

MEETING OF THE SECRETARIAT | WORLD PEACE COUNCIL**Vientiane, Laos | 25 and 26 November 2019****Speech of the WPC President Socorro Gomes**

Dear comrades of the World Peace Council's Secretariat,

Dear friends of the Lao Peace and Solidarity Committee, whom very hospitably, and for which we really thank you, welcomes us in Vientiane, giving us the opportunity of observing the WPC Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting and getting to know more about the Lao people's struggle.

It is a huge challenge, but also a great inspiration to be here with you in the current conjuncture. We see clear signs of the strength of popular resistance in many regions of the world, facing the very grave threats that imperialists and their allies continue to pose us.

At this point we usually introduce what we have been discussing, promoting or rejecting in our many actions all over the world, in constant mobilization, activities that comrade Thanassis Pafilis, our Secretary-General, the Regional Coordinators of our organization, and the national members, will address. Hence, we can draw a general evaluation of the state of our struggle and our challenges to identify our goals, which includes, today, in an organizational sense, the preliminary discussion of the next World Peace Assembly.

Comrades, we are aware of the urgency and the strategic importance of broadening our front of struggle against imperialism. I start with this call, one that each one of us repeatedly make, because our obstacles and challenges are indeed ever more serious. The peoples' struggles all over the world converge towards the key of our denunciations: the failure of an international system under the dominance, hegemony, and subdued by US imperialism, by the empire of war, exploitation and oppression.

Each passing day we observe how international law, the principles contained in the United Nations Charter, and the very international institutions presented as the promoters of democracy and social justice are the first to be manipulated, distorted by the empire when it suits it or when the generalized threat of the use of force, aggression and war does not suffice. That is why we continue committed with those principles, which are the peoples' and nations' instruments in their struggle for liberation and defense of their sovereignties, and whose manipulation by the United States, the European Union and their most vile allies, such as Israel, we do not accept.

We observe what happens today in the region and the country which we have the great opportunity to visit. The Lao comrades tell us about how the effects of the US war against Laos were serious and are still felt. The US war of 1964-1973 was an aggressive interference, in the form of a criminal military offensive, in the country's revolutionary process —which thanks to the Lao people's bravery and that of their leadership, and to international solidarity, has victoriously consolidated into the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. As always, the US had its plans and supported the counter-revolutionary forces. It is estimated that in the so-called Second War in Indochina about three million tons of explosives were dropped in 580,000 bombing missions over Laos, the second most bombarded country in the world. Such an atrocious record! There are also estimates that over one third of the bombs have not exploded; with the war's end, these unexploded ordinances are still making victims: 20,000 people died or were injured, suffering the consequences to this day.

This is the factual reality of the imperialist policies, which change in form, but not in content nor vision, according to the conjuncture. The United States and its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in this and in so many other occasions, such as the wars against Vietnam, former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and many more, show that they are war criminals, perpetrating the most heinous crimes against humanity. And they continue being that even when they are not dropping bombs, but imposing sanctions, blockades and siege, or directly supporting their allies who indeed do the dirty work, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and the putschists and fascists proliferating all over the world.

In Asia, we remain vigilant regarding the interference in situations such as Hong Kong's, the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula. With war drills, offensive alliances and the support granted to suspicious protests, the US and their allies continue to impose their plans. For a long time, we have been denouncing what is called the Pivot to Asia unveiled in Barack Obama's Government, but Donald Trump's moves, now presented in the form of a "commercial war" against China, besides militarization, are still very grave.

As was pointed out in the 2018 WPC Regional Meeting in Nepal, there is significant interference and ever more US soldiers and numerous military bases in Asia-Pacific, also the second region with the greatest number of active nuclear weapons. All that exacerbate conflicts that could be solved peacefully and sovereignly amongst neighbors who share serious challenges which they can solve together, such as the intensification of religious fundamentalism, terrorism, poverty, endemics and so many others, which are interconnected and require peace and stability so they can be solved.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the peoples also face a very dire situation with growing attacks against their countries' sovereignties. Whereas many had proclaimed the end of the historical progress towards emancipation, social justice and regional integration with sovereignty and solidarity, we see signs and concrete deeds that inspire us in continuing to rebel against neoliberalism, conservatism, reactionarism and even the proto-fascism emerging in many countries as obstacles to historical progress, offensives that always count on the support of US imperialism.

The peoples in the region struggle with their votes and on the streets against neoliberalism, for democracy, national sovereignty and social justice in Argentina and México, where the democratic forces won Presidential elections; and in Chile, Ecuador and Bolivia, where the masses on the streets rise in popular rebellions. The struggle also progresses with the very brave resistance of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela against the coup plotters and the threats of aggression. One of our struggles' priorities is still the unwavering support to the Venezuelan people targeted with a criminal siege that has cost so much to the nation. We denounce the maneuvers of the United States and its puppets in the so-called Lima Group and that of the Organization of American States, the US "ministry of colonies".

We hail the victories of the Cuban Revolution, in its glorious 60 years building socialism, despite the US criminal blockade, one that is more intense each day, since the activation of the third and fourth points in the Helms-Burton Act, which aims to strangulate the Cuban people, seeking to kill their resolve in continuing to defend their sovereignty and consolidating their revolution.

We must also denounce the seriousness of the most recent coup d'état in the region, in Bolivia, again to overthrow a legitimate government elected by its people. The putschist, racist and fascist forces promote, besides the violation of the Constitution, acts of street violence that are horrific due to their brutality against the supporters of the legitimate government of President Evo Morales. We salute the Bolivian people on the streets, in mass protests, to resist the coup. They will not surrender!

If in the past the US organized direct interventions, with "boots on the ground", as it did in Nicaragua, to subdue the people daring to face it, or less direct, with the support to bloody military coups of which so many people were victimized, but survived, now there are other methods besides those, methods that are also devastating due to the scope and depth of the effects of its "wars of new generation", using mass media, social networks and all sorts of support to more than suspicious groups in different countries.

Friends,

The peoples continue mobilized in all parts of the world when the conditions before us are hard, when the anti-democratic forces, allied to the US imperialism, do so much to knock us down and end the peoples' confidence in that it is possible to defeat this system of exploitation, domination and oppression.

But we have reasons to trust the peoples' struggles. Evidence of that is the daily, heroic and persistent resistance of the valiant Palestinian people under Israel's bloody, criminal and colonial military occupation, whose leaders' heinous crimes against humanity are still not held accountable; likewise, the resilience and resistance of the martyred Sahrawi people, in the refugee camps under harsh conditions in the desert or under the brutal Moroccan military occupation, while demanding the realization of the decolonization promise; another evidence is the Puerto-Ricans' struggle for their liberation from US colonization; the Japanese struggle to expel from their country the numerous and aggressive US military bases; the People's Korea, which remains committed to diplomacy, peace and the Peninsula's stabilization, for the reunification with its other half, while responding to imperialist provocations; the Syrians, who also sustain a glorious resistance to US aggression, and that of neighbors such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, fighting the terrorism of groups armed by them and also their invasions, while the country's government and its people remain determined to recover all their territory and defend the nation's sovereignty; amongst many others.

In these struggles is where the peoples' unity is built, in internationalist solidarity and in the realization that it is possible to defeat the system of domination under the US control.

It was also in that direction that in Baku, Azerbaijan, the 18th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement made its statement, a movement born from the commitment with the peoples' liberation. The Baku Declaration recovers the power of the struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, all forms of foreign intervention, aggression, foreign occupation, domination or hegemony, and also the movement's intention of "of becoming a balancing factor in the international relations, outside of the military alliances of the centers of power, remain concrete expressions of the policy of non-alignment".

The World Peace Council participated in the event with a delegation. There, we heard from the leaders of the nations present their commitment with the Bandung Principles and with the Movement's Declaration of Goals and Principles in the current conjuncture of "reaching a world of peace, equality, cooperation and well-being for all". We made our denunciation of the effects of imperialism and neoliberalism on the peoples and strengthened our own determination to resist.

We reinforced the denunciation of the United States' total lack of respect for international law and the right of peoples to self-determination, including the right to decide over their political systems.

We denounce the imperialist manipulation of the banner of human rights to justify interference and aggression; and the disrespect towards multilateralism and international law.

But the planet's militarization runs ever faster, bringing renewed suffering to the peoples and determining a path towards a war of unpredictable consequences, which could even jeopardize the very survival of humankind.

It is no exaggeration to raise the alarm about the almost 1,000 military bases run by the US and NATO all over the world, the US naval fleet spread throughout all oceans, the war drills, the dispersion of nuclear weapons, while it is said that the number of warheads is decreasing even though they are being "modernized" to have greater reach and cause more, or less, damage, according to specific intentions, banalizing its use; and the military expenditure that already reached USD 1,822 billion, or 2.1% of the world's GDP, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). This is an unacceptable affront to everything the peoples aspire to.

My fellows,

This year, the WPC celebrates its 70 years of struggle and we must always raise our banners, the highest possible, of resistance to oppression and exploitation, to the threats against the nations' sovereignty and war. To impose their plans, plunder the peoples' resources, control strategic routes and subdue nations to its agenda of full dominance, the US and its NATO allies go to any lengths. Their victims are the peoples and their aspirations.

We know that, together, we can defeat imperialism and build a world of social justice and peace, solidarity and cooperation. The powerful are also aware of that, therefore they react the only way they know how, with violence, aggression and war.

We always make reiterated calls for the broadening of our front of struggle and seek to move forward with concrete measures, but we know that we must reinforce this effort, starting with strengthening our own unity through our collective work and intelligence.

The world's state is ever graver and, therefore, the struggle, which we make in the everyday, which is still alive, is ever more difficult. This is exactly why we must strengthen the strategy, and we know how.

End imperialist wars!

For justice, peace and solidarity between the peoples!

We continue struggling!

Long live the World Peace Council!