

CUBA

Speech

by

Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz
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at the
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Excellencies:

Not everyone here will share my thoughts. Still, I will respectfully say what I think.

The existing world economic order constitutes a system of plundering and exploitation like no other in history. Thus, the peoples believe less and less in statements and promises.

The prestige of the international financial institutions rates less than zero.

The world economy is today a huge casino. Recent analyses indicate that for every dollar that goes into trade, over one hundred end up in speculative operations completely disconnected from the real economy.

As a result of this economic order, over 75 percent of the world population lives in underdevelopment, and extreme poverty has already reached 1.2 billion people in the Third World. So, far from narrowing the gap is widening.

The revenue of the richest nations that in 1960 was 37 times larger than that of the poorest is now 74 times larger. The situation has reached such extremes that the assets of the three wealthiest persons in the world amount to the GDP of the 48 poorest countries combined.

The number of people actually starving was 826 million in the year 2001. There are at the moment 854 million illiterate adults while 325 million children do not attend school. There are 2 billion people who have no access to low cost medications and 2.4 billion lack the basic sanitation conditions. No less than 11 million children under the age of 5 perish every year from preventable causes while half a million go blind for lack of vitamin A.

The life span of the population in the developed world is 30 years higher than that of people living in Sub-Saharan Africa. A true genocide!

The poor countries should not be blamed for this tragedy. They neither conquered nor plundered entire continents for centuries; they did not establish colonialism, or re-established slavery, and, modern imperialism is not of their making. Actually, they have been its victims. Therefore, the main responsibility for financing their development lies with those states that, for obvious historical reasons, enjoy today the benefits of those atrocities.

The rich world should condone their foreign debt and grant them fresh soft credits to finance their development. The traditional offers of assistance, always scant and often ridiculous, are either inadequate or unfulfilled.

For a true and sustainable economic and social development to take place much more is required than is usually admitted. Measures as those suggested by the late James Tobin to curtail the irrepressible flow of currency speculation --albeit it was not his idea to foster development-- would perhaps be the only ones capable of generating enough funds, which in the hands of the UN agencies and not of awful institutions like the IMF, could supply direct development assistance with a democratic participation of all countries and without the need to sacrifice the independence and sovereignty of the peoples.

The Consensus draft, which the masters of the world are imposing on this conference, intends that we accept humiliating, conditioned and interfering alms.

Everything created since Bretton Woods until today should be reconsidered. A farsighted vision was then missing, thus, the privileges and interests of the most powerful prevailed. In the face of the deep present crisis, a still worse future is offered where the economic, social and ecologic tragedy of an increasingly ungovernable world would never be resolved and where the number of the poor and the starving would grow higher, as if a large part of humanity were doomed.

It is high time for statesmen and politicians to calmly reflect on this. The belief that a social and economic order that has proven to be unsustainable can be forcibly imposed is really senseless.

As I have said before, the ever more sophisticated weapons piling up in the arsenals of the wealthiest and the mightiest can kill the illiterate, the ill, the poor and the hungry but they cannot kill ignorance, illnesses, poverty or hunger.

It should definitely be said: "Farewell to arms."
Something must be done to save Humanity!
A better world is possible! .

Thank you.

CLARIFICATION NOTE FROM DR. FIDEL CASTRO RUZ, PRESIDENT OF CUBA. MONTERREY, MARCH 21, 2002.

Mr. President:

I would need twenty seconds for a point of clarification.

Excellencies:

I ask for your indulgence since I will not be able to accompany you any longer. A special situation created by my participation in this Summit obligates me to immediately return to my country.

The leader of the Cuban delegation will then be comrade Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, Speaker of the National Assembly of People's Power, and a restless combatant in defense of the rights of the Third World peoples. I entrust him with the prerogatives corresponding to me as a Head of State attending this conference.

I hope he will not be prevented from attending any official function that it is his right to participate in as the Leader of the Cuban delegation and the President of the Supreme body of power in the Cuban state.

Thank you, again.