

Evo Morales Opens World Meeting of Social Movements in Bolivia



La Paz, July 8 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The World Meeting of Social Movements, representing 150 social organizations from Latin America and around the world, began Tuesday in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, with events and workshops that will also feature the participation of Pope Francis.

Bolivian President Evo Morales formally opened the gathering on Tuesday. "It is the hour of the peoples of the world ... It is the hour of social movements. We should discuss the origins of poverty and inequality and combat those institutions," said President Morales.

"When I see these people, the faces of people, it gives me hope. One can feel people have the ability to transform (things), to build a more human, more fraternal, (and) equal world," said Marina dos Santos, representing the Brazilian Landless Peasants Movement, known as the MST.

This is the second World Meeting of Social Movements, the first of which was held in October at the Vatican. Pope Francis, who also participated in the first gathering, is set to meet with participants on Thursday.

The gathering opened with a panel presentation on the "Fight for Mother Earth," which dealt with the pope's encyclical addressing the pressing need for action to combat climate change. During his exposition, MST leader Joao Pedro Stedile said, "the paradigm had changed," and that social movements needed to be prepared to put forward its own version of what sustainable agriculture should look like.

Luis Infanti, the bishop of the Chilean diocese of Aysen, also spoke and invoked the recent comments by Pope Francis. "The pope calls us to become aware in order to break and bring down structures that enslave us more and more everyday," Infanti said.

The World Meeting of Social Movements includes over 1,500 people from over 40 countries.

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