

29 June 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,  
to the Plenary Session on the Situation in Honduras**

Excellencies,

It is with a heavy heart and deep personal outrage that I open this plenary session to consider the coup d'état that interrupted the democratic and constitutional rule of President Manuel Zelaya in the Republic of Honduras yesterday, the 28th of June.

In response to urgent requests from many Member States, it is my responsibility and my duty to bring this outrageous attack on Honduran democracy to the attention of the General Assembly so that we might consider ways to ensure the peaceful restoration of the legitimate government of President Zelaya in the hours and days ahead.

As a Nicaraguan, I am ashamed that this coup has taken place in Central America, during my presidency. This is a throwback to another era that we had hoped was now a distant nightmare. Latin America and the Caribbean have the ignominious record of being the region with the most number of military coups in the world. This is a record that has no place in the 21st century.

The first so-called anti-communist coup was against the democratically elected government of President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 in neighboring Guatemala. In the 1970s and 1980s, virtually every country on the continent was humiliated, subjugated, violated and brutalized by military regimes that usurped power for the sake of promoting the interests of the U.S. and its local caretakers who always claimed to be motivated by the need to defend their own peculiar understanding of democracy and freedom.

Those were bloody, oppressive years when the best of our workers and campesinos, students and artists and politicians were disappeared, imprisoned and assassinated or forced into exile.

Those represented lost decades in the development of our region, and only in recent years have we managed to recover democratic rule throughout the region. But our societies are permanently scarred by the atrocities committed to make them safe for corporate profits and unfettered markets.

On Sunday morning, that is to say, yesterday at 4:00 AM, masked men with automatic weapons invaded the residence of President Zelaya and swept him away to exile in Costa Rica. This represents the first coup in the region since the end of the Cold War. It is not the first attempt, however. Reactionary forces, who have never given a hoot for the growing number of our dispossessed, are now

alarmed by the remarkably powerful movements that have brought progressive governments to power in response to the disastrous consequences brought about by anti-people neo-liberal policies.

Let us remember the failed coup against the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in 2002 and the continuing destabilization that has attempted to disrupt the first presidency of a representative of the indigenous people of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

We must make certain that this act of infamy in Honduras also ends in absolute failure.

The region has responded with outrage and demands for immediate restoration of the legitimate government. The Organization of American States (OAS), the Rio Group, the Bolivarian Alliance for Our Americas (ALBA) and the Central America Integration System (SICA) have all decried the military action in Honduras. Leaders around the world have denounced the military action.

Now it is appropriate and crucial that the entire world, the 192 members of the United Nations General Assembly, add its voice to underscore the universal rejection of this crime. Let us denounce the perpetrators with such unanimity that no military-backed regime in Honduras will be able to withstand the criticism and rejection of the world.

Today we are concluding the historic United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development which began on 24 June. Many Member States expressed their concern about the social unrest and political instability that has resulted from the ongoing economic calamity that is raining down on virtually every country around the world. This only exacerbates the unrest created by the criminal military coup in Honduras which we hope will be very short lived.

Certainly the call for a constitutional amendment to extend presidential term limits is nothing illegitimate. Over the past fifteen years several Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela have held plebiscites on such proposals and new legislation has often passed without incident.

The forces behind this crime must be exposed and brought to justice. More importantly, we must not let them take advantage of the economic turmoil to return to business as usual. We must allow the peoples of the world to choose for themselves their governments and listen to their voices that call for justice and participation in their societies, and in their economies. Let us not allow these voices to be extinguished as all of us will be diminished and our future dimmed.

I declare my total and unconditional solidarity with President José Manuel Zelaya, the only democratically elected and constitutional head of state of the Republic of Honduras. Long live the people of Honduras!