

THE SERIOUS OBAMA

Bolivarian President Hugo Chavez really made a clever remark when he referred to the “riddle of the two Obamas.”

The serious Obama spoke today. Recently, I recognized two positive features in his behavior: his attempt to make healthcare available to the 47 million Americans who don't have access to it, and his concern for climate change.

What I said yesterday about the imminent threat to the human species could sound pessimistic but it is not far from reality. The views of many Heads of State on the ignored and neglected issue of climate change are still unknown.

As the representative of the country hosting the United Nations High Level Meeting on the subject, Obama was the first to express his opinion.

What did he say? I'll refer to the substance of his remarks.

- He said that he recognizes that the threat on the planet is serious and growing.
- That history will pass judgment on the response to this environmental challenge.
- That there is no nation, big or small, that can avoid the impact of climate change.
- That there is a daily increase of the high tides lashing against the coastlines while more intensive storms and floods are threatening our continents.
- That the security and stability of every nation are in danger.
- That climate has been placed at the top of the international agenda, from China to Brazil, from India to Mexico, Africa and Europe.
- That these can be significant steps if we are all united.
- That we understand the seriousness of the situation and are determined to act on it.
- That we were not there to celebrate any progress.
- That much remains to be done.
- That it will not be an easy job.
- That the most difficult part of the road is ahead of us.
- That this is happening at a time when to many the priority is to revitalize their economies.
- That we all have doubts about the climate challenge.
- That difficulties and doubts are no excuse to act.

- That each of us should do his share so that our economies can grow without endangering the planet.
- That we should turn Copenhagen into a significant step forward in the climate debate.
- That we should not allow for old divisions to jeopardize the united quest for solutions.
- That the developed nations have caused most of the damage and should thus take responsibility for it.
- That we shall not overcome this challenge unless we are united.
- That we know that these nations, particularly the most vulnerable, do not have the same resources to combat climate change.
- That the future is not a choice between economic growth and a clean planet because survival depends on both.
- That it is our responsibility to provide technical and financial assistance to these nations.
- That we are seeking an agreement that would enhance the quality of life of the peoples without disturbing the planet.
- That we know that the future depends on a global commitment.
- But that it is a long and tough road and we have no time to make the journey.

The problem now is that everything he has said contradicts what the United States has been doing for over 150 years, especially from the moment --at the end of World War II-- when it imposed to the world the Bretton Woods accord and became the master of the world economy.

The hundreds of military bases set up in scores of countries in every continent; their aircraft carriers and Navy fleets; their thousands of nuclear weapons; their wars of conquest; their military-industrial complex and their arms trade are incompatible with the survival of our species. Likewise, the consumer societies are incompatible with the idea of economic growth and a clean planet. The unlimited waste of non-renewable natural resources, --especially oil and gas accumulated throughout hundreds of millions of years and depleted in barely two centuries at the current rate of consumption--has been the major cause of climate change. Even if the unfriendly emissions of the industrialized nations were reduced, which would be commendable, it is a reality that 5.2 billion people on planet Earth, that is, three-fourth of the population live in countries that are still in various stages of development and will therefore demand an enormous input of coal, oil, natural gas and other non-renewable resources that, according to the consumption patterns created by the capitalist economies, are incompatible with the objective of saving the human species.

It would not be fair to blame the serious Obama for the abovementioned riddle of what has happened until today, but it would not be fair either to have the other Obama make us believe that humanity could be preserved under the prevailing rules of the world economy.

The President of the United States has conceded that the developed nations have caused most of the damage and should take responsibility for it. It was certainly a brave gesture.

It would also be fair to concede that no other President of the United States would have had the courage to say what he has said.

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