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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT-COMMANDER DANIEL ORTEGA OF NICARAGUA
TO THE PLENARY OF THE SEVENTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

Thank you, Isabel Saint Malo, esteemed Vice President of Panama.

Yesterday, when we were talking at the SICA meeting with President Obama, I told President Juan Carlos Varela that I remembered a phrase that General Omar Torrijos used in one of the many interviews he gave.

General Torrijos was asked, “And how do you plan to go down in history?” And he replied: “What I want is the Canal.” And there it is: the Canal, in the hands of the Panamanian people; after much blood had been spilled. After young Panamanian students who were fighting for that Canal had been killed.

Finally, dialogue prevailed. In that dialogue, it was General Torrijos and President Carter who were finally able to find a way for the Canal to be transferred into the hands of the Panamanian people. Through dialogue!

I was telling President Obama how very happy we were to have Cuba here at this Summit of the Americas. And I reminded him that at the Summit in Trinidad and Tobago, I said that there were two important absentees at that event: Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Well, Cuba is here. Puerto Rico is not, yet. Puerto Rico is Latin American, Caribbean! Cuba and Puerto Rico “are the two wings of the same bird,” as a Puerto Rican poet, or poetess, once said, the two wings of the same bird.

And Puerto Rico, as I am reminded by our brother Rubén Berríos Martínez, the President of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, Puerto Rico has, since 1898, had the status of a colony. And that’s why we have taken up that claim within CELAC. That’s why the United Nations Committee on Decolonization is also dealing with the topic of Puerto Rico.

And I told President Obama: “Mr. President, if Hawaii had kept the same status as Puerto Rico, you would not be the President of the United States.” It’s that simple, because the people of Puerto Rico are denied their rights. Although it is called a Free Associated State, in the United States they are not free to seek the Presidency of the United States, for example. Because it has colonial status.

And so, when a vote is held... Because President Obama said to me, “But, when a vote is held...” Yes, it is true that when it is put to a vote, a part of the population votes in favor of Puerto

Rico becoming a state of the United States, and another part of the population asserts Puerto Rico's legitimate right to be independent and to become a part of this family to which it really belongs.

The fact is that he told me he was open to dialogue with Puerto Rico, and what a good thing it is that President Obama is open to dialogue with Puerto Rico! And last night he was there, he met Rubén at the dinner, and they shook hands. And Rubén raised the topic of Puerto Rico, and President Obama told him he was willing to talk. Well, it's a good thing for him to talk with those fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico.

Because the authorities in Puerto Rico are subordinated to the United States. They do not represent the will of the people of Puerto Rico. Because, at the end of the day, the question of self-determination, of Puerto Rico's independence, is a topic that has been left to one side, and they are a people with limited rights, a nation with limited rights.

And upon arriving at this Summit, we hear reports of arrests here, and arrests there, and we cannot forget that there is one political prisoner, a Puerto Rican patriot... Oscar López Rivera, who has been in prison for 34 years now. His crime? Fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico... 34 years!

And, from this platform, we once again want to urge the United States that Oscar López Rivera be freed. That is nothing other than a duty they have toward the people of Puerto Rico, whom they keep in submission, subjugated. And that is a battle that remains on the table.

We paid close attention to President Obama's remarks at the SICA yesterday, and today I would say he was much more expansive about the topics that have provoked – and continue to provoke – conflicts in relations between the United States and our Latin America and the Caribbean.

He spoke about history, but he himself reminded us, and I remember from the news about those days, he recalled the struggle for civil rights, which was led by Martin Luther King. And he visited the place where some of those who were fighting for civil rights were killed.

They were murdered by the racism of a society that, at the time, was already boasting of being the owner of "democracy" in the world, and on the planet. That wanted to give other peoples lessons about democracy, while imposing dictatorships and tyrants on us.

When its expansionist policy meant that even Nicaragua had a Yankee president, whose first act was to allow slavery in Nicaragua. When Nicaragua was already independent from Spain... the year 1821, independent from Spain.

1854 to 56, with U.S. shipping fighting for control of a transit route from the east coast of the United States to the west coast through Nicaragua, when they brought U.S. expansionists from the South of the United States, who had previously tried to take control of Sonora to annex it to the Southern United States as well.

They reached Nicaragua and, through the strength of their weapons, well... a president from the United States, Mr. William Walker. He was a journalist, an intellectual, a fascist, a racist, an attorney, a journalist, an intellectual. So, first decree: slavery in Nicaragua.

Finally, he was defeated, because the whole of Central America saw that Yankee expansionism was setting its sights on the entire region, and the Central Americans united and took up arms against the filibuster who set fire to cities there in Nicaragua.

And, how can we forget history? Because, anti-expansionism, anti-imperialism in Nicaragua did not begin with the conflict between East and West... It has nothing to do with the conflict between the East and the West! Because the Soviet Union didn't exist. Because the October Revolution hadn't triumphed, and the Yankees were already interfering in Nicaragua.

And then, we were so very worried when this Note against Venezuela appeared. It immediately reminded us of the Knox Note... The U.S. Secretary of State who, on behalf of the Government of the United States, imposed an ultimatum on President José Santos Zelaya of Nicaragua, back in the year 1907. An ultimatum, and President Zelaya was forced to flee to France, and a war broke out with Nicaraguan patriots fighting the Yankee invasion. And so, in 1912, Yankee troops arrived in our country... 1912, before the October Revolution triumphed.

This is not an ideological problem, comrades. At least the problem of Nicaragua is not ideological. It has nothing to do with the thinking of Marx, Engels, or Lenin. Nicaragua did not attack the United States; it was Yankee expansionism that entered our territory before they triumphed. Then came other interventions, and Sandino fought them.

So, when we hear about this note that says that Venezuela is a threat to the security of the United States... Well, behind a note like that, there is always the weight of history. Back to history again. And what do we say? The Yankees do not change. That is what we say.

The Yankees do not change! On the one hand, a gesture toward Cuba; on the other, a blow against Venezuela. They have made a gesture toward Cuba, a gesture toward Latin America, unquestionably. It is a gesture toward the world that has fought for the lifting of the embargo, the blockade.

The gesture toward Venezuela is a blow against our peoples, against Latin American and Caribbean unity. And what Venezuela has given the region are programs based on solidarity, on complementarity, on fair trade. That is what the region has with Venezuela. With PETROCARIBE, with ALBA, Venezuela has no projects of a military nature. They are all social programs.

And if only the United States would compete with Venezuela in that area, like that. It would be wonderful for the United States to come along and contribute, as the Bolivarian people do unconditionally. Thanks to the initiative, the immense heart of Commander Hugo Chávez, who was, with Fidel, the creator of this project. And now Nicolás is continuing with it.

And I am not going to repeat what I said this afternoon about U.S. policy not being the policy of a president. It is the policy of an empire. The United States is an empire... of course it is, an empire!

And why is it an empire? Why did it develop more than we did in Latin America? Not because of its ingenuity, not because of its great abilities, not because they are more intelligent than Latin Americans or Caribbeans... no! It was simply the transfer of the British Empire to the territory of North America, which belonged to the aboriginal peoples, who were exterminated.

And the British Empire was the most developed country at the time, logically, and it took ownership of those lands, of that territory. It transferred all that knowledge, all that technology, all that science; the Industrial Revolution, where did it begin if not in England? That explains why the United States is imperialist in nature! It is the British Empire relocated to the territory of North America; expanding, and then incurring in contradictions. Logically, they incurred in contradictions once they were established.

The arm of the British Empire installed itself in the United States, and then the contradictions began: economic contradictions, commercial contradictions, about taxes... And then the wars began. In other words, it was just the process, the process of development that Europe was attaining, that was transferred to the United States as what we would today call cutting-edge technology. It was transferred to the United States.

To our lands came nations with lower levels of technology, which are still the nations with the lowest levels of technology and economic development in Europe: Spain and Portugal. And England also came, and seized half of Nicaragua, fighting Spain for it.

And then England also seized the Malvinas, and there England, the British Empire, still is in the Malvinas! That same empire, whose arm relocated to North America, whose science, whose technology, whose culture relocated to the territory of North America, and which explains this phenomenon.

In contrast, here, in these lands, a new culture was born. There, the old culture of Europe was transferred to the north of our America. Here came the least developed cultures of Europe... Spain and Portugal: less developed empires came to our territory and, in many cases, exterminated our indigenous populations, and, in other cases, interbred with them, finally giving rise to what was really a new civilization. We are a very young culture, and that explains how they, with their high level of development, logically thought immediately about seizing all of our America.

And it appears that times have not changed, because congratulations to President Obama! I say I believe he is a man of good will; listening to his speech, he is a person of good will. But under what conditions does he govern? To what extent can he make decisions in the United States? What are the limits that the system imposes on him?

There they have a system, a machinery that installs presidents to serve that economic, military, and financial machine. And if the machine feels that the president is on the wrong path, they kill him, just as they killed Kennedy. Kennedy's killers were never identified.

I am certain that President Obama is being inundated with curses and insults there in the United States, for being here and for meeting with Cuba. He'll be inundated with curses, and they'll be calling him a Communist, because that's what they have called him on other occasions. "Communist," they'll be shouting at him. They will even call him an Islamist, and the darkest forces that exist in the United States will be bringing out all the racism that still exists in the United States. But he has been brave enough to take this step with Cuba.

But on the other hand, the blow against Venezuela, which is a blow against our America, against CELAC, against all of us, and we have every right to think that this is a plan... well, let's go

with Cuba to see how to reduce tensions. Latin America, it is now clear that it has opened relations with Cuba, no one is blockading Cuba any more; the world demands an end to the blockade against Cuba.

Cuba has not surrendered; it has resisted, but now let's go against Venezuela! Because Venezuela is not democratic; it has had 20 elections, and it is not democratic. Because now Venezuela is the devil, now it is evil, because it is giving an example of solidarity to the peoples of our America. So, a blow here, a hand there. It could look like a maneuver, and we are entitled to think that.

That's why it is important that the Government of the United States, which has said that the Decree doesn't really state, or doesn't mean, because it says so. Now they say that the Decree doesn't say what the Decree says: that Venezuela is a threat to the security of the United States. That's what the Decree says.

But now there's another interpretation: the Decree doesn't mean that. If it were simply a matter of canceling visas and blocking accounts in the United States for any citizen from our America or from the Caribbean, they do that every day, without the need for a decree. We would be up to our necks in decrees here, because they deny visas in all our countries. In all these countries they deny visas.

When we have to visit the United Nations, we have to make special visa requests, and we receive restricted visas. There we have any number of officials, and in other Latin American countries, who have no visa, who cannot visit the United States.

That's fine, that's their right, just as we have the right to decide which U.S. senators, which U.S. officials cannot enter our country... that is our right!

That is their right; fine: we won't be asking them to give us visas. What is unacceptable is that to deny visas, they use the idea that the country whose citizens they are denying visas to is a threat to the security of the United States.

Therein lies the danger. Therein lies the threat to Venezuela's security, and to the stability of the entire region. Because we are here, struggling with this agenda on "Prosperity with Equity, Education," and suddenly they drop this bombshell on us.

We were supposed to be coming here to discuss that: equity, prosperity, education, health. That is what we were supposed to be discussing, but the truth is, even though we made an effort to address those topics, the attention of the international community and of our peoples is not on those topics, but on the emergence of a split with Latin America, between the United States and Latin America, when it issued this decree against Venezuela.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States has already issued statements, making their position clear. In other words, this is an unacceptable decree. Unacceptable! Is the United States going to rescind it? Very unlikely. It would be unlikely, very unlikely, for them to rescind it. Fifty years had to pass for them to acknowledge the need for normal relations with Cuba and to think about lifting the embargo. Which remains to be seen; it remains to be seen whether or not the embargo will be lifted.

Why does that remain to be seen? Because President Obama cannot decide it: he said so here, we heard him... Let's not delude ourselves! Yes, happy because of the step that has been taken, but there is still a long road ahead, and, as we know, there is a lot of resistance there in the United States against the measures, even the local ones, that President Obama has adopted to benefit the poor.

His health programs have been blocked in the United States. On the topic of migration, he has been blocked. By whom? By those who dominate Congress. So, how long will it take him before the lifting of the blockade becomes a reality? Let's hope President Obama succeeds in persuading Congress to lift the blockade before President Obama has to leave the Oval Office... Let's hope!

And, immediately, what are we hoping for? We hope that the United States will act coherently with what President Obama has said today, including when he said that the topic of security bore no relationship to Venezuela. He said that.

Now he has to demonstrate it, with actions, with gestures, with deeds. As they say: we need gestures. Well, we also need gestures from them. Why should only they be entitled to demand gestures from us? We are obliged to demand gestures from them, because it is a matter of concern to us all. It causes a situation of insecurity throughout the region, when we should be addressing the topics I spoke of ... the topics of economic growth; the topic of gas, about which I also spoke to President Obama yesterday.

Because gas is being discussed, and on that point I want to tell you, my brothers and sisters of Latin America and the Caribbean, gas is being discussed quite happily, and in Nicaragua we are concerned about the topic of gas. Why? Because the topic of gas, as it is being put forward, clashes with the environmentally friendly culture that we have been promoting at the global level, which is renewable energy. Gas is not renewable.

Never mind how much gas there is in Canada, or in the United States, or in other regions of the world: they are limited, finite resources; they are not renewable. But they also pollute... they do not pollute as much as coal, of course, but they do pollute! And the best way to make progress with the challenges facing us on the environmental agenda and with global warming is to include renewable resources for generation; and so, how are we going to manage that?

In Nicaragua, we have been expanding our renewable resources. I remember that President Chávez used to say: Work on renewable resources, on renewable projects. That was his advice to us. And we have made progress with renewable resources; more than 60% of Nicaragua's energy is generated with renewable resources.

And, at present, there is an avalanche of investors ready to come in to fund more renewable projects. And we have had to stop them. Why? Because the figures don't work out, the cost of generating with renewables, because the current fall in oil prices is endangering renewable projects. Because with falling oil prices it is cheaper to generate with what they call bunker fuel oil, much cheaper than doing so with renewable resources. It is more costly.

So, these are complex situations, because don't we all want cheap energy? Yes, we want cheap energy. Well, there is the possibility of developing oil ducts or gas pipelines from the United

States, from Canada, Mexico, to Central America: wonderful! But how are we going to balance that, and who is going to invest, or who is going to subsidize renewable energy? Because in conditions like that, renewable energy would have to be subsidized.

Right now, in Nicaragua, we are subsidizing renewable energy. Why? Because we have a supply of nonrenewable energy, and a supply of renewable energy where it was cheaper, and what are the business owners and investors demanding? "We want cheap energy," they say. As you know, the first thing they want in any country: cheap energy.

And what do they say to us? Nicaragua has the most expensive energy in Central America. But it is because we worked hard for renewable energy, and renewable energy is expensive. Of course, at the prices oil was commanding a while ago, it was cheaper, but now renewable energy is more expensive.

That is a point that we want to take to the different forums that deal with these topics, so we can rationalize the introduction of gas in at least the Central American region, where we are very committed, where there are other countries such as Costa Rica that have almost 100% renewable energy. And so this dilemma arises.

These are topics that we should be addressing here, but well, they left us no choice. Why? Because at these Summits, on topics of a political nature certainly, well, we've already congratulated Cuba. Simply, again applaud the presence of Cuba, the decision of the United States, and we shouldn't have addressed the topic of Venezuela.

Who provokes? The United States. Who harms this Summit? The United States. Why is there no Summit Declaration? The United States. Because the United States logically is not going to support the 3%. Because President Varela has said that consensus exists on 97% of the document, on all the economic and social issues, which are related to the topics before us.

But there is no consensus on the remaining 3%: the political topic. And what is at the core of the political topic? The Decree. So, with this decree, what they did was kill the possibility of a resolution that we all would have signed quite happily, and we would have gone home quite happily, trusting, or wishing to trust, in the disposition expressed by President Obama on U.S. policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean.

But, as I said at the start, dialogue is our only solution in that area. We support the efforts being made by President Santos for peace in Colombia. And we also support Argentina in all its efforts for that territory to return to its legitimate owners; and also for the territory of Guantánamo to return to its legitimate owner, which is Cuba.

Thank you very much, my dear friend, Vice President Isabel Saint Malo. And please extend our greetings to the President and people of Panama.