

# Fujimori: 'Let Us Build the United States of South America'

*In the working session of the South American Presidents Summit in Brazil, different Presidents were responsible for directing the discussions on the five general topics on the agenda; each would speak for five minutes, and then a short discussion among the Presidents, of some 20 minutes, and not to be reported, would follow the presentations. Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori and Paraguayan President Luis González Macchi were responsible for the topic of organized crime and drug trafficking. In his brief speech, Fujimori situated the battle against the drug trade as but a predicate of the broader battle required to secure the progress for which South America's people long, and which is their right. His speech follows. A subhead has been added:*

Peru salutes President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's decision to take up this historic initiative, which constitutes the first great step which the states of the South American subcontinent take toward regional integration, the highest expression of the conscience and objective recognition of our interests.

Forgive me for only adding a few brief words on a subject such as this, that of drug trafficking, which has been aired and discussed on hundreds of occasions. In the 11 years I have served as President, there has been no meeting in which this subject has not been discussed. And the problem exists; what doubt can there be that it exists and that the matter demands, of course, an efficient strategy to combat it? But it also reveals that we are the continent of paradoxes.

Seen from a satellite, the South American subcontinent is enormous, more than 20 million square kilometers which contain resources which make us, united, the number-one mining, fishing, oil, and forestry power in the world.

However, there below, in that so generously endowed portion of the planet, we also see great areas of coca or poppy cultivation, immense belts of urban misery, unemployment, endemic diseases, precarious education, terrorist violence, etc., etc.

And, as if this were not enough—and this is not detected by satellite—we have to add to this already somber panorama a sizable and heavy foreign debt weighing upon the shoulders of our peoples, and whose principal, according to conservative data, has been paid several times, over the course of these last 25 years.

We are 450 million South Americans, but 200 million of

our people live in poverty, in precarious living conditions, reminiscent of centuries past. This is something which does not occur in other regions of the world, less endowed by nature. Something has gone wrong; we are not on the right path, and perhaps it is necessary to rectify this.

## A 'Shared Perspective'

Is this not, I ask myself, an extraordinary occasion to begin to realistically move toward a development strategy from a shared perspective, without prejudices, suspicions, or fears?

Up until today, we have faced problems with third parties in an isolated manner, bilaterally. One of those problems is, precisely, the drug trade. What has been the result? A weak, fragile position, where the large consuming countries impose their conditions. Common sense, a true recognition of our regional identity, and an authentic vision of the future, leads us to a different logic for resolving our problems, not as isolated and weak interlocutors, but with the strength which unity should give us.

Today we have heard about the necessity of negotiating with the great developed blocs on demands regarding the environment, trade, foreign debt, and other subjects. Now, we meet as 12 separate states, which, if history had been different, a more logical history, we certainly would be a totally different reality. However, we should not resign ourselves to it, but face it creatively.

This can give rise—I am going to use a phrase which might seem utopian, ethereal, and lyrical—to the United States of South America, but I believe that in this first meeting we should audaciously pose a goal which corresponds to the great challenges which are being posed by the 450 million human beings who live in South America, a land which still continues to be one of promise and hope.

There is an immense potential which is reflected in our territorial dimensions, the quantity of resources which we possess, and our people's longing for progress, who, with justified right, are awaiting that development and well-being which already exists in other parts of the world. As a region, we are politically weak. However, Brazil is one of the largest countries in the world, and one of the greatest economic powers on the planet.

We cannot continue confirming that we are the continent of paradoxes. Twenty million square kilometers, 450 million inhabitants, and with problems of drugs, of foreign debt, and without the ability to exploit our resources.

We South Americans are no less capable than other peoples of the world, who are achieving progress. Therefore, our goals must be audacious and our actions sufficiently efficient to turn our dreams into reality.

It is for that reason that, perhaps ingenuously, or as a dreamer, I would like to think that this first meeting, convoked by President Cardoso, would become the birth certificate of the United States of South America.

Thank you.