

Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, has sent a message to all participants at this Second South Summit, which I will now read:

Your Excellencies:

I would have liked to have joined you at this truly important meeting in Qatar, a sister nation to which I am bound by a profound feeling of friendship and the fraternal ties we have established with its people, its government and its head of state.

However, other pressing matters have not allowed me to attend this meeting. We are facing up to the US government efforts to grant safe haven to a notorious and confessed terrorist, a fugitive from Venezuelan justice who is responsible, among many atrocious acts of terror, for the midair bombing of a Cuban commercial aircraft and the resulting death of 73 innocent people.

Cuba is involved in an intense campaign to denounce the acts of terrorism our country has endured for more than 45 years, which has cost us the lives of thousands of people and incalculable material losses.

We also striving against impunity for the abominable crimes committed in our hemisphere during repressive operations, such as "Operation Condor", undertaken in different South American countries, or dirty wars and massive extermination campaigns perpetrated in Central America, to expose the true culprits behind these monstrosities. I have had to receive, attend to and meet with hundreds of renowned figures who have visited our country, a number of whom are still in Cuba.

The world's poorest nations pay with tens of millions of lives for the economic order imposed upon the world by the process of neo-liberal globalization.

Never before has there been so much inequality and never before has inequality been so great.

Today's economic order includes our nations in exploitation schemes and excludes them from development plans.

This order blocks the development of South countries to sustain the wasteful consumerism of the North, environmental degradation and the accelerated squandering of the world's natural resources. The overflowing wealth of the North is the result of the savage colonial and neocolonial exploitation of the South.

The foreign debt of Third World nations continues to grow and although a total of 5.4 trillion dollars were paid between 1982 and 2004, the debt is now 2.5 trillion dollars and the International Monetary Fund continues to use it as an instrument to impose socially disastrous economic adjustments on our countries.

Every day, we are fed the rhetorical discourse of free trade, but the taxes which the United States applies to imports from the Third World are twenty times steeper than those applied to imports from developed countries. Every year, rich countries spend 300 billion dollars to subsidize agricultural productions which muscle South countries out of the market, while hypocritically talking about free trade.

In the unregulated financial market, aggressive speculation on the exchange rate of currencies is commonplace. Our countries are asked to be transparent with financial information while speculators hide behind a veil of secrecy. Risk-assessment agencies threaten our countries with negative evaluations after rewarding US companies that announce fraudulent bankruptcies. These are the expressions of an economic order that is imposed to defend the interests of an opulent minority exclusively.

Spendthrift consumerism contrasts scandalously with poverty and threatens to raze the planet's living conditions to the ground. The case of oil is an obvious example.

The ravenous consumption of this important energy source in the United States, where people consume twelve times as much energy as people in the Third World, creates a growing demand that threatens to deplete this vital non-renewable resource.

The United States of America, with only 5 percent of the world's population, consumes 26 percent of the world's oil.

We must clearly and unequivocally say that the true cause of the nearly apocalyptic energy crisis which threatens the world today is the excessive and uncontrollable consumption of rich countries and the absurd and unsustainable consumer societies they have spawned. At this breakneck pace of energy consumption, the oil or gas offer will never be in step with the demand, because proven and probable reserves are running out.

Furthermore, 30 years after a 0.7 percent aid for development was promised, development aid does not exceed 0.2 percent and that offered by the United States is of 0.1 percent. Debt service paid in 2004, on the other hand, was 5 times what the South received as official aid for development.

It is now clear that the modest Millennium Goals shall not be reached.

Hunger continues to be a daily reality for 852 million people while trillions of dollars are spent on weapons that will kill the hungry, not hunger.

Almost one third of Third World children suffer from growth retardation and have sub-normal sizes and weights due to undernourishment.

Additionally, 13 million children continue to die every year from preventable diseases, while another trillion dollars is misspent on mind-numbing advertising.

Nearly a billion illiterate adults and 325 million children who do not receive schooling are proof of just how far the world is from the most elementary equity and justice.

The future of Humanity cannot be this unjustifiable and unsustainable world.

Faced with the enormous challenges of poverty and injustice in today's world, the president of the United States proclaims his right to wage pre-emptive wars on 60 or more countries. He manipulates the United Nations, declaring its Charter obsolete and showing contempt for international law. He makes a repugnant mockery of the sovereign equality of states.

Let us, who have always been excluded, join efforts to establish a just, equitable and sustainable world order. Let us preserve the United Nations and make it serve the people. Let us defend peace. Let us struggle for our rights, conscious of the fact that nothing will be given us for free.

In spite of the enormous obstacles, we believe in the worth of ideas and principles, and we place our trust in the capacity of our peoples to struggle.

Fidel Castro Ruz

Havana, June 12, 2005