

Africa and Latin America: Building Unity and Solidarity against Western Intervention

Third Africa-South America Summit Held in Equatorial Guinea Gathering calls for unity against western intervention, Palestine statehood and enhanced trade

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From February 20-23, the Third Africa-South America Summit (ASA) was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The event was a follow-up meeting to two others held in Nigeria in 2006 and Venezuela in 2009.

This event enjoyed the participation of 63 governments from both continents including twenty heads-of-state from Africa and five from South America. The summit was held under the theme: "Strategies and Mechanism to Promote South-South Cooperation."

The summit adopted the Malabo Declaration containing a number of resolutions aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two continents. The deliberations also resulted in the establishment of a presidential committee which will be the decision-making organ between the gatherings that are held every three years.

Republic of Zimbabwe Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, who was a member of the delegation headed by President Robert Mugabe, described the summit as a great success. After returning from Malabo at the Harare International Airport he briefed reporters on developments at the meeting.

Mumbengegwi said that "As you know the theme of the summit relates to South-South cooperation. The Summit discussed strategies and mechanisms to promote South-South cooperation." (Zimbabwe Sunday Mail, February 24)

He went on to note that "A permanent secretariat based in Venezuela was also approved to run day to day coordination and implementation of our cooperation." Some 30 joint projects have been proposed in the fields of education, information, trade, communication and technology among other areas.

According to Mumbengegwi, "So far South America has expressed interest in 16 projects. However, implementing this has not been done and the reason being the lack of an implementation framework."

The Zimbabwe official recognized that these projects embodied the potential to reap tremendous economic benefits for both regions. Brazil committed to cooperate with African states in various areas including agriculture as a means of boosting economic growth.

Venezuelan President Issues Statement to Summit

President Hugo Chavez of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela circulated an open letter to the ASA Summit urging both regions to unite in order to become a “true pole of power.” The letter was read aloud by Foreign Minister Elias Jaua to all delegations at the gathering.

Chavez called for “an authentic and permanent link of joint work” between Africa and South America. “It’s in our continents, where enough natural, political and historic resources are found...to save the planet from the chaos it’s been driven towards [by the capitalist system]” he said. ((Venezuelan Analysis, February 22)

The Venezuelan leader now undergoing medical treatment, stressed that “in no way do we deny our sovereign relations with Western powers, we must remember that they are not the source of the comprehensive and definitive solution to the problems that our countries share.” Chavez said that Africa and Latin America was essential in developing a “multipolar” world order, in order to provide an alternative to the dominance of the United States and its allies internationally.

Chavez called for an escalation in cooperation in the areas of energy, education, agriculture, finance and communications. To facilitate these objectives, Chavez suggested the development of a University of the Peoples of the South, a petroleum firm to link oil resources from the two continents and the creation of a Bank of the South.

Trade between Africa and South America has increased significantly over the last decade from \$US7.2 billion in 2002 to \$US39.4 in 2011. With the creation of a secretariat to better coordinate these trends even greater cooperation could occur at a much more rapid level.

Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino discussed the difficulties in enhancing cooperation between Africa and South America. He said that “we don’t know each other well, we don’t have experience of joint work...there’s so much we can offer each other, and not only in terms of commerce.” (Venezuelan Analysis, February 22)

Patino said that the difficulty in building cooperation was rooted in the legacy of European colonialism. Although Africa and South America share a common history of the large presence of African peoples stemming from the Atlantic Slave Trade and the economic and political domination by imperialism and neo-colonialism, the process of decolonization has in many ways hampered unity between developing states.

Chavez in his remarks observed that military intervention by imperialism has hampered cooperation between the regions. Since 2009, when the last ASA Summit occurred, Libyan leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi was in attendance as the-then chairman of the African Union, the U.S. has escalated its destabilization policies towards Africa and South America.

The Venezuelan leader claimed that “It’s not by luck or chance... [that] since the Summit in Margarita (Venezuela) the African continent has been the victim of multiple interventions and attacks by Western powers.” Therefore, he continued, Venezuela “totally rejected all interventionist activity by NATO” in Africa and other parts of the world.

Africa Calls for South-South Unity

Republic of Namibia Deputy Prime Minister Marco Hausiku, who led a delegation of 13 officials to the ASA Summit, emphasized that “the peoples of South America and Africa share a common historical background of waging the struggle for freedom and self-

determination. We must speak with one voice to advance the common interests of our peoples.” (Informante.web.na, February 27)

African Union Commission Chairwoman, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, in a statement said that “Africans cannot ignore the common heritage shared by our two regions forged by historical ties as well as by circumstances of which we have not always been the masters. Indeed, we have no choice but to take responsibility over our respective destinies in a collective approach as this is dictated by our past and present as well as by the need for us to successfully fight for a bright future.” (African Executive, March 1)

The ASA Summit issued a communique demanding statehood for the Palestinian people. The gathering recognized that the Palestinian question was one of the main challenges to international peace and security in the modern world.

In regard to Syria, the gathering condemned the ongoing violence inside the country and recommended dialogue over conflict for all of the parties involved.

Brazilian President Makes State Visit to Nigeria

In the immediate aftermath of the ASA Summit, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff made a state visit to the West African state of Nigeria. These two states have the largest populations in the respective continents of Africa and South America.

After a closed door meeting, President Goodluck Jonathan of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and President Rousseff issued a joint communique saying that reforming the United Nations was a welcomed development. The two leaders noted the efforts by Nigeria to acquire non-permanent membership on the Security Council for 2014-2015.

Both leaders signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) covering agriculture and food security, petroleum, power, bio-fuel, trade and investment, mining, education, aviation, infrastructure management, finance and culture. Jonathan reported that a bi-national commission would be established to implement the MoU.

The heads-of-state noted the growing cooperation in the economics sphere. The MoU, they said will be utilized to “leverage on the economy of our people, improve the lot of unemployed young men and women and make sure Nigerians and Brazilians are happy people.”

The MoU went on to say that “Our exchanges have actually grown significantly between 2009 and 2012, years marked by crises. Our trade exchanges have grown and for 2012 the figures come to \$US9 billion.”

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