**Declaration by Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Relations**

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Photo: Molina, Vladimir **Photo:** MINREX

Over the last few weeks, international media have reported the intention of OAS General Secretary Luis Almagro Lemes to travel to Havana, in order to receive a "prize" invented by an illegal grouplet, which operates in concert with the ultra-right wing Foundation for Pan American Democracy, created in the days of the 7th Summit of the Americas in Panama, to channel efforts and resources in opposition to legitimate, independent governments in Our America.

The plan, plotted during several trips to Washington and other capitals of the region, consisted of mounting a serious, open provocation against the Cuban government in Havana, generating internal instability, damaging the country's international image, and at the same time, affecting the positive development of Cuba's diplomatic relations with other states. Perhaps some calculated poorly and thought that Cuba would sacrifice its fundamental principles to maintain appearances.

Drawn into the spectacle were Almagro himself and other right wing figures who are members of the so-called Democratic Initiative for Spain and the Americas (IDEA), which has also behaved in an aggressive manner toward the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, over the last several years, as well as other Latin American and Caribbean countries with progressive and leftist governments.

Also conniving and supporting the attempted plan were other organizations with well established anti-Cuban credentials, such as the Democracy and Community Center; the Latin American Development Research and Management Center (CADAL); and the Inter-American Institute for Democracy, run by the terrorist CIA agent Carlos Alberto Montaner. Additionally, since 2015, well known are the ties which exist between these groups and the United States' National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which receives funding from the government of this country to implement its subversive programs against Cuba.

Aware of these plans, and enforcing laws which sustain the country's sovereignty, the Cuban government decided to deny entry into national territory to foreign citizens linked to the acts described.

In an irreproachable act of transparency, in accordance with the principles which govern diplomatic relations between states, Cuban authorities contacted the governments of countries from which these persons would be traveling, and informed them, attempted to dissuade those involved, and prevent the consummation of these acts.

As international civil aviation regulations stipulate, the airlines cancelled the reservations of these passengers upon learning that they would not be welcome. Some were rerouted. There were some who attempted to manipulate the facts to serve strictly political interests within their own countries, given internal processes taking place there.

Abounding were statements by defenders of those who falsely claimed to have been persecuted, associates of dictatorships and unemployed politicians disposed to allying themselves with common mercenaries, at the service of and paid by foreign interests, which do not enjoy any recognition in Cuba, live off unsubstantiated slander, pose as victims, and act against the interests of the Cuban people and the political, economic, and social system they freely chose and have defended heroically.

In regards to Almagro and the OAS, we are not surprised by his declarations and openly anti-Cuban acts. Within a very short period of time as head of this organization, he has drawn attention by generating, with no mandate whatsoever from member states, an ambitious plan of self-promotion with attacks on progressive governments such as those in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

At this time, imperialist and oligarchic attacks have been redoubled against Latin American and Caribbean integration, and against democratic institutionality in several of our countries. In a neoliberal offensive, millions of Latin Americans have returned to poverty, hundreds of thousands have lost their jobs, they have been forced to emigrate, or were murdered or disappeared by mafias and traffickers - while isolationist and protectionist ideas, environmental deterioration, deportations, religious and racial discrimination, insecurity, and brutal repression are expanding across the hemisphere.

Where has the OAS been? Remaining as always silent in the face of these realities. Why so silent? Only someone completely out of touch with the times would attempt to sell Cubans "the values and principles of the Inter-American system," given the harsh, anti-democratic reality created by this very system.

One must have a short memory to fail to recall that, in February of 1962, Cuba stood up alone before this "immoral conclave," as Fidel described it in the Second Declaration of Havana. Fifty-five years later, accompanied by peoples and governments from the entire world, it is worth reiterating that, as President Raúl Castro said, Cuba will never return to the OAS.

José Martí warned, "Neither peoples nor men respect those who do not demand respect… men and peoples travel the world poking a finger into the flesh of others to see if it is soft, or if it resists. We must make our flesh hard, to repel the insolent fingers."

In Cuba, we do not forget history's lessons.

Havana, February 22, 2017