

ADDRESS BY H.E. Mr. EVO MORALES AYMA, THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 64th SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

September 23, 2009

# **If We Don't Defend Mother Earth's Rights, There's No Use in Defending Human Rights**

Thank you to the President of the United Nations General Assembly, greetings fellow presidential brothers, to the distinguished delegation of this global forum, reunited at the United Nations to share problems, concerns and solutions to serve our fellow people of the world.

This morning I listened carefully to the speeches, beginning with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. There exist enormous similarities in expressing problems such as the financial crisis, the environment and the stability of the institution of democracy. There have been many positive suggestions, beginning with the Secretary-General's humble request for unity between the presidents of the United Nations.

I agree with the importance for governments of the world to unite in order to successfully tend to our peoples demands and resolve these crises. Unity within the United Nations to solve profound economic differences, asymmetries between continents, families and countries is paramount for the equality, dignity and resolution of the demands of our people.

There exists an ongoing debate about the financial crisis, climate change and democracy. We cannot forget the food and energy crises. I applaud the addresses, which focus on the origins of the crisis. However, the majority of the speeches only speak of effects, never the cause. I came here today to speak plainly with you all. The origin of this crisis is the exaggerated accumulation of capital in far too few hands. It is the permanent removal of natural resources and the commercialization of Mother Earth. The origins come from the system and an economic model of Capitalism. If we don't share the truth of this crisis with one another nor the international community, we will disseminate a lie to our people whom expect more from their presidents, governments and these kinds of forums.

We must securely establish and seek peace. Social peace cannot exist if economic inequalities still remain. Worse even, where there are foreign military bases in countries. In many continents, especially in Latin and South America, the presence of U.S. military bases provokes distrust among our people.

I can briefly relate my experiences as the victim of a foreign military presence operating in my country. This was before I assumed office of the president and before the social movements would become actors in a new country with equality and social justice. We were all victims of the U.S. military presence in Bolivia and as victims we know what U.S. soldiers in different countries of South America do. When there is a U.S. military base in Latin America especially, I don't know what will be their behavior in Europe or other continents, but in Latin America U.S. military bases do not guarantee social peace, they do not guarantee democracy, they do not guarantee the integration of our countries and less of the people who organize themselves in pursuit of profound economic, social, and cultural structural changes.

Here we have Honduras, if there is a U.S. military base in Honduras why can't that military base

guarantee democracy?

I salute the valor of our colleague, the president of Honduras, Zelaya, who peacefully perseveres towards a democratic recovery. Also, I must extend my respect and admiration to the rebellious people of Honduras in defense of democracy. It would be wonderful if the Assembly President of the United Nations, this grandiose global organization, would arrive with a resolution where an ultimatum assures the dictatorship in Honduras is abandoned, returning and acknowledging Zelaya as the sole president. I am convinced the U.S. Southern Command does not accept presidential nor governmental heads in Latin American countries seeking liberation. My brothers and colleagues who've supported the direction of Bolivia and Latin America have commented to me, that the only reason there isn't a coup in the U.S. is because there is no U.S. embassy within the United States. I want you all to know, presidential brothers, that last year there was a coup attempt in Bolivia. Thankfully, because of the forces of organized union and the international community, especially from UNASUR, we civilly halted a coup without use of military force. The coup failed to succeed. We are convinced military bases do not guarantee democracy, or integration, or social peace.

Also in debate is the topic of climate change. I want to take this opportunity to propose a few themes that are very important to the inhabitants of Mother Earth. For the indigenous movement, not only harmony with human kind, but harmony with Mother Earth is sacred. Mother Earth gives life, water, natural resources, oxygen and everything that supports the well being of our people. If we talk, work and fight for the well being of our people we first have to guarantee the well being of Mother Earth; otherwise it will be impossible to guarantee the well being of our citizens. Mother Earth, Planet Earth, will exist without human life, but human life cannot exist without Mother Earth.

After hearing many speeches, I've concluded that in this new twenty-first century, defending Mother Earth will be more important than defending human rights. If we do not defend the rights of Mother Earth, there is no use in defending human rights. I am willing to debate this concept, but now or later it will be proven that the rights of Mother Earth supersede the rights of human beings. We must protect what gives us life. Coincidentally, as we are in the climate change debate, we want to propose, dear presidents, delegates from distinct countries, to the brothers of the world that are listening, a very simple proposal which can be summarized in 3 points.

First: Developed countries must honor and pay the climate debt they owe to mankind and planet earth.

Second: We currently do not have a structured manner in which we can quantify the damages committed by nations. My dear presidents, it is of utmost importance to create a Court for Climatic Justice, in which countries will be tried and punished assuming they do not follow international laws and continue to destroy the earth.

Third: A proposal derived mainly from Indigenous farmers: nations must declare and expand the rights of Mother Earth's natural regeneration. Nations must also declare rights on behalf of the right to life, a clean life and the right to harmony and equilibrium for all and everything.

Hopefully these proposals will be taken into account and debated in Copenhagen, Denmark. We hope the discussions in Copenhagen will provide us with short and long term solutions over the enormous problems that our distinguished countries endure.

I want to also take this opportunity to gather proposals from other presidents. If we first want to change the world then we must first change the configuration of the United Nations. If within our countries we strive for equality through change then why not begin with changing the structure within the United Nations?

While listening to many presidents speak in the United Nations Security Council, I've noticed many coincidences. We need true democratization; toward this we have established the following:

The permanence of membership in the Security Council, similarly the right to veto, should be eliminated. It cannot be possible that in the twenty-first century we are still practicing the style of totalitarianism from a monarchy era. All countries have the same rights within the UN. Those that proclaim themselves as leaders of Democracy should resign their privileges and accept true democracy from the Security Council. Let us be responsible to the promise of democracy, and let us start with the democratization of the UN.

To end this speech, and not abuse my allowed time, is a discipline of truth and respect that we follow in Bolivia. I apologize if by speaking the truth, the U.S. government may feel slightly bothered. I have confidence in President Obama and congratulate him for closing Guantanamo. That is progress and we congratulate it, but don't only close the Guantanamo prison, you must end the economic blockade of Cuba. This is a respectful request to the President and the American people.

In Bolivia and Latin America, the United States initially granted tariff preferences. Former President Bush eradicated these tariff preferences with Bolivia and falsely accused that there is no war against drug trafficking nor a struggle against poverty in Bolivia. I knew that these allegations were political decisions. Former U.S. President Bush never observed Bolivian norms, and much less Bolivia's Political Constitution. Now, in this new government of Mr. Obama, there are reports published on the developments and concerns of Bolivia's Political Constitutional State. I know that this observation was made to Article 56 of the New Bolivian State Constitution on private property, which for the first time in 183 years of republican life of the Bolivian people was approved with their vote. This seems to be an open interference by the U.S. government to the Constitution that I do not accept and reject outright.

We do not want interference with diplomatic relations but diplomatic relations of cooperation and investment. The New Political Constitution of Bolivia guarantees private property, guarantee state ownership, but fundamentally, for the first time, ensures collective ownership, partnerships, cooperatives, community land of the original indigenous movements. For the first time Bolivia's new Political Constitutional State guarantees private property and state property. Fundamentally, it incorporates a guarantee of collective cooperation of associations, corporations and collective property of the original indigenous peoples.

Besides that, they accuse me and say in their document: "current challenges include explicit acceptance and encouragement of the production of coca leaf in the upper echelons of the Bolivian government." I promote coca cultivation. I want you to know that one thing is the coca leaf, the planting of coca leaf, cocaine is something else. Cocaine we do not defend, we will fight cocaine. Our proposal is zero cocaine. But there cannot be free cultivation of coca leaf. This in its natural state is good, is healthy for human life. You know that we are campaigning to decriminalize the traditional consumption of the coca leaf. I guarantee there will never be free cultivation of coca leaf, nor zero coca, but rather, zero cocaine. You cannot tell me that I incentivize the planting of coca in Bolivia. This is false.

Most worrying, you know that I come from the union struggle, from a social, trade union leader but I was also president momentarily. The document says the government may dissolve unions by administrative decree. I do not wish to stop the unions. The force of this government - that of Evo Morales - is of social and union forces. Even though I've created and constructed union headquarters, donated automobiles to unions, forces still accuse me of subverting them. I can be sure that President Obama may not know this document and it may come from the Department of State of the United States. Sometimes we change presidents, but it is difficult to change the structure of states. I understand this deeply, after reading this document.

In Latin America those called afro-bolivians, those called indigenous Indians, are the most disadvantaged sectors of society. In popular terms we say black, Indian. I can't understand how a black person discriminated against, an excluded black person, discriminates or excludes another Indian. It really is a huge concern that we live with. Hopefully, these historical wrongs can be corrected, not just for the sake of the President of the Bolivian people but also by the good image of nations like the United States. I fully understand that it is sometimes not easy to change these structures and perhaps work against our people.

Finally, to conclude dear presidents, president of the Assembly, in Bolivia in order to resolve some historical demands, like the demand to return to the sea, I would like to inform you that two sister Republics, Chile and Bolivia, are building trust with one another in order to resolve oceanic matters. I have high hopes in resolving bilateral relations. It is important that the international community intervene if a solution has not been reached. Although there has been headway in building mutual trust in order to solve matters, trust continues to be of great importance. But it does not end with trust; further important steps must be taken.

Brothers and Sisters, I thank you for listening and considering my words and the message of my people. I want to continue sharing your experiences, your proposals and your worries for the collective well being of the human race.

Thank you very much.