

ALBA-TCP: United for the well-being of our peoples

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By María Josefina Arce

Eighteen years ago, Cuba was the scene of a transcendental event; a mechanism of coordination for the benefit of the nations of the area was born. ALBA, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, emerged as an option in the face of the neoliberal policies imposed in the area that plunged many into poverty.

The historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, and then president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, gave life to this bloc, which has its roots in the spirit of solidarity of both statesmen and in the thinking of the independence heroes Simón Bolívar, José Martí, Augusto César Sandino, and many others who fought for the unity and sovereignty of Our America.

Today's ALBA-TCP, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-People's Trade Agreement, is based on solidarity, complementarity, justice and cooperation, uniting the capacities and strengths of the countries that comprise it.

In these almost two decades, the integration mechanism has emphasized the fight against poverty and exclusion, through various social programs that seek to improve the living conditions of Latin Americans and Caribbeans.

Through ALBA-TCP, three nations were declared by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as "Territories Free of Illiteracy". Venezuela in 2005, Bolivia in 2008, and a year later Nicaragua.

Likewise, the Milagro Mission was a turning point in the region. This ophthalmological rehabilitation program has benefited more than five million low-income people.

Young people from poor families have been trained at the Latin American School of Medicine, with branches in Cuba and Venezuela. A high level of technical, ethical and humanistic preparation distinguishes these new doctors, who contribute to improving health indices in their countries.

In spite of the continuous external pressures against many of our countries and the application of coercive measures, the solidarity that unites the ALBA-TCP states was once again evident during the world health emergency caused by COVID 19.

Through the mechanism's bank, a humanitarian air bridge was established for the transfer of vaccines, medical personnel, treatments and supplies to our Caribbean brothers and sisters.

Cuba, whose health personnel collaborated in member nations, was also the recipient of true gestures of solidarity. It received donations from Venezuela, Nicaragua, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia and others.

Now Havana is once again welcoming its brothers in the area. The heads of state and government of ALBA-TCP are holding their 22nd Summit in the Cuban capital, an opportunity to celebrate the 18 years of the bloc's creation.

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