public life. Four of the five Public Powers that exist in Venezuela are chaired by women: Legislative, Electoral, Judicial and Moral.

In 2001 Venezuela reached the goal of drinking water coverage. And in 2005 the target in the service of wastewater collection was met.

Venezuela was declared a territory free of illiteracy by UNESCO in 2005. Furthermore, Venezuela will achieve before 2015, the universalisation of primary education, a reduction in the mortality of children, a reduction of maternal mortality, a reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDS and will reverse the incidence of malaria and dengue.

In Venezuela [people] are moving toward a democracy of quality, focused on the interests, needs and hopes of the people. It is a participatory and protagonist democracy where political freedom is exercised and the benefits of development are enjoyed.

The Bolivarian government promotes Latin American and Caribbean integration, based on the principles of cooperation, solidarity and complementarity. 'The Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of our America' (ALBA) and Petrocaribe contribute to the eradication of poverty and to overcoming inequalities and unemployment in the region. Venezuela contributes towards sister countries in the continent to help them to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Venezuela has regained full control of its natural resources. All basic services are considered basic human rights. The resources managed in a sovereign manner, have allowed for the creation of a Bank of the South and the Bank of ALBA. State policies have become instruments for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and for the promotion of independent and autonomous development, without the tyranny of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Against neoliberal globalisation Venezuela proposes the globalisation of justice and equity. Against the looting and abuse of countries Venezuela purposes fair trade through solidarity and partnership.

Under the leadership of President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela has met most of the Millennium Development Goals. Within the framework of the full exercise of sovereignty and self-determination, people have opted for Venezuelan Socialism, in order to create a society where justice, equality and solidarity reign, with full respect for human rights and democratic freedoms.

Also during the summit, Cuban Chancellor Bruno Rodriguez criticised the lack of collaboration by developed nations to achieve the millennium goals and denounced the "exploitative" global financial system that favours developed countries. He criticised the fact that many countries have paid off their external debt countless times but it keeps multiplying, as well as the slow transference of technology.

Evo Morales, president of Bolivia, proposed a World Bank for countries of the "South", or for the poorer countries, in order to "start to...end with the blackmail of the International

Monetary Fund". Ali Treki, president of the UN General Assembly, came to Venezuela on 23 and 24 June, when Venezuela handed over its preliminary report on its achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, so that the UN president could verify and revise it. Treki said Venezuela was an "example to the world" for its compliance with the Millennium Development Goals. "Venezuela has been recognised, despite all the accusations... and the discredit campaign by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR), as a leader and at the vanguard of reaching the Millennium Goals," said ombudsman Gabriela Ramirez.

Elias Eljuri, president of the National Institute of Statistics (INE), also commenting on Venezuela's achievement of the Millennium Goals, said Venezuela's extreme poverty has reduced to 7.2%, the hunger index has reduced to 3.7%, 84% of students are finishing primary school (an increase of 70% since 1990), more women are attending university than men, and infant mortality reduced to 13.9 per 1000 children in 2008, a statistic which, to meet the goals, should be at 8.6 by 2015. Eljuri said the goal Venezuela had to work hardest on was reducing maternal mortality, but for this the government had developed the Mission Baby Jesus, launched late last year. The mission aims to provide greater pre and post natal care. □□□