

Speech by Miguel Vargas

Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean  
3 November 2017

Good morning.

Luis Ayala, Secretary General of the Socialist International,

Comrades Vice-Presidents,

Delegates,

Special Guests,

Distinguished members of the press,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to give you a warm welcome to our country.

On behalf of the Dominican Revolutionary Party, I extend to you our greetings and appreciation for your presence here in this meeting of the Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean.

We are honoured by your participation.

As Dominicans, we will do our very best to make you feel at home here.

This meeting has a great significance for the Socialist International because here will be elected the new authorities of the Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean for the next four years.

In view of the current historic moments in the world, especially in our region, this election must be conducted observing the principles of solidarity, cooperation and fraternity on which social democracy and its ideological framework are based, applying at the same time the criteria of active participation, wide representativeness and unity in diversity.

Poverty, inequality, the growth of organised crime and gender violence, are important challenges for our region to which we will be able to respond only by being united and with a constructive attitude towards dialogue in order to help our people to live well and with dignity, reaching prosperity and the fullness of wellbeing.

The current political climate demands wisdom and political intelligence, but it also demands the unity of everyone around the common goal of a sustainable development for our nations.

We trust that the spirit of collaboration among us will continue to help us increase our feelings of fraternity, so that the links that we build in these gatherings will continue to be of great benefit for the strengthening of democracy in our region.

Comrades,

While it is true that during the current century the social investment with respect to GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean has increased from 11% to 14.6%, according to ECLAC's figures, inequality is still the main challenge for our region.

This is our greatest obstacle to reach a sustainable development and achieve the wellbeing and prosperity for our peoples.

In order to combat inequality, we must promote policies of employment that guarantee for our citizens a dignified and well-paid job; this will be possible if we are able to formulate an economic model that encourages investment and leaves behind the rent-seeking habits of the Latin American entrepreneur.

Greater economic growth, less unemployment, that must be the battle cry of the social democratic proposals in order to achieve the sustainable development goals for 2030.

The projects of alliances between the public and private sectors must also be another flag that must be raised by social democrats in Latin American and Caribbean to promote equality of opportunities for all.

The region must finally demonstrate a decided commitment to innovation and research for development, since these are the essential tools for taking the great leap that generation after generation have been searching for.

Active and growing economies, full employment, state and private sectors working together for the wellbeing of all, public policies that promote innovation and research, they all have one basic need: education.

That is the greatest commitment our governments should undertake, an intelligent investment in education leading to an education system that promotes creativity and ensures the formation of citizens well prepared to successfully respond to the world challenges of the next hundred years.

Access to the education system in the region has substantially improved, with increased rates of schooling, nevertheless, the quality of our teaching is still insufficient; according to figures of the Inter-American Development Bank only a third of the students of Latin American and Caribbean reach the minimum standard of basic mathematics skills.

That is without mentioning that the countries of the region which participate in the International Programme for Assessment of Students (PISA), were located at the bottom of the ranking.

As we can see, the inequality created by unemployment and a low-quality education constitutes the main threat to democracy in the region and is the cause of the important deficits that are evident in our democratic model.

Certainly, in what concerns the electoral aspect, Latin American democracy remains constantly improving. Today, in almost all the countries of the region elections take place without any major problems, apart from the normal ones in any contest.

We have ahead of us the challenge to guarantee the loyalty of the votes of our citizens, with less expensive campaigns, with a society better engaged with everyone as a whole rather than with the individuals, and more aware of the quality of the proposals of the candidates.

However, democracy is much more than going to the polls.

Democracy is built through public policies that guarantee a universal and equal access to better opportunities, an economic model that includes everyone in the society and, above all, with a political leadership able to find the exact point of agreement to solve the problems of the people through dialogue, fraternity and unity, despite how different their way of thinking may be.

Gathered here today, we have the historic responsibility of making this world a better place and giving the future generations the assurance that we will know how to live in peace, in harmony and in prosperity for the wellbeing of all.

Thank you very much.