

**REFLECTIONS**

**THE PETROCARIBE AGREEMENT**

**THE MOST HON. P. J. PATTERSON, ON, OCC, PC, QC**

**COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY**

**MONTEGO BAY CONVENTION CENTRE**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2015**

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## **SALUTATIONS**

The Most Hon. Portia Simpson-Miller, Prime Minister

President, Maduro Moros

President Raul Castro Ruz

Heads of State and Government

Ministers

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors

Ladies & Gentlemen

1.

It was El Comandante, who during an Official Visit to Cuba, first drew my attention to the prospect and significance of Hugo Chavez winning the 1998 Presidential Election Campaign in Venezuela.

“Es hombre militar, pero muy progresista

Creo que Chavez puede hacer una diferencia enorme en nuestra lucha para justicia en el mundo” me dijo Fidel

Immediately after his installation, we had the honour of receiving the President of Venezuela on February 10, 1999 here in Montego Bay at the 9<sup>th</sup> Summit of the G15 on what was his first trip abroad.

Hugo Chavez pledged in his Opening presentation at our Conference –

“to advance the Bolivarian agenda which promote the pace and scope of integration between the nations in the Caribbean space and to embrace initiatives which would redress the inequalities between developing countries of the South and the industrialized nations of the North.”

## **CARACAS ENERGY ACCORD**

It was not long before he demonstrated the total commitment of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to alleviate the plight of energy deficient countries within our region. The life of The San José Accord, which granted concessionary oil arrangements with both Mexico and Venezuela, had expired.

Hugo Chavez immediately put in place the Caracas Accord which provided tremendous assistance to countries of our region. He was persuaded to make it inclusionary, thereby resulting in the reduction of existing tensions created by age-old border disputes.

But for Chavez, the Accord was only a start.

## **THE CONCEPT**

When Heads of State and Government gathered in New York for a special Convocation of the U.N. to mark the New Millennium, Hugo Chavez invited Fidel and I to a meeting in his suite at the Manhattan Hotel.

At a time of high and volatile oil prices and insecure supplies, Chavez sought our views on how best to forge an Energy Cooperation Agreement, which would enhance energy security, advance regional economic integration and foster socio-economic development for our people.

Having re-affirmed the sovereign right of all nations to determine and manage their natural resources, we engaged in a fruitful exchange, based on our experiences of futile efforts between oil producers and consuming countries within the developing world two decades before. We shared a common resolve to create new frontiers for trade, energy cooperation, and human resource development.

We recognized it would take considerable time for the seeds to germinate and decided to remain in close and continuing contact before and during the intensive work by our Ministers of Energy.

## **PUERTO LA CRUZ**

The environment of Puerto La Cruz was exquisite for the historic ceremony. Those who were present will recall that before signing, we had to clear that final hurdle which would enable the region's two energy-rich countries – Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela – to assist energy deficient countries of the wider region in complementary mechanisms.

The PetroCaribe Energy Agreement opened a new era of collaboration to uplift and advance the economic and social conditions of people within our shores and territorial borders. Chavez was emphatic that it encompass those who have been historically oppressed and down trodden.

“Nunca olvide los pobres” – he insisted.

We departed Puerto La Cruz with the confidence that the unique construct and the spectacular advantages which the new regime provided would reduce the crippling effect of financial stringency and facilitate the appropriate allocation of scarce resources in all energy deficient countries.

This would allow an expansion of our social programmes, building our physical infrastructure, promoting education, housing and health.



## **2<sup>ND</sup> PETROCARIBE SUMMIT, MONTEGO BAY**

Jamaica was privileged to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> PetroCaribe Summit in Montego Bay – exactly 90 years after the great and revered Liberator wrote La Carta de Jamaica – 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1815.

It was here that His Excellency Hugo Chavez, Co-Chairman of the Summit, endorsed once again the Bolivarian vision –

“to put into use all the resources for public prosperity;  
to improve, educate and perfect the New World.”

The constraints of time permit me to share only one humorous reflection of that occasion with you.

In addition to the serious security concerns which surround the gatherings whenever certain Heads are in attendance, clear warning had been given of planned political protests locally. As it transpired, whatever took place amounted to no more than moments of slight inconvenience.

Little did anyone expect that the challenge would come from a most unexpected combination which none of the Security Forces could prevent or control.

We were about to retire in our separate villas at Half Moon – within an area that was cordoned and under tight security when all hell broke loose –

Fidel & Hugo had commandeered two golfcarts

Senna or Lewis Hamilton?

Their Security detail could barely cope with the hectic pace.

Chavez and Castro only stopped, when a birthday cake which was first ordered at 10.00 p.m. eventually arrived just before the midnight hour.

## **HUGO CHAVEZ ACADEMY**

As we celebrate today, the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Montego Bay Summit, how do we best commemorate the legacy of this great Bolivarian disciple and how do we perpetuate his dream?

Madam Prime Minister,  
President Maduro,

Permit to share with you an enterprise Chavez and I twice discussed.

We wanted

To build in Jamaica, the land where Simón Bolívar wrote his Summons of inspiration to the people of the Americas, a Tertiary Institution which would offer specialist education in the fields of language, sports, culture, Tourism, environment, maritime training and nursing.

Work on the discipline and design has already reached the embryonic stage for what could become the Hugo Chavez Academy.

This would expose the sons and daughters of Simón Bolívar, José Martí, Toussaint L'Ouverture and Marcus Garvey to develop fluency in language and hone the skills which blend our economic development and different cultures.

Despite our financial restrictions, you the Leaders who gather here should marshal the monetary and academic resources to build an Institution of Higher Learning. Let it stand as an enduring testimony to Hugo Chavez, who in his short sojourn on our planet did make, indeed, a monumental difference on which this and succeeding generations must build.

Venceremos!!