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REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA, ROGELIO MAYTA MAYTA

Distinguished Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Heads of Delegation:

Please accept the greetings of the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Luis Alberto Arce Catacora, who is not at this event because not all the countries are present, because despite the name “Summit of the Americas,” some countries have been excluded.

It is a shame that this Summit, a venue for hemispheric integration, is no longer a meeting place for all the countries of the Americas. We thought that the exclusion of Cuba had been confined to the past and that we could believe in a brighter future for relations between states at these summits. However, in a return to the gray past, the number of countries that were not invited to attend this event rose to three. With their absence we all lost any opportunity to discuss and understand each other despite our differences. Bolivia demands respect and reasserts the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states.

We believe it is appropriate today to recall the fundamental precept in the Charter of the Organization of American States that provides that each country, each nation, has the right to “choose, without external interference, its political, economic, and social system and to organize itself in the way best suited to it, and has the duty to abstain from intervening in the affairs of another state.”

We thus reject unilateral assessments of which country is or is not democratic, because such arbitrariness is in itself antidemocratic, despite the discourse that seeks to justify it.

Who decides what happens in our common house?

The fact that the United States is hosting this Summit does not give that nation the power to exclude, and thereby to undermine the spirit of the United Nations Charter and other foundational documents of international relations.

Unfortunately, today neither the Organization of American States nor its General Secretariat are guarantors of institutionality, the rule of law, or respect for human rights. In our painful experience, the OAS participated in events such as the coup d'état in Bolivia in November 2019, which consolidated a *de facto* government through the violent repression of social protest, with the use of lethal force, which ended the lives of dozens of Bolivians who were murdered criminally and undemocratically.

The OAS participated in a so-called “electoral audit” in 2019 that was one of the justifications for the coup. We have asked to be provided with information from that audit, not once, not twice, but 11 times to date. But there is no transparency in Almagro’s OAS. Bolivia is still waiting for an honest and impartial investigation into what happened with that purported electoral audit.

Our bitter experience leads us to ponder on the future of organizations and mechanisms that no longer respond to the needs of the nations and peoples of Latin America. In the end, we are under no obligation to stay where our rights are not recognized, where solidarity or support at times of crisis cannot be found. That is why we believe that fundamental changes are needed before it is too late. A rethink of the institutions and even the very instruments of integration in the Americas is necessary.

At the same time, we believe our countries should not prioritize financial interests over social needs. We must learn the lesson of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccination was not equal among our countries, it remains unequal, and some are still struggling to inoculate their populations. In the midst of that inequity, at the United Nations General Assembly last September, President Arce asked the pharmaceutical multinationals to release their patents and share their knowledge and technology.

We also want to reassert our proposal for universal citizenship, here today in Los Angeles, a paradigmatic city for Latin American migration. From here we send warm greetings to all Latin American migrants, and especially to those from Bolivia. As always, we await your return with open arms.

We reject all forms of racism and discrimination, and we reject the building of walls to separate us. If our hosts truly want to cooperate with our peoples, they could start by treating our migrants with dignity.

We are living in dangerous times. Climate change and political and military crises across the world are affecting the existence of millions of human beings. Hunger is a catastrophe that intensifies with each passing day. And in that situation, the countries of our Hemisphere can no longer wait for saviors who promise to lead us out of crisis. Superheroes do not exist, but deforestation and climate disasters do.

In other words, the search for solutions needs no more speeches. We need to work together, without reservations, to figure out how to vaccinate our children and give them the future they deserve and the health and education that our constitutions promise throughout this Hemisphere.

Sectarian attitudes will not stop the death of the Andean glaciers or reforest the Amazon. Promises do not clean the air or the water in the oceans that surround us. It is time to act without fear, looking each other in the eye. For that reason, Bolivia insists on multilateralism to work for peace among peoples and to put an end to the arbitrariness and disasters we suffer.

I would like to end my speech by asking once again, on behalf of the Government and the people of Bolivia, that integration processes be pursued without exclusions and that respect for the rights of others be the basis for a coexistence in which we may find solutions to many of our shared problems.

Thank you very much.