
Ibero-America Briefs

Bolivia Inaugurates Nuclear Medicine Center with ‘Joy and Hope’

On March 6, Bolivia’s President Luis Arce inaugurated the country’s first nuclear medicine center in the city of El Alto, the first of three such centers being built in the country. The other two will be located in the capital of La Paz and in the southeastern city of Santa Cruz. The Santa Cruz center is expected to be finished by the second half of this year and the La Paz one by year’s end or the beginning of 2023. It was a momentous day, one which Health Minister Jeyson Auza described as “historic,” and filled with “joy and hope,” as Bolivia will now have cancer treatment centers with advanced technology not previously available in the country. These state-of-the-art centers are a joint effort by the Bolivian Nuclear Energy Agency (ABEN) and the Argentine state-run high-tech company INVAP, based in the Patagonian province of Rio Negro.

The nuclear medicine centers are one aspect of the government’s broader plan to make the benefits of nuclear technology available to its population. Based on a 2016 agreement signed between former President Evo Morales and Russia’s nuclear energy firm Rosatom, a state-of-the-art Nuclear Technology Research and Development Center (CIDTN) is also being built in El Alto. When complete, the CIDTN will include a research reactor, food irradiation capabilities, and isotope production for use in nuclear medicine, services never before available in Bolivia.

Aside from President Arce, the March 6 ceremony was attended by officials from ABEN, the Argentine ambassador to Bolivia, and officials from Argentina’s National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) among others. Personnel at the facility have been trained at Argentina’s scientific institutes and universities, such as the renowned Balseiro Institute, but the plan is for the El Alto Center to eventually train its own personnel. President Arce and other speakers stressed that with these new facilities, Bolivia will now become a regional center for cancer diagnosis and treatment and that Bolivians will no longer have to leave the country to seek treatment in Argentina or Brazil. Auza reports that although radio-isotopes are now imported, the expectation is that the new center will be able to produce them by July.

Hunger, Poverty at Catastrophic Levels in Haiti, Humanitarian Aid Declines

As is occurring with Yemen, Afghanistan, and other crisis-wracked nations, UN agencies report that funds for humanitarian aid in Haiti are far below what’s required, resulting in a rise in hunger and poverty levels. As reported in a March 22 UN News [release](#), World Food Program personnel in Port-au-Prince warned in a briefing to media in Geneva that lower-than-expected humanitarian food assistance, combined with the fallout from the August 2021 earthquake, has created a situation in which “hunger levels are rising unabated, as persistent political

instability, growing inflation and recurrent disasters continue to conspire against the people of Haiti.”

It is projected that between March and June, 45% of the population will be in severe hunger, and of those, 1.3 million are estimated to be in the IPC designated “emergency phase.” On World Water Day March 22, the International Action for Human Rights (IAHR) organization reported that 45% of the Haitian population of 11 million people has no access to safe drinking water. Even before the Ukraine/Russia crisis, inflation was rampant, but now it’s worse, with food and fuel prices soaring, making these products unaffordable. Haiti imports most of its food and fertilizer. Patrick David, Senior Program Manager of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), warned that higher prices of imported food and fertilizers from Ukraine will contribute to even higher inflation. Haiti imports wheat mainly from Russia but also from Canada, “so, if the wheat flour is going up, you will see a problem and the price has already multiplied by five in two years. So, we can only expect that it will multiply again.”

The backdrop to this disaster is the dysfunctional government of discredited “interim” Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who remains in office only at the pleasure of the Biden Administration. Henry has done nothing to deal with an out-of-control security situation, driven by armed gangs that have taken control of key roads in and out of the capital of Port-au-Prince, cutting off transportation of goods and people to the southern part of the country. Gang kidnappings of citizens from all walks of life—

healthcare workers, teachers, students, priests and others—has now reached epidemic proportions, increasing by 58% just in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period of 2021. An enraged population took to the streets around the country on March 29 to protest this intolerable situation, demanding that Henry immediately resign.

Barbadian PM Calls for International Economic Justice, Peace, Development

Speaking from Geneva on March 23, where she delivered the World Trade Organization Presidential Lecture, Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley called for the creation of a new world order capable of delivering on the peace “that would permit us all to live in a just and inclusive society in each of our countries,” the Jamaica *Gleaner* [reported](#) March 24. By peace, she said, she meant “peace both in terms of security, but also peace that comes from economic justice,” because the existing global order was “simply the embalming of the old colonial order that existed at the time of the establishment of these institutions,” such as the World Trade Organization: “We have to ask ourselves if we can live in this global order.” Mottley’s speech was entitled “Reinventing the Global Order.”

Prime Minister Mottley is a feisty and outspoken Caribbean leader who minced no words in charging that the current global order had perpetuated a situation of first- and second-class countries. Vulnerable states were left without a safety net of protection and been denied the right to develop: “This is a global order that is compromising, equally, our right to develop, our right

and capacity to attain the sustainable development goals that each and every one of our countries has submitted is critical for our populations in order for them to prosper.

Achieving this new order will require a “transformative agenda” dependent on the will of all citizens, she warned. But, she asked, is the world ready to exercise the global *moral* leadership, and the strategically necessary commitment and political will “that will allow us to pursue the transformative agenda in order for us to be able to reinvent the new global order?” Of note was Mottley’s observation that the current conflict in Ukraine has “reset the global order,” whereas the old order has failed to deliver on peace, prosperity, and stability in the world.

Mottley challenged the WTO to be in the vanguard to bring about necessary change, which would mean ridding itself of the inheritance of the destructive General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Such structures have to be confronted, she said, “if we are to move away from the old colonial order and create opportunities for fairness among those countries and people of the world who need our protection the most.”

Rousseff Calls for Industrializing, Not Depending on Imported Tech

Giving the keynote speech March 29 at the Rio de Janeiro meeting of the Puebla Group, an organization of “progressive” Ibero-American leaders, former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) issued a passionate call for the industrialization of Ibero-America, telling the audience of current and former presidents, government ministers and others that

“we can’t be content with Uber, iFood, and Airbnb. Those satisfied with being importers of technology will be subjected to an even more perverse form of what exists today,” the Argentine state news agency *Télam* [reported](#) her saying. On the latter path, “we’ll see young people who are neither employed nor studying. We cannot overcome the inequality of Latin America if we don’t reindustrialize.”

Rousseff, ousted from office by a 2016 color-revolution coup orchestrated by London and Wall Street bankers, stressed that Ibero-American nations should pay attention to developments occurring as a result of the war in Ukraine, pointing out, for example, how Brazil has been affected by not being able to import Russian fertilizer. At the same time, she said, there has been a reduction in the dependence on the dollar as the world currency used in trade. Look at the fact that there are already countries agreeing to trade in rubles for Russian oil, bypassing the SWIFT payments system:

“A lot of people are going to start thinking about which currencies they invest in if the strength of the dollar for transfers is going to decline. India has agreed to pay in rupees, depositing in rubles, breaking with SWIFT. Saudi Arabia has agreed to sell its oil to China using yuan.” Ibero-America should be paying close attention to this situation. Oil, food, and minerals are plentiful throughout the region, and this can be strengthened and centralized. Oil and fuel will become paramount. But there should be no “third wave of neo-liberalism” in which nations become raw materials producers and exporters. “We have to reindustrialize! This is the only way to reduce the inequalities. Ibero-America must become more autonomous and sovereign in its geopolitics.”