

Discussion Document
19th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum

May 16th, 2013

Tentative Program

Firstly, it should be stressed that this Discussion Document is intended as a contribution to the preparatory process for the 19th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum.

Thus, it is worth recalling the tentative program of the 19th Meeting in order to assess to what extent the Discussion Document fulfills its purpose, or otherwise still has gaps that must be filled. In this regard, the *Declaration of La Habana* approved at the meeting of the Working Group held in Cuba on April 29–30, 2013, offers substantial contributions.

The 19th Meeting is preceded by the **2nd Political Education School of the São Paulo Forum**, which will focus on the following themes: Integration in the history of Our America; Integration from the point of view of the United States, Europe, and Asia; Migration and integration processes; Analysis of the several integration mechanisms and institutions: CELAC, UNASUR, ALBA, MERCOSUR, Andean Pact, SICA, Parliaments; The ongoing crisis of capitalism, new integration agreements and processes in other regions of the world, and Latin-American integration; Present and future integration challenges.

On the day before the 19th Meeting, by invitation of the Workers Party of Brazil, a meeting will be held bringing together the member parties of the São Paulo Forum either governing or in coalition with administrations governing MERCOSUR countries, both full and associate members with the aim of discussing concrete measures to be taken to accelerate the integration process in this sphere.

As part of the 19th Meeting proper, five sectoral meetings are scheduled:

* **5th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum Youth**, emphasizing the following themes: Youth in defense of government platforms of São Paulo Forum member parties; Latin-American integration, the regional development project, and the new generation; Youth-related public policies for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean;

* **2nd São Paulo Forum Women's Meeting**, emphasizing the following themes: The impact of the crisis on the life of women; Women and the regional integration of Latin America and the Caribbean; Strengthening social struggle from the point of view of women; Women's political participation – women's underrepresentation in power;

* **1st São Paulo Forum African Descendants Meeting**, emphasizing the following themes: The role of black men and women in the São Paulo Forum parties; Experiences in government policies promoting racial equality in Latin America and the Caribbean;

* **Meeting of the Parliamentarians of the São Paulo Forum Member Parties**, its main aim being to coordinate our actions in the region's parliaments;

* **Meeting of the Local and Subnational Authorities of the São Paulo Forum Member Parties.**

Also as part of the 19th Meeting, we will have 7 seminars: a) **Africa and Latin America**; b) **BRICS and Latin America**; c) **Middle East and Northern Africa**; d) **The United States**; e) **Europe**; f) **3rd Assessment seminar of progressive and leftist governments**; g) **The contribution of Hugo Chávez for the process of change in Latin America and the Caribbean.**

The program includes 21 thematic workshops: a) **Mental health policies and drugs**; b) **Struggle for democracy on the Internet and on the social networks**; c) **Struggle for peace and against**

militarism; d) **Social movements and civic participation**; e) **Social policies**; f) **Electoral processes**; g) **Original peoples**; h) **Natural resources**; i) **Food and agricultural security and sovereignty**; j) **Art and culture workers**; k) **Latin-American and Caribbean union and integration**; l) **Colonialism and self-determination**; m) **Defense**; n) **Democratization of information and broadcasting**; o) **Economic development**; p) **State, democracy, and popular participation**; q) **Environment and climate change**; r) **Migrations**; s) **LGBT movement**; t) **Trade union movements**; u) **Security and drug trafficking**.

Initially we will have the meetings of the **Working Group** and of the **Regional Departments**, then the meeting of the **Capacity-building Foundations and Schools or Centers**, the plenary sessions of the 19th Meeting, and the opening session.

Deepening the changes and accelerating regional integration is a crosscutting theme for all these activities.

Presentation of the Discussion Document

The 19th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum will be held from July 31st to August 4th, 2013 in the city of São Paulo.

The 19th Meeting was called with two fundamental goals: ***to provide a comprehensive diagnosis of the international situation and approve a regional plan of action*** driven by the critical goals of ***deepening the changes and accelerating regional integration***.

The 19th Meeting will be dedicated to Hugo Chávez. Accordingly, its activities will include an analysis of his contribution to the process of change in Latin America and the Caribbean, underscoring his commitments to democracy and popular mobilization, his militant internationalism and anti-imperialism, his vision of the history of our region and of socialism. The diagnosis on the international situation builds on our conclusions at the 18th Meeting of the Forum (Caracas, 2012): we are going through an international situation characterized by a ***deep crisis of capitalism***, the ***deterioration of the United States hegemony***, and the ***appearance of new centers of power***.

This is an international situation of ***systemic instability***, marked by ***deep social conflicts, acute political crises***, and ***increasingly more dangerous military conflicts***.

Latin America and the Caribbean make part of this world in crisis and suffer its effects. Yet we are also a region where, since the late twentieth century, early twenty-first century, a process of change is under way that offers hopes and alternatives for this world in crisis.

In this context, we, the Latin-American and Caribbean leftist forces gathered in the São Paulo Forum, our parties, the governments we head or take part in, the social movements in which we act, our thinkers and artists, all have before us challenges of historic transcendence.

Challenges that begin with a correct diagnosis of the world and regional situation, and proceed toward deepening change and accelerating the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, themes that will be developed in the three chapters of this discussion document: 1) world situation, 2) regional situation, and 3) plan of action.

1. Some features of the world situation

The 19th Meeting of the Forum takes place under the triple impact of a deep crisis of capitalism, the deterioration of the United States hegemony, and the appearance of new centers of power.

This is a situation of instability, marked by deep social conflicts, acute political crises, and increasingly more dangerous military conflicts.

The current crisis does not affect the various regions, countries, productive sectors, and social sectors in the same way. Nonetheless, it is a **global crisis**, *urbi et orbi*, with its financial, trade, productive, energy, food, environmental, social, political, ideological, and military expressions. This is not, therefore, just a crisis of neoliberal *thinking*, neoliberal *policies*, or financial *speculation*. Surely, it encompasses all these points, albeit in the context of a crisis of accumulation that is similar to the 1930 and 1970 crises. Observed as a whole, we can say that this kind of systemic crisis takes place at ever shorter intervals of time, with ever fewer possibilities of virtuous or long-term solutions.

Thus, no short-term solution is foreseen, even less so a structural one, in other words, a long-term solution. Nor is the outcome of the crisis in the medium and long term clear, as this outcome is being built here and now, in the conflicts waged between political and social groups, within each State; and in the struggle between States and blocs on a planetary scale. As at other moments in history, it may come to pass that capitalism will survive the crisis it is facing today. Yet it is worth considering its unacceptable costs for humanity, bearing in mind among other things the ecological depredation intrinsic to capitalism, given the contradiction between the unlimited nature of accumulation and the limited nature of natural resources as sources of wealth accumulation.

Yet it may also happen that, while capitalism may keep on existing under distinct forms in some regions of the planet, in other regions socialist societies may keep on existing or come to appear. And there is always the risk that the capitalist forces, in their struggle to uphold their system of oppression and exploitation, may come to jeopardize the very continuity of humanity.

Thus, we are living and acting at a historical moment fraught with perils, ripe with possibilities, yet also ripe with hope, a feeling that prevails in Our America, where, we, the leftist and progressive forces, have governed numerous countries, broadened democracy, social well-being, national sovereignty, and continental integration.

There is a marked contrast between the policies implemented by these progressive governments and the policies implemented in the United States and Europe, where the interests of the financial and imperialist plutocracy prevail.

The United States insists on recovering global hegemony, without which the U.S. economy cannot live.

Since the early days of his administration in 2009 and early 2013 the president of the United States, Barack Obama, engaged on several fronts: bailout of the financial plutocracy, devaluation of the U.S. dollar, regional free trade agreements, search for energy autonomy, adjustments to the security policy, destabilization of adversarial governments.

These and other initiatives, including the **Trans-Pacific Partnership**, the **U.S.-Europe Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership** and support for the so-called “**Pacific Rim**”, must be understood against the background of the conclusions of the recent “of the National Intelligence Council’s Global Trends Report”, signaling that by 2030 Asia’s economy will be bigger than that of the United States and Europe combined and acknowledging that the age of *pax americana* is coming to an end.

It is as if the U.S. dominant class adopted the orientation of a well-known financial newspaper to which it is *better to act now while it [U.S.] still represents half of the world’s economy and still holds power to set global standards, since in five years’ time it might be too late*.

One of the largest national banking and private sector bailout expenditures was carried out in

the first Obama government in an effort to curb the crisis that, in conjunction with the deficit caused by the United States security policy and the country's invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, nearly drove the U.S. over the legally-mandated indebtedness level. At the same time it supports the plutocracy, the Obama government seeks to spur the U.S. economy through monetary devaluation in the form of funds controlled and injected by the United States Federal Reserve converted into other countries' bonds, thus strengthening their currencies vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar and hampering these countries' exports as their products become more expensive "in dollars".

At the same time it embarked on this major dumping operation, the U.S. government has favored regional free trade agreements. In addition to those already established with countries and regions of Latin America, like Chile, Peru, Colombia, Central America, and even the older NAFTA itself, the U.S. is seeking to advance the **Trans-Pacific Partnership** and the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**.

Regardless of the details of each of these agreements, it is worth noting their strategic objective: bringing disarray to national plans and independent regional blocs, as well as confronting the bloc made up by the BRICS.

Coupled with this the U.S. is seeking energy autonomy, which seems to be about to be achieved due to a combination of factors, among which are a reversal of the U.S. oil and gas import/export curve and increased exploration of shale gas and oil.

This operation is coupled with a reviewed military strategy whose focal point has shifted to the Asia-Pacific region. It is worth clarifying that all these initiatives have an explicit purpose: ***the recovery of the economic and political hegemony of the United States***.

Considering the history of the United States, there is no surprise in the fact that such goal should be pursued through predominantly military means; just as there is no surprise in that the U.S. has to solidify its internal fractures, necessarily hinged today on the theme of migration.

While the U.S. is striving to recover this leadership, in Europe there is a dismantling of what one day came to be thought of as a potential competing bloc.

The dominant class in Europe is promoting the dismantling of the "social covenant" agreed upon in the northern hemisphere after the Second World War, a covenant based upon two cornerstones: the Welfare State and collective bargaining between trade unions and companies.

Dismantling this "social covenant", which was largely funded by imperialist exploitation of other regions of the world, implies cutting the wages of the European working classes, either to bail out the financial capital or to increase the profitability of productive investing.

Since 2007 the script is basically the same: expenditure of huge amounts of money to rescue the financial system; tax breaks to supposedly stimulate productive activity; privatizations; fiscal austerity to secure payments claimed by the financial system by re-routing resources originally earmarked for government investing and for funding social security, public services, and the State's public employees' payrolls; and reduced consumer capacity of the masses.

The decrease in government spending is leading to the extinction of social rights and to labor law reforms in some countries, Spain, for one, where negotiations are being allowed between employers and individual workers for the purpose of reducing wages.

The economic consequence of all this is a meager average growth in the European Union, the U.S., and Japan; and in some cases recession and deep crisis, like in Greece, Spain, Portugal,

Italy, and Cyprus.

From the point of view of capitalism, the adoption of austerity measures is not the only option. In other regions of the world a capitalist yet altogether distinct policy has prevailed based on productive investment and support for domestic markets. Had it not been for this policy and the world crisis would be much deeper.

The existence of other kinds of capitalism, distinct from the neoliberalism prevailing in the Anglo-Saxon axis, is one of the reasons why we must not accept the idea that we are surely before the “imminent collapse” of world capitalism. One thing is considering the need and urgency required to overcome capitalism, in any of its forms, all structurally opposed to our values, ideals, and needs. Something entirely different is to overestimate the anticapitalist forces at present and underestimate the redeployment capacity capitalism has already exhibited many times throughout its history.

The difference in policies between the “Anglo-Saxon” axis led by the United States, on one side, and the axis led by the BRICS, on the other, is the expression of a competition between distinct models of development, both surely capitalist, yet simultaneously confirming and resulting from something long analyzed: capitalism’s unequal and inharmonious development, which widens the gap or the relative imbalance between the central countries and the big developing countries, the BRICS specifically.

Despite the elements of cooperation between the two blocs and without prejudice to furthering the debate on the role played by China, it must be clear that, in order to get out of the crisis, the countries led by the U.S. need to impose a defeat on the BRICS and reaffirm imperialist and neoliberal hegemony over Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America.

This is why war is spreading, including with nuclear threats. For the same reason, too, the exchange and trade war with its damaging effects on the other economies; and why the structural adjustment programs or “austerity measures” in Europe do not affect the military industry; and the reason for the ineptitude of the United Nations to enforce its resolutions, when they are slightly contrary to the interests of the United States.

What is happening in the U.S., Europe and Japan is, on one hand, an outcome of capitalism’s nature and dynamic and, on the other, a political and ideological option determined by the hegemony of the financial plutocracy in the imperialist countries. It is worth recalling that all recent holders of key offices, for example the president of the European Central Bank and the secretary of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, among others, originally come from the private financial system and some have even worked for banks like Lehman Brothers, one of those responsible for triggering the financial crisis.

All that banks and investment funds want is to get the profits forecast for their speculative operations and loans no matter what, even if at the cost of the bankruptcy of countries facing great hardship and of the poverty of their people. For that they rely on the pivotal support of authorities linked to the financial system.

A somewhat overlooked piece of evidence that another policy is possible is the case of Iceland, the first European country to be pushed into the crisis with the insolvency of its financial system, triggered by unfettered speculation by the country’s main banks.

Iceland did not bail out the financial system and some of its banks went bankrupt. The population opposed the idea of rescuing them with public money, mostly because the amount needed for that was four times the size of Iceland’s GDP. Thus, Iceland did not submit to the conditions imposed by the IMF in exchange for loans and now its economy is relatively stable.

There is even talk of suing the bankers.

Notwithstanding, in the countries in southern Europe, in Ireland and in Cyprus, the prescription is privatization, layoffs of public employees, reduced wages for those willing to keep their jobs, smaller pensions, the undermining of social rights, unemployment insurance included.

Even in countries not subject to the conditions imposed by the Troika (i.e. the IMF, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission) budgetary restrictions have dramatically reduced the capacity of the State to drive the economy, in addition to affecting the quality of social policies.

The fact of the matter is that it will take the industrialized capitalist countries now in crisis several years to return to their 2009 development levels; meanwhile, unemployment rises and is now over 11% on average in the OECD countries, while among the young people it is at least twice as high.

One of the few European countries where unemployment rates are low, albeit with a rising percentage of temporary job contracts and below-minimum wages, is Germany.

The most industrialized and competitive country in Europe, Germany has a government pushing for austerity policies to be imposed, through the European Commission, mainly on those countries that are indebted to the German banks.

Chancellor Angela Merkel is bound to win next October's parliamentary elections, as she has so far been able to draw the support of German public opinion for her austerity policies.

Yet Germany is also suffering from growing deterioration of social services and from the cultural and subjective impacts the social crisis is disseminating across Europe: frustration and anguish, weakened social ties, widespread distrust, particularly in face of "the others" (migrants, minorities), predisposition to authoritarian messianisms and so forth.

The crisis has had an effect over European policymaking that thus far has mostly favored the right, which in turn takes advantage of the oversimplified argument that "you can't spend more than you earn", by imposing austerity measures as an alternative to unpopular tax hikes. Yet there is also growing popular dissatisfaction with the policies implemented by right-wing governments that, as in Spain and England, are finding it difficult to keep their majorities in parliament.

Many social democratic parties have jumped on the austerity bandwagon and in several cases, as in Greece, Spain, and Portugal, were among the first to implement structural adjustment measures. They were punished by the electorate, while in several countries alternation between parties sharing the same rhetoric has yielded two phenomena: the growth of the far-right and a rejection by major portions of the population of partisan and electoral political activities.

The second phenomenon is made clear by acceptance of "technical governments", lower turnouts, and by the share of votes given to the "anti-politicians", for example the party of comedian Beppe Grillo in the recent Italian elections (whose outcomes will surely be the subject of debate at the XIX/19th Meeting).

Also contributing to the rejection of partisan and electoral political activities, in addition to austerity policies and the absence of feasible alternatives from the left, are several corruption cases, like in Spain, where just recently members of the *Partido Popular*, including the incumbent Prime Minister, were accused of receiving kickbacks from contractors.

The labor and social movement, especially in those countries most affected by the austerity

measures, has reacted with massive demonstrations and general strikes, still insufficient to change the course of current policymaking.

The youth and various social groups have also staged huge demonstrations, like "*los indignados*", "Occupy Wall Street", and others.

Yet these movements fizzle out after some time for many reasons, including rejection of partisan and electoral political activity and poor creativity of the leftist parties to engage them. The challenge for the left is to present alternative platforms, sustain social mobilization, and build electoral alternatives. In this context, Greece portrays a situation that draws the interest of many progressive forces: there, leftist forces have presented an alternative based on social mobilization and electoral strength. And they are opposing both the right and the far-right. However, as a whole, Europe is immersed in strategy failure and internal confrontation, thus being forced to play a subaltern role in relation to the United States in its confrontation with the BRICS, Our America, and the countries opposing the hegemony of the axis led by the United States.

Africa and the Middle East are one of these settings of open confrontation between these blocs. For this reason the U.S. and Europe reacted promptly to the political crisis in the Arab world (a crisis that was and is still called by many "Spring"), for example by intervening in Libya, Mali, and Syria, and by preparing an attack against Iran.

The events in Iraq, Libya, Mali, and Syria (and the plans against Iran) constitute an outright disrespect for national sovereignty and, beyond the imperialist attitude, a return to the imperial attitude of the great powers.

Likewise, this is why last February the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the SADR as a free and independent State came without Moroccan colonial domination over the Sahrawis having ceased.

This is also why Israel continues to be a close ally of the United States in the Middle East and the largest foreign aid recipient. And this is also why the United States spared no effort in trying to stop the righteous victory represented by the acknowledgment of Palestine as a U.N. Observer State, after its status as a Member State in its Full Right was vetoed at the Security Council.

We recognize the political importance of the acknowledgment received by the people of Palestine in the form of United Nations Observer State Status. This decision reinforces the claims of great part of humanity for the definitive recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to build their material homeland and live in respectful peace with its neighbors and the other countries of the world.

The imperialist countries, the U.S. and France in particular, along with Israel and Saudi Arabia, want to destroy the axis formed by Iran, Syria, and the Hezbollah in Lebanon because it represents the most intransigent opposition to foreign interventions in the Middle East. The interventions and aggressions suffered by Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Mali by the hands of the capitalist powers headed by the United States, and the threats facing Syria, Iran, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), constitute flagrant and unacceptable violations of the national sovereignty of these peoples. The impunity of the actions perpetrated by the United States and its allies reveals unheard-of contempt for what is supposed to be the existing international law in terms of respect for the national sovereignty of the peoples. This is absolutely regressive behavior such that unilateral action plays the incorporeal role of planetary police, violating borders, destroying countries, and replicating governments of its

liking and convenience, without the slightest reaction at the openly criminal acts it carries out recklessly. No one should doubt that this sense of impunity is what the United States will leverage against the peoples of Our America where democratic and progressive processes keep advancing.

It is the duty of the parties of the São Paulo Forum to keep track of the positions adopted by our respective governments in the United Nations' system, whether in the General Assembly, at the Security Council, at the Human Rights Council or in any other of the U.N. bodies, regarding the situation described above.

If we share the certainty that to the United States and its allies our democratic and progressive vision makes us a probable target for their attacks, we must therefore be ready to stand up to, report, and neutralize any attempt to meddle in our region.

In turn, the events on the Korean Peninsula must be viewed both from a national perspective, that is, that of a people divided in two countries that one day will have to reunify, yet again against a backdrop of confrontation between blocs.

The ongoing conflict on the Peninsula of Korea is a historical consequence of this country's forced partition in the aftermath of the Second World War, of the interventionist occupation by the United States government and army of the south of Korea, and of the never-ending hurdles set up by the enemies of peace to prevent the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. The right-wing forces have gained positions both in South Korea and in Japan.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which governed Japan from the end of World War II to its defeat by the social democrats of the Democratic Party in 2009, returned to the government in 2012 thanks to the lack of capacity of the social democrats in dealing with the crisis and their failure to keep electoral pledges, like closing down the United States navy base in Okinawa, in addition to poor management of the Fukushima nuclear plant meltdown.

Economically and socially, this means the return of orthodox neoliberal policies. Yet, this also means a more bellicose tone by the Japanese government, since the LDP is claiming for the right to reorganize its armed forces, decommissioned in the aftermath of the Second World War. This rhetoric has gained momentum more recently with the explosion of a third nuclear artifact by North Korea, plus the fact that this country is on the verge of mastering the technology required to launch long-range missiles capable of carrying atomic warheads.

Japan and China, in turn, have been accusing each other due to a dispute over the territory of the Senkaku (in Japanese) or Diaoyu (in Chinese) Islands, which heightens tensions in the Far East.

China, for its part, has signaled that it will face this geopolitical dispute by strengthening the BRICS. In this reference, it is worth examining the decisions adopted in Durban in March 2013, as well as analyzing each one of the BRICS. Though not to be assumed as a homogeneous bloc, there is no doubt the BRICS will play a key role in the world setting.

Moreover, China has decided to strengthen its domestic market to the detriment of export-driven economic growth, prompting a slowdown and a GDP growth of about 7%, which is still one of the world's highest.

The international situation outlined above, in particular the counteroffensive launched by the United States and its allies, calls for a quick, effective, and joint reaction by the progressive and leftist parties, social movements, and governments towards ***expediting the regional integration process, neutralizing the Pacific Rim operation, supporting the success of the negotiation process between the FARC and the Santos government, reinforcing the political***

institutionality of our governments, in addition to ***expressing solidarity to the leftist forces leading social struggles and taking part in electoral processes***.

2. The situation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Two projects are confronting each other in Latin America and the Caribbean. One is subordinated to interests that are foreign to the region and possesses symbols like FTAA, NAFTA, FTAs and, now, the so-called Pacific Rim. The other is based on regional interests and bears symbols like CELAC, UNASUR, ALBA, and MERCOSUR.

The integrationist process has a long history in our region. In its more recent stage, it is directly related to the cycle of progressive and leftist governments ushered in with the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998.

The 19th Meeting reaffirms the statements made in the previous Forum Meetings and systematized in the progressive and leftist governments' assessment seminars. Our plurality is something we value positively, yet we have enemies in common, as common are the roads we tread on.

We have fought colonial heritage, yet it is still present in the Malvinas, Puerto Rico, in some Caribbean nations, and in French Guyana, as well as in racism and discrimination against original peoples and African descendants.

We have historically fought conservative developmentalism, which provides growth yet also brings dependence, inequality, and curtailed democracy.

We have fought against imperialism and neoliberalism, whose influence lingers on in our region and across the globe, threatening democracy, the people's well-being, sovereignty, and even the survival of humanity.

And we keep moving forward, each to one's pace and ways, along the road of economic growth with equality, social justice, democracy, sovereignty, integration, and in many cases, seeking to build a socialist society.

It is imperative to summarize the achievements of the pro-change forces in the region: recovery of national sovereignty and independence; emphasis on options focused on development, growth, and redistribution; democratization of the economy; poverty and inequality reduction; State repositioning; deepening democracy and creating new forums for popular participation; citizen participation in public management; compliance with the population's basic rights; political stability; the setting in place of efficient and innovative public management mechanisms; civic security and the struggle against violence; solutions for urban problems.

The progressive and leftist cycle initiated in 1998 is strong because it is neither one nor uniform, having evolved over diverse historical and social formations, with forces guided by distinct strategic horizons, albeit leftist, and with different levels of accumulation. That is why we have won in countries with disparate histories, cultures, social and political structures. Yet this plurality of national strategies must increasingly be combined with a continental strategy based on regional integration and with the establishment of common features for the alternative models in progress.

Without integration, which strengthens our common direction, a converging of national projects, our programs will not succeed and will not resist against our internal and external enemies' opposition, sabotage, siege, and attacks.

Thus, the 19th Meeting must make an assessment of the current stage of the regional

integration process, its accomplishments, its difficulties, and even its missteps. Foremost, observe the MERCOSUR, the UNASUR, ALBA, CELAC, and initiatives aimed at holding them back or even undermine them, as in the coups in Honduras and Paraguay, the Pacific Alliance and so on.

The Pacific Alliance was formally established in April 2011 in Lima, allegedly for the purpose of deepening trade integration between Peru, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, all of which countries have signed FTAs with the United States. The next summit of the Pacific Alliance is due on May 24, in Cali, Colombia. The Pacific Rim is in line with Obama's project for the creation of an area for the reaffirmation of the U.S. power in the Pacific.

The 19th Meeting must also analyze the impacts of the international crisis on the region. The European recession, feeble U.S. growth, and the Chinese slowdown have had moderate impacts on the Latin-American economy, perceptible mostly in the region's trade, since, according to ECLAC, Latin-American exports grew only by 1.6% in 2012.

Likewise, the region's mean GDP growth is estimated at 3.6% in 2012, down from 4.3% in 2011. Nonetheless, unemployment has fallen, mostly among women, and wages have risen, though most of the jobs generated are poor quality and there is uncertainty regarding the behavior of the economy in 2013 due to the ongoing crisis and the protectionist measures adopted by the developed countries.

Should the industrialized countries continue to depreciate their currencies, thus further increasing pressure for monetary appreciation in Latin America, with its harmful effects on the region's exports, it will be critical to adopt measures that will more effectively protect the economy of the region, foremost the industrial base, threatened by 'reprimarization' trends, to a lower or higher degree, in our countries.

There are disquieting signs of industrial denationalization and deindustrialization (or significant industrial transformations) in countries in the region, since crisis-stricken and shrinking consumer markets in the developed countries pose a hurdle for Latin-American producers, compounded by the fact that corporations based on the northern hemisphere keep coming to Latin America and are aggressively competing for market share here.

It must be said, however, that the growth in employment levels, mainly achieved through the strengthening of our region's domestic markets, the implementation of key social policies, and the strengthening of the role of the State, has preserved a political alternative to neoliberalism in several countries of Latin America for over a decade, and with the support of the majority of the people.

What we know is that the electoral victories the right-wing forces can claim, so far, were in places whose governments have no part in the wave begun in 1998. In the cases of Paraguay and Honduras, the right has opted for coups to return to power.

Honduras is on the brink of new elections, with the leftist organizations better rated by the people, a situation that is being jeopardized by threats by the right to once again resort to maneuvers designed to avert the triumph of the democratic forces.

It is also worth pointing out that the coming elections in El Salvador are of great importance to the Latin-American left.

The 19th Meeting is to produce a report on the contribution of Hugo Chávez to the region's process of change.

This is not just a formal obligation. The truth is that the United States, its European allies, and its allies in our region believe that the death of Hugo Chávez will drive a wedge through which

they will be able to penetrate and destabilize the Venezuelan process and, with that, affect the entire regional left. An example of this was the coup-inspired and destabilization-driven tactic by the Venezuelan right in the aftermath of the April 14th election of President Nicolás Maduro. The tactic had the evident backing of the United States and the European Union, which cynically refused to recognize the results of these clean and democratic elections as attested to by hundreds of international observers.

Nonetheless and precisely because of that, imperialism and its allies will do anything they can to undermine the Venezuelan government and economy, to hamper the functioning of the collective direction of the Bolivarian process and, not least, to attack the ideological, theoretical, programmatic, and cultural heritage of *Chavismo*.

Bearing the aforementioned in mind, the São Paulo Forum must take the offensive in this debate not only to defend the social, economic, and political transformative legacy of the Chávez government (1999-2013), but also to ensure that the Venezuelan experience may remain as a strategy to overcome neoliberalism and a transition strategy towards socialism, by means of winning governments through electoral processes, in the present Latin-American and Caribbean conditions.

We must be watchful because the imperialist forces and their regional allies, besides seeking to discredit *Chavismo*, also intend to revive the misconceived “theory “of the “two lefts”, with the clear purpose of undermining cooperation between the progressive and leftist forces acting in the region, thus hindering the regional integration process for the benefit of, for example, the so-called “Pacific Rim”.

Thereby, the Working Group considers it critical to warn the parties and governments of the region about the need to grant more concreteness and velocity to the integration process. We consider it important that the 19th Meeting should propose concrete initiatives to be launched in this regard.

In this context, one of homage to Chávez and his legacy, it seems appropriate to recall his role in favor of regional integration, his denunciation of the FTAA, and his work in favor of other integration and solidarity mechanisms for the peoples of the great Latin-American and Caribbean land, like the ALBA.

In Nicaragua, over the past years the economy has gained momentum and the population is living in safer conditions. The fact that Nicaragua has become an ALBA member has made it possible to boost economic and social achievements and introduce an alternative integration focus. The FSLN proves that investing in human development and organizing the people are two extremely important elements for development and sustainability.

In El Salvador the experience with the ALBA acquires a different connotation, as the government is a non-member, yet the municipalities governed by the FMLN and certain business sectors participate, through ALBA Petróleo of El Salvador, which contributes with food-production and social programs.

In the Central-American region, the official integration system is over sixty years old and is based on a traditional model that has been unable to overcome inequality and poverty, a convenient situation for the U.S. interests, whose justification for the rising militarization and increased military funding in the region is drug trafficking, replicating a model already implemented in Mexico.

Guatemala is stuck today between the interests of the military and the oligarchy in power and the great institutional voids left by unfinished peace agreements. In these hours social struggle

seems to reach a climax, eager to exercise the right to truth and justice after decades of dictatorial regimes responsible for countless acts of genocide and repression.

The 19th Meeting should underscore that the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean is the **strategic objective of the São Paulo Forum**. This objective is to be accomplished by advancing and supporting regional integration mechanisms that may become weapons for our nations to wield against foreign policies seeking to weaken the Latin-American left. In this sense we should emphasize the pro tempore presidency of Cuba at the head of CELAC and its significance to concrete integrationist actions.

The political parties gathered in the São Paulo Forum play, therefore, a triple role: orienting our governments to deepen the changes and step up integration; organizing social forces to support our governments or oppose right-wing governments; and building mass thought that is Latin-American and Caribbean, integrationist, democratic, people-led, and socialist.

An important part of the deepening of the changes and a premise for the construction of a Latin-American and Caribbean thought is the democratization of social communication and of judicial powers.

Among our tasks, it is worth mentioning our intense 2013-2014 electoral calendar:

- June [30th, 2013](#): primary elections in Chile
- August [11th, 2013](#): primary elections in Argentina
- October [27th, 2013](#): legislative elections in Argentina (half of the Chamber of Deputies and a third of the Senate)
- November [10th, 2013](#): general elections in Honduras
- November [17th, 2013](#): first round of the elections in Chile (President, Deputies, Senators, and for the first time also Regional Advisors (*Consejeros Regionales*))
- December [15th, 2013](#): second round of elections in Chile
- February [2nd, 2014](#): first round of presidential elections in El Salvador
- February 2nd, [2014](#): presidential and legislative elections in Costa Rica
- [March 9th, 2014](#): second electoral round in El Salvador
- [March 9th, 2014](#): legislative elections in Colombia
- [May 4th, 2014](#): general elections in Panama
- [May 25th, 2014](#): presidential elections in Colombia
- May 2014: legislative elections in the Dominican Republic
- June 1st, 2014: primary elections in Uruguay
- October [5th, 2014](#): first electoral round in Brazil (President, Governors, Senators, Federal and State Representatives)
- October [26th, 2014](#): second electoral round in Brazil
- October 26th, 2014: legislative and first round of presidential elections in Uruguay
- November [30th, 2014](#): runoff presidential election in Uruguay
- December 2014: general elections in Bolivia.

Also worth highlighting is the importance of the FARC-Santos government negotiations.

The most recent peace processes in Colombia share a trait in common – each failed process was followed by an escalating wave of violence. And this common trait should prevail in the horizon of the present peace process in Colombia, since a new failure would submerge the country in a new cycle of fratricide violence.

The failure of the Caguán dialogs was followed by a period during which homicide increased exponentially, as was the case with the failed dialogs of La Uribe, Caracas, and Tlaxcala.

In the 1980s, with the failure of the peace dialogs led by Betancourt, the first Colombian president to dare acknowledge the objective causes of the violence, paramilitarism spread like a 1,000-head hydra.

On its way this paramilitary army has sown terror, displaced people, murdered, abducted people, and usurped land. A phenomenon that has mutated toponymically into the present *Bandas Criminales*, the notorious Bacrim, which continue, however, in their practices, actions, and ideological orientation to embody the paramilitary project.

At the present juncture there is no doubt that the peace process will be followed by an escalation in the war. Unlike the 1980s, when the Colombian people said that there were covert peace enemies, today the enemies of negotiated peace are openly acting to undermine the La Habana talks.

The statements by the Colombian far-right, headed by Uribe Vélez, have stigmatized the present peace process, charged it with death bombs, and above all have announced that should it win the next presidential elections, the peace policy will be replaced by a war policy. To this common trait we should add that, at present, if peace fails in Colombia, this will seriously compromise the region's stability, especially the north of South America and the Caribbean zone.

The warpath along which Uribe led Colombia during his two terms of office will follow a failure in the current peace talks under the argument that more time was the only thing required to strike a military-strategic blow against the FARC. The warpath, however, shows ignorance of the recent ruling by The Hague, amounting in practice to a declaration of war against Nicaragua, severed recently reestablished relations with Venezuela, and constant showdowns with Correa's project in Ecuador.

Today more than ever, the Colombian war –along with the Venezuelan Bolivarian socialist project and the dispute over the Argentine Malvinas– cannot be seen as a “mere” national issue; rather, it must be set against the regional context.

A war in Colombia is Latin America's war, and peace in Colombia is peace in Latin America. Avoiding a new spiral of violence in Colombia and a bellicose environment in the region is a more far-reaching historical commitment for the entire Colombian, Latin-American, and Caribbean left.

Peace in Colombia will help us reduce the military presence of U.S. imperialism in the region. This is also one of the reasons we will keep on fighting till there is no colony in Our America. In January 2013, in Santiago, Chile, the Community of Latin-American and Caribbean States (CELAC) expressed its open support for a free, independent, and sovereign Puerto Rico. The 19th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum joins the struggle for the full and sovereign independence of Puerto Rico, adopting as its own the statements made by CELAC, along with by a significant part of the international community.

This year on March 26th, Argentina once again submitted its historical complaint about the Malvinas to the United Nations, a decision that received the “unanimous” support of Latin America, in order to demand that the United Kingdom negotiate the sovereignty of the islands. Still, the British refused the mediation of the U.N. Secretary General.

Argentina's foreign minister, Héctor Timerman, asked the U.N. Secretary General -again- to intercede before the British authorities; however, Ban Ki-moon confirmed that the United Kingdom refused the mediation offered, despite the 40-plus U.N. resolutions establishing that the two countries should negotiate a peaceful and definitive agreement on the sovereignty of

the Malvinas. During his visit to the U.N. the Argentine foreign minister was accompanied by Bruno Rodríguez, foreign minister of Cuba, who attended the meeting with Ban Ki-moon in representation of the Community of Latin-American and Caribbean States (CELAC); by his Uruguayan peer, Luís Almagro, on behalf of the MERCOSUR; and by Peru's Undersecretary of State, José Beraún Aranibar, on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). To us, participants in the 19th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum, the Malvinas are Argentine. Therefore, we will strive to make sure that the governments of the countries hereby represented once again demand the devolution of the archipelago of the Republic of Argentina by the United Kingdom.

The struggle in defense of national sovereignty and independence, against colonialism and imperialism, is most intensely expressed in the defense of Cuba.

The **United States trade, economic, and financial blockade against Cuba**, imposed in October [1960](#), is condemned today by most of the countries of the globe, as made clear in the overwhelming majority vote held in November 2012 at the United Nations General Assembly against the blockade (188 countries condemning the blockade, 3 votes in favor, and 2 abstentions) and calling for its lifting and the cessation of any coercive action not emanating from the United Nations Charter.

The 19th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum expresses its complete solidarity with and support for the people and government of the Republic of Cuba and sides with each statement by nations expressly calling for the definitive cessation of the economic, trade, financial blockade imposed on Cuba and demanding that the government of the United States of America fully abide by the United Nations Resolutions thereof and by the trade principles the United States itself subscribed to at the World Trade Organization, providing for the free circulation of goods, financial transfers, and people.

Moreover, the 19th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum demands that the United States immediately release the Cuban Heroes detained in its territory, heroes defending their homeland against terrorist plans being plotted in the United States since the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, which have cost the lives of many innocent people for more than fifty years. One of our challenges to successfully combat imperialism is to engage in the organization and struggle of the people of the United States.

We establish a distinction between the United States people, who are our allies, and the United States government, which is the main culprit for the economic, political, social, and military unrest our planet is facing. To the people of the United States we express our solidarity with their struggles for social justice, against oppression and in favor of fundamental rights.

We express our solidarity to the millions of men and women immigrants residing in the United States –many coming from Latin America and the Caribbean– in their just struggle for human, social, and economic rights, whom we support under the motto **“All rights to all men and women migrants and their families”**.

The political tasks outlined will only be accomplished if the leftist and progressive forces grouped in the São Paulo Forum are fully conscious of the importance of unity. There is **no more pressing task for the Latin-American and Caribbean left than unity** and that our forces unite locally and nationally – and regionally. A unity understanding and acknowledging of our differences yet deeply rooted in the objectives that all our peoples share in common. **Unity is the roadmap towards our peoples' effective integration.**

7. Plan of action

The commission in charge of drafting the discussion document is now preparing the 2013–2014 Plan of Action of the São Paulo Forum building on the topics below.

Uphold and broaden spaces conquered, especially national governments.

Keep fighting to defeat the right wherever it governs.

Deepen change where we govern.

Strengthen unity and regional integration.

Synchronize our struggle against imperialism and the right's counterattack.

Support and seek to broaden social struggles.

Contribute towards a political and peaceful solution for the situation in Colombia.

Support the efforts of the progressive, democratic, and leftist sectors in Honduras.

Our deepest solidarity with the struggle waged by the people, our brothers and sisters, of Haiti to overcome ancestral poverty and marginality and in favor of the full democratization of the Haitian society, without foreign meddling and respecting Haiti's national sovereignty. Endeavor to support the leftist forces in that country.

Reaffirm our commitment to the cause of decolonization, self-determination, and independence, and of our peoples' unity and integration, especially with regard to the cases of Puerto Rico, the Malvinas and the other British colonies in the South Atlantic, the French Guyana, Martinique, and Guadeloupe.

Solidarity with Cuba. Fight against the blockade. Adopt the cause of the freedom of the Cuban Heroes as the cause of the São Paulo Forum and demand their immediate release by the United States through the required channels.

Strengthen the Europe Department of the São Paulo Forum and our ties with the various sectors of the European left, especially anti-neoliberal resistance parties and social movements.

Consolidate the U. S. Department of the São Paulo Forum and strengthen our ties with the resistance movements in the United States, particularly those standing up for the rights of migrants and the "Occupy!" resistance movement against the crisis.

Broaden our dialog with the left in Africa and the Middle East.

Reinforce our struggle for peace, against foreign meddling, and our solidarity with the peoples who are fighting, starting with Palestine.

Express our solidarity to countries like Syria and Iran, violated in their sovereignty and harassed by imperialism.

Increase dialog and agreements with the parties of China, Russia, India, and South Africa.

Increase the Latin-American and Caribbean left's capacity to draw up propositions in face of the most critical and salient themes, and intensify debate on the course of the changes in the region, their nature, and their short-, medium-, and long-term goals, on alternatives to neoliberalism and capitalism, and on the role of the diverse regional expressions of unity and integration.

Improve the organic functioning of the São Paulo Forum by strengthening coordination spheres in order to drive debate, coordinate positions, and increasingly disseminate them regionally and globally, as well as achieving greater cooperation between the São Paulo Forum parties in concrete actions.

Hold the 20th Meeting of the São Paulo Forum in 2014 in Bolivia.

