

# CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON THE ROAD TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF NATIONS

## Hemispheric Social Alliance

Presented to the Ministers and Vice-ministers of the SACN  
in Santiago, Chile, November 22nd & 23rd, 2006

1. We believe that the future of the South American Community of Nations brings new perspective to the root weakness of the FTAA project, and is an expression of the general conviction in the continent that "another integration" is possible. A South American bloc will be an important and positive step if it permits our peoples to speak with their own voice, independent of the impositions and conditions set by the United States, Europe and multilateral institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the BID. **Reaffirming and exercising the sovereignty of the region is the first step towards any project of a true integration.**
2. The difference between the FTAA, FTAs and investment agreements – which are oriented to favour transnational corporations and the commodification of all aspects of life – and the South American Community of Nations should be based on the redistribution of the wealth that is today concentrated in very few hands, on the commitment of the states to their obligations in regards to the social, cultural, economic rights of the peoples, on the overcoming of discriminations based on gender, race and generation, and on respect for the identity and the rights of indigenous peoples. **Life, human and environmental rights, well being and solidarity amongst the peoples should be central to the process of integration.**
3. **We understand education to be a fundamental right of the peoples. For this reason, it should be one of the central pillars of any project of integration for the region.** It is essential that a commitment to the eradication of illiteracy be established – as well as to the elimination of misery and of hunger. For this reason, we must develop mechanisms that permit technical and scientific cooperation between countries towards the end of overcoming existing inequalities. All the countries of the Community should likewise assume a commitment towards educational reform that guarantees universal, free public education of quality for the entire population. To meet the objective of promoting "inter-culturalism" between peoples and in recognition of cultural diversity, native languages should be incorporated into the system in a determined manner.

**In the fight for the eradication of poverty, it is necessary also to establish a South American Plan to guarantee the universality of access to Public Health.**

4. The physical integration of South America is fundamental in meeting the goal of broadening the possibility of contacts between our peoples and countries. For this reason, the infrastructure cannot be designed as part of a global geo-strategy for the control, dominion, possession and usufruct of strategic natural resources and the exploitation of cheap labour. In this sense, **projects such as IIRSA (South American Regional Integration of Infrastructure), conceived by the IFIs and international capital as complements to the FTAA, should be rejected in favour of proposals for Infrastructural Integration that emerge from the necessities of the peoples and that prioritizes our joint participation** in a framework for comprehensive development in harmony with the

environment and the norms and principles that make its care and protection possible, with respect to our communities and human rights, and that no longer generate illegitimate and hated indebtedness. To achieve this, projects should be submitted to democratic debate and consideration with the communities that will be affected by their implementation and financial provisions.

5. **Financial integration referred to by the South American Community should begin from the point of recognizing that we are creditors of an immense historical, social, cultural, ecological, and financial debt** whose recovery – together with the halt and reversal of the current mechanisms that facilitate the flight of capital, human capacity, and natural goods – should establish genuine and sovereign financial potential, but in a manner that is able to meet our needs. Such commitment by the states of the regions will put an end to the mechanisms of indebtedness and external conditioning that have served to impose the Washington Consensus, and to systematically violate human and environmental rights.

In this sense, the states should review and reverse agreements of investment protection and promotion, extensions of jurisdiction, and the acceptance of extra-judicial authorities like the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, regressive payment systems, and other mechanisms for the under-resourcing of the state (including the privatization of important public goods and services whose private exploitation is currently subsidized by the state), and instead establish controls on exchanges and financial transactions in order to strengthen an autonomous financial base and to eliminate the false necessity of external capital.

The new financial system requires new mechanisms of control and monitoring that begin by instituting proceedings against those who have unscrupulously trapped our nations in debt, and that ensure social participation in the determination of budget priorities [there will be a need to remain on guard because of the danger that new supportive finance mechanisms between countries of the Community may be appropriated to maintain old relations of domination and control such as, for example, the creation and sale of bonds and other mechanisms that create new debt, between countries of the region, in order to continue payments against the old debt that is clearly illegitimate and illegal]. In this same sense, we should not admit the restructuring or conversion of debt, a practice that only serves to whitewash questionable debts and to fall prey to external interests.

In order to prevent our people from continuing as victims of illegitimate and hated debts that are continually recreated from sources of permanent de-financing, we demand **that a South American audit be carried out on the debt payment demands levied against the peoples in the region, and that there be external audits of the International Financial Institutions, their policies and credit practices, and that all of this to be promoted by the South American Community of Nations.**

6. **South American energy integration should be fostered, beginning with the strengthening of state enterprises in hydrocarbons, the nationalization of strategic resources, and the channelling of profits obtained in this manner towards sustainable development, with policies of income redistribution, and using any surplus to finance renewable energy options.** It is necessary to share our resources for the benefit of our peoples, respecting economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, and that our well-being and that of future generations prioritized – these resources should not be for the benefit of transnational corporations and local oligarchies.

Sustainable energy development means respect for the rights of communities, energy

conservation and the combating of excessive energy consumption. Energy sources should be renewable, clean and low impact, and equitable and democratic access should be guaranteed. The countries of the SACN should guarantee full access to energy resources to all inhabitants of the continent, in the bid to overcome the current reality where countries with high energy potential have not yet achieved a dignified level of supply to their inhabitants.

It would be necessary to change the current energy model that implies a high level of dependency on combustible fossil fuels and that has serious impacts on local populations and original peoples. Multinational and even state enterprises themselves cause irreparable damage to the environment and communities through this type of exploitation.

**Energy projects should be viable in terms not only of economic costs, but also social and environmental ones.** We request that information on the social, ecological and socioeconomic impacts of such projects be made publicly available, in order to evaluate if energy megaprojects justify the investment of such capital when decentralized alternatives to such investments exist, including the generation of renewable energy. We reject the idea of financing this type of work with loans from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, because this will jeopardize the future of South America by placing it yet again in the hands of foreign creditors.

7. There will be no true integration if the asymmetries between the different countries are not resolved. For years, this theme has never moved beyond being a mere discourse in the ACN and in MERCOSUR. We defend **the creation of a compensation fund for the most underdeveloped countries, whose resources may then be destined to develop sectors of the popular economy, cooperatives, and to projects in agreement with the decisions of the peoples of these countries** – and not those defined under pressure of national and transnational big capital. These funds could initially be constituted through a tax levied on the financial transactions of transnational corporations that operate in South America, and by utilizing part of the resources of international monetary reserves in our countries which are today deposited in the United States. In this same spirit, mechanisms that perpetuate asymmetrical relations should be reviewed and corrected; establishing, for example, the necessity that Brazil and Argentina annul the bilateral debts claimed from Paraguay as the unjust results of the construction of the Yacretá and Itaipú dams.
8. We must **change the South American model of development** that is export-oriented in order to favour one based on internal development for the benefit of the people. South America can not keep being a region principally geared towards the export of raw materials (hydrocarbons and minerals) and certain agribusiness products. South American integration should promote the complementarity of our economies in order to generate jobs and promote a comprehensive mode of production and development, strengthening interregional trade and the substitution for imported goods of products that can be produced in the region.
9. The South American Community of Nations is being threatened by FTAs being signed by Chile, Colombia and Peru. **It is fundamental to reverse these agreements and to promote in their place trade agreements that do not compromise sovereignty, medicines, health, water, education, culture, biodiversity, food sovereignty, government purchases, and natural resources, and to implement active industrial policies.** The experience of the last 20 years has shown that it is necessary to conceptualize a new structure for trade in the region that begins from the recognition that it can be an important tool for development only if it is regulated, in order to avoid the mode of trade which perpetuates asymmetries between businesses and between countries, deepening the dependency on and subordination of countries and peoples to the great powers.

Trade is not an end in and of itself; rather, it should be thought of as a form of creating linkages between the important production chains in the region in order to stimulate development, taking maximum advantage of the complementarities that exist between diverse national economies, and prioritizing the creation of an integrated, powerful regional market of consumption over other proposals that aspire fundamentally to increase exports to external markets.

**Within the South American Community of Nations, just and cooperative trade accords should take priority, rather than those that only serve to reproduce experiences of the neo-liberal approach to integration. We wish to note here that far from suggesting an advance, the so-called “convergence” between the ACN and MERCOSUR as proposed may signify the reinforcement rather than elimination of the neo-liberal model of integration.**

10. However South American integration should also transcend trade, and advance in the resolution of other dilemmas facing our peoples and reality in the region. One of these arms stockpiles and militarization in our region, often associated with the installation of military bases, military command and control structures such as Plan Colombia, the build-up of military manpower in conjunction with the pentagon's Southern Command - all emerging from a theory of conflict and military doctrine that does not correspond with the interests of our peoples. We consider that, in this process of integration, the South American countries should elaborate their own doctrine of security and national defence which speaks to the aspirations for peace, sovereignty and self-determination of each and every one of our peoples.

We come with deep concern over the presence of our troops in Haiti and we believe that the withdrawal of these military forces should begin immediately. We are also concerned that United States troops have been allowed into Paraguay. The SACN should have this discussion and consider how to reverse all those actions which weaken our sovereignty, generate conflicts and adversely affect civil rights and democracy.

At the same time, the nations of South America should consider a joint effort of **struggle against impunity and state violence**, strengthening democracy and setting important precedents to settle the historic debt with peoples who fight for dignity and justice.

11. In the process of the SACN, we consider that it is impossible to conceive of a regional integration without an active citizenry, rights and in general, the existence of nationalities and indigenous peoples that transcend republican frontiers. Indigenous peoples and communities are those most directly and principally affected by the actions of transnational corporations, whose indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources generate poverty, migration, pollution, and marginality. **The indigenous peoples should be recognized as protagonists in processes of integration, and the policies of the SACN should aim to preserve territories, environmental resources and life itself.**
12. The **decriminalization of the coca leaf** in South America and support for its industrialization is a fundamental step to achieving the removal by 2008 of the coca leaf from the United Nations list of prohibited substances.
13. **We see the recognition of communication as being a key means of unification as central to the reunion and fraternity of the nations involved, and to the support of urgent tasks towards the creation of well-being amongst our peoples.** Democratic Communication should be seen as a fundamental right, and there should be a commitment among the parties to adopt public policies to this end. Therefore we urge agreement on a strategy of cooperation in the spheres of information, communication, culture and

knowledge; the definition of agreements to promote regional networks of public communication with a sense of equity with respect to the means of communication; the prioritizing of intraregional connection of telecommunication networks (reducing external dependency); together with training policies and the enhancement of accessibility in each country.

14. We call on the states of the South American Community of Nations to constitute a process towards a **Convention on Water that is oriented towards guaranteeing water as a human right**, to care for our primary water sources and resources and to protect them against privatization and commodification through an international agreement that builds on the advances made to date, in the framework of the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

We also call on the States to construct a Global Forum on Water based on the principles of full participation and inclusion and in recognition of water as a human right.

The SACN should be an instrument that commits countries to:

- Reverse the processes of dismantling states services, and to instead strengthen public systems of water and basic sanitation to develop efficient management, with transparency and social control, ensuring mechanisms of cooperation and exchange with this end in mind.
  - Promote the effective participation of communities in decision making on projects of development that involve water in each territory, retaining their visions, patterns of usage and customs in the sustainable planning and management of natural resources.
15. The SACN and in particular the affected countries should abandon the current model of research, management and elaboration of official policies with respect to the Guaraní Aquifer, most of which has been created under the tutelage of the World Bank through the Global Environmental Facility, which are contrary to popular sovereignty and which do not satisfy the principles of informative participation and transparency that we promote as constituent organizations of the social movement in defence of water. **We propose the creation of national institutional spaces of information and discussion with respect to the uses of the territories and subsoil that constitute the Guaraní Aquifer System (GAS), with participation of the social movements and organizations of those countries which share the GAS**, which will be linked to public authorities whose principle tasks are to monitor the water table and usage, its defence as a shared public good, and the denunciation of all proceedings of research and management of knowledge that are not transparent.

Before the completion of the GAS Project of the WB/GEF/OAS in 2008, it is necessary to produce a pre-project, alternative research and management framework with the objective of defending sovereignty and with an integrative approach through searching for genuine financing that does not impose conditions on governments and social organizations contrary to their fundamental interests; a framework that gives continuity to that which preserves, and to modifying asymmetries in favour of countries and not multilateral institutions. We demand the release of documents on the referred-to project to the movements, parliaments and governments of the countries of the GAS.

16. **It is urgent to adopt policies of sustainable development that assume social justice as a central measure of quality and to construct mechanisms of intervention that permit the inclusion of all inhabitants.** We aspire to a regional integration based on a different socio-economic model that is oriented towards: increasing decent and permanent jobs; ensuring the application of labour rights; universalizing public social security; strengthening the right to unionize and to collective bargaining; adopting measures against

discrimination in the labour market and that searches to overcome the current sexual division of labour that penalizes women; that puts in place programmes of Youth Employment; that puts a stop to the mechanisms that drive our populations to migrate, but at the same time, that recognizes the basic level of rights of migrant workers guaranteed by international conventions.

17. As united countries, we should confront the job of creating an **agrarian reform** that guarantees to all the right to work the land, and that democratizes property in a manner that gives priority to family, social and cooperative forms. The SACN should be a natural space to consolidate **food sovereignty** ; in other words, the right that all people have to produce their own food (which is of healthy and high quality) in an independent manner, in order to supply all of society. **Seed as the legacy of humanity and cannot be subjected to the privatization and patenting of multinationals.**
18. As a consequence of neo-liberalism and structural adjustment policies applied in the region, every day millions of people are obliged to emigrate in search of alternative livelihoods.

We consider the primary obligation of the governments to develop the necessary policies to effectively guarantee workers freedom from having to emigrate. These must be made in light of the situation facing migrant workers and their families, in whatever stage of migration they may find themselves. **In contrast to the reductionist vision that sees migrants simply as a labour force, we affirm that they are persons and not commodities, and moreover, that all those rights that will permit them to develop themselves and fully exercise their citizenship through the enjoyment of labour, social, cultural, economic, civil and political rights, should be guaranteed.**

We cannot continue with policies aimed at criminalizing the immigrant and at treating migration as a matter of security. The SACN should develop policies that guarantee citizenship to migrants and that promotes shared actions to fight against poverty and marginality, and to foster conditions that allow the inhabitants in each country to develop themselves fully and to guarantee their continued well-being.

19. **We demand the urgent creation of mechanisms of Social Participation in the construction of the Community at local, regional, sub-regional and national levels.** The States should ensure the transparency of the negotiation process of the SACN initiative, recognizing that the official mechanisms of this Summit, as with previous ones, have not facilitated access to information, nor the dissemination of progress made, nor the contents of what is being discussed. The alleged “informality” of the Reflection Group should not operate as a formal shield to impede the publication of the discussions of the 12 countries. The presidents united in Cochabamba should create a formal mechanism of popular participation and consultation.
20. We, the social movements who – resisting while searching for Alternatives to create the conditions for “another world is possible”, “another Americas is possible” – are reaffirming our commitment to the construction of a South American Community based on the universal exercise of Human Rights, in the context of popular Sovereignty and participatory Democracy. For this reason, we have taken on the organizing of the Social Summit for the Integration of the Peoples to be held in Cochabamba. It is to be a space where the historical accumulation of our struggles and the democratic construction of political, social and economic Alternatives come together; understanding that integration that emerges from the peoples also strengthens our Identity, our cultural diversity. It is out of this experience that all the peoples assume the challenge of sharing in the construction of the integration of

the South American peoples drawing from the diversity of expression fundamental to Social Forums throughout the continent, free from exclusion or discrimination.

***The South American Community of Nations should demonstrate that “Another Integration is Possible.”***

*English translation courtesy Amanda Latimer*