

ALBA Summit: Caricom members enter reservations on Sucre, Defence Council.

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The 7th ALBA Summit (16-17 October 09) has concluded in Bolivia with the adoption of a 30-point [Final Declaration](#) containing a 36-point Plan of Action for economic, social, political and defence cooperation. The Summit was attended by leaders or representatives of all seven ALBA member countries¹ including Prime Ministers Baldwin Spencer of Antigua and Barbuda, Roosevelt Skerit of Dominica and Ralph Gonsalves of St Vincent and the Grenadines; as well as delegations from several Observer countries including the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Russia.

A separate [Declaration on Honduras](#) gave strong support for the reinstatement of the ousted President, Manuel Zelaya, including the application of 'economic and trade sanctions' against the coup regime, a declaration of non-recognition of the results of any elections held by the regime, and the mounting of a diplomatic offensive.

The leaders agreed on the [establishment of SUCRE](#) (the Spanish acronym for the 'Unitary System of Regional Compensatory Payments') as a 'virtual currency' for the conduct of trade among themselves, to reduce dependence on the US dollar and promote monetary and financial sovereignty. An implementation plan is to be prepared within a month.

The three Caricom countries that are ALBA members entered written reservations to the paragraphs of the POA dealing with the SUCRE and the ALBA Defence Council; suggesting that they will not be part of these initiatives, at least for now.

The three are members of the East Caribbean Currency Union, together with the other member countries of the Organisation of East Caribbean States (O.E.C.S.), with which they share a common currency. This appears to be the likely reason for their reservation on the SUCRE.

In the case of the reservation on the ALBA Defence Council, the reason given is the membership of the three countries in the Regional Security System (RSS) of the Eastern Caribbean.

The reservations are consistent with the character of ALBA as an 'a la carte' grouping, in which member countries opt in or out of specific activities; rather than a trade bloc governed by a 'Single Undertaking', in which each member is obliged to assume the entire range of obligations.

[Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves](#) of St. Vincent and the Grenadines attracted much attention for a passionate speech on his government's plans to reform the country's constitution to remove the British Monarchy and the Privy Council, identified as vestiges of colonial status.

¹ Cuba was represented by Vice President Machado Ventura

The ALBA leaders also attended a meeting in the parallel [Summit of ALBA Social Movements](#), which drew over 1,000 representatives from 40 countries, including from the 36 indigenous peoples of Bolivia; and which discussed the integration of the American Continent ‘to end discrimination, humiliation and the looting of natural resources by the United States’.

The 36-point Plan of Action is ambitious and wide-ranging. ALBA’s institutional architecture will consist of three Ministerial Councils—for Politics, Economic Complementation and Social Affairs—served by Ministerial meetings for specific programmes, Committees and Working Groups. Highlights are summarised in the Box below.

18/10/09

ALBA Plan of Action—Highlights

- Signing of the Constitutive Treaty for establishment of the SUCRE-- Sistema Unitario de Compensación Regional de Pagos (Unitary System of Regional Compensatory Payments—whose aim is to reduce dependence on the US dollar and secure greater monetary and financial sovereignty (with the three Caricom countries entering reservations).
- Reaffirmation of complementarity, solidarity and cooperation as the basic principles governing the People’s Trade Agreement (TCP) and establishment of a Working Group to draft the proposed TCP.
- A POA for the development of ALBA intra-trade; including creation of the Grandnational export-import company ALBAEXIM, to establish trade complementarity among ALBA-TCP countries
- Provide for conclusion of a mutual recognition agreement for quality certificates in the textile and clothing industry (Venezuela and Bolivia have already concluded one such)
- Confirm eradication of illiteracy as an ALBA priority: continuation of two multi-country literacy projects and their priority for financing by the ALBA Bank, with eventual incorporation of all ALBA member countries
- ALBA Social Ministerial Council to develop projects in education, health, employment and housing; including a system for the prevention, detection and control of new and re-emerging diseases; and expansion of social cooperation to include culture and sport
- Speed up ratification of the Agreement on Mutual Recognition of University Degrees; Welcome creation of an ALBA-TCP Education Publishing House and designate Bolivia as coordinator; and agreed on the prioritization and financing of the ALBA Grandnational Education Project, which will embrace all levels of education from basic to university
- A Working Group on Labour and Social Security to be set up, to include inter alia Certification of Labour Competencies of ALBA–TCP
- Early establishment of a Ministerial Council on Women and Equality of Opportunity
- Establishment of Ministerial Council for the Defence of Nature
- Working Group to study establishment of an International Tribunal of Climate Justice
- Setting up and strengthening of Grandnational Enterprises as instruments of promoting trade, treating asymmetries, strengthening complementarities etc. among ALBA member states. Grandnational Enterprises planned or contemplated include ALBA-Food, ALBA-Energy, ALBA-Forestry, Geological Institute INGEOALBA; and enterprises for Mining and Metallurgy, Iron and Steel and Aluminium. A Food Grandnational has been set up between Venezuela and Bolivia
- Develop a unified position on Food Sovereignty for the World Conference on Food Security to take place on November 16-18, 2009.

Highlights – Continued

- Develop concrete proposals for Dispute Settlement
- Develop a common ALBA-TCP position on International Law, Self-determination, Respect for Sovereignty and Human Rights
- ALBA –TCP structure to be consolidated in three Ministerial Councils responsible for Politics, Economic Complementation and Social Affairs, Committees Under these Councils and Working Groups for specific tasks
- Welcome the proposals of ALBA Tourism Ministers for a Grandnational Chain of ALBA Hotels, a Grandnational Tourism Training Institute, and a Tourism Development Research Centre
- Support creation of Organization of Latin American and Caribbean States composed of the 33 independent states of the region
- Coordinate positions in the Rio Group and in the forthcoming Latin American and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development in Montego Bay, Jamaica, 4-6 November 2009
- Widening of the scope of the ALBA-TCP Working Group on Industrial Property to cover Intellectual Property for development of a Mode of Social Appropriation of Knowledge that transcends the limitations imposed by the international IP system on the production of the basic necessities of life
- ALBA Satellite Project to provide telephone and broadband Internet services to rural areas; creation of Telecommunications Commission.
- Permanent Committee for Sovereignty and Defence of ALBA to be part of Political Council; to devise a Joint Popular Defence Strategy and create a School of Dignity and Sovereignty of the ALBA-TCP Armed Forces (three Caricom countries reservations)
- Social Council to set up working group on creation of an ALBA-TCP Scientific Pole, focusing initially on applications in pharmaceuticals and medical products
- Study creation of South Radio, ALBA-TCP News Agency, and co-production
- Propose creation of ALBA School of Television and Cinema
- Permanent information portal on ALBA to be developed
- Support the binational (Ecuador-Venezuela) Media Observatory and its widening to include all ALBA countries as instrument to confront media warfare and review the legal framework relating to communication and information
- Study design of an ALBA-TCP Reserves Fund for the management of international reserves
- Develop a proposal for the care, treatment and protection of handicapped persons and the complete elimination of discrimination against, and integration of, handicapped persons in the labour force
- Develop a project for the incorporation of historically excluded sections of the population into the education system of ALBA-TCP countries