



CLOSING SESSION

— Addresses

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The Closing Session of the V Encounter of Ministers of Culture and Officials Responsible for Cultural Policies of Latin America and the Caribbean took place on November 18, 1992 at 6:00 pm. in the Caracas Hilton Hotel.

The presidium was made up of the following delegations: Brazil, Dr. Antonio Houaiss, Minister of Culture; Cuba, Dr. Armando Hart Dávalos, Minister of Culture; Chile, Lic. Eugenio Liona, Chief of the Culture Department of the Minister of Education; Mexico, Mr. José Luis Martínez, Technical Secretary of the National Council for Culture and Arts; St. Kitts-Nevis, Mr. Earl S. Morris, Minister of Culture; Venezuela, Dr. José Antonio Abreu, President of the National Council for Culture and Dr. Francois Moanack, Counsellor to the Presidency of CONAC.

Then the Rapporteur read the Declaration of Caracas proposed by the Delegation of Puerto Rico, which was unanimously approved by a vote of applause.

Afterwards, the representative of Mexico, in his capacity as Rapporteur, read his Report.

The session concluded with the intervention of the representatives of St. Kitts-Nevis and Chile and closed by the Minister of Culture of Brazil at the request of Dr. José Antonio Abreu, President of the National Council for Culture. Minister Houaiss gave his speech in the name of all the delegations present, expressing his thanks for the hospitality extended to them and congratulated Dr. Abreu and the Venezuelan Government for the success of their mission.

ADDRESS BY EARL S. MORRIS, CULTURE MINISTER OF
ST. KITTS-NEVIS, DURING THE CLOSING SESSION

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates:

When on Monday we sat down to discuss about this Fifth Encounter, I felt a measure of strangeness which no doubt was caused by my absence from the Second, Third, and Fourth Encounters, but substantial developments have taken place since that initial meeting in Brazil. Concrete achievements have occurred in that Plans of Action are being implemented. In brief, a wonderful progress has been made and the conscious journey towards our culture of integration of Latin America and the Caribbean is gaining a meaningful momentum.

That feeling of strangeness has evaporated and in this meeting there is a firm feeling of accomplishment, confidence and solidarity among all participants. Like all journeys, there would arise occasions when we must all pause to evaluate, reaccess and -when necessary- redirect our individual and collective efforts. The English-speaking Caribbean is a willing companion and partner on this journey, because it cannot envisage any other alternative or any other attractive avenue whereby it could secure the good quality of life it desires for its people.

Although we are separated by the Caribbean Sea, we are united by common threads of history, culture; we are also united by a robust capacity for merriment and wholesome diversions, but we are also further united by a solemn commitment towards the well-being of our peoples.

In this regard, therefore, we of the Caribbean fully endorse the Declaration of Caracas, and we offer our individual and collective commitment for the further strengthening of our cultural ties and a sustained effort towards the cultural integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We look forward to the Sixth Encounter in Chile, and may all our future meetings be crowned with success.

Thank you.

ADDRESS BY MR. EUGENIO LLONA, HEAD OF THE
CULTURAL DIVISION OF THE EDUCATION MINISTRY OF CHILE,
DURING THE CLOSING SESSION

We come to the end of a successful event, one which has entrusted the new Pro-Tempore Secretariat, coordinated by us, a delicate and complex mandate. Our meetings will be respected if we are all able to demonstrate that we keep our word, as words are vehicles for culture; therefore we respectfully and carefully accept, jointly with the members of the new Pro-Tempore Secretariat, the task you have delegated upon us.

The challenge is a dual one, because the experience handed down by Venezuela and this country's representatives -Dr. Esteban Araujo, Dr. Mary Batista, Dr. Maritza Reyes Santana, and all their collaborators- is indeed substantial. And what can I say about Mr. Minister, Don Jose Antonio Abreu, when in Venezuela "Culture" is spelled with an "A" for admiration; an "A" for audacity; an "A" for Abreu.

When Chile assumed the responsibility to host the VI Encounter, it did so reflecting both upon the recent past and upon the future. As regards the former, because as a country we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our sister countries which not only served as a home during exile during a very difficult period of our history, but were also an irreplaceable force which permitted the reconquest of democracy.

As regards the future, because we wish to make evident our present and future Latin American calling, jointly with our Caribbean brothers. Only if our imagination and reality sustain us can we adequately step into the future.

We must ask ourselves what we can do to make our plans, our countries, our culture, and our ancient civilizations, more viable during this prolonged period which now lies before us. To this question, we can answer with isolated replies, related to the way in which each one of us plans to step into the future. Nothing guarantees our knowledge; however, we firmly believe that it would be an historic crime to squander our common heritage and the potential uniting us, thereby dangerously increasing the risks we face, should we not try to integrate our projects, our human capital, our sadness and our hopes, in one single future.

In other continents our differences are stressed, in order to divide us and to have weaker spokespersons. Our impression is that if there is something profoundly contemporary about us, it is precisely our diverse and multiple reaction capacity. Our culture has never been homogenous, as the Spanish and Portuguese arrived at our coasts with multiple faces: Greek and Roman, but also Catholic, and Arab, and Jew. To further enrich this melting-pot, we then consolidated a policulture rooted in Pre-Colombian America, Black Africa and a diverse and contradictory West. From Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz to Borges, from Chichen Itza to Neruda, from Aleijadinho to Uslar Pietri, and all the other great links of this chain, this culture has been able to sustain a common bond and a continuum, without ever sacrificing its diversity. This is where our wealth lies.

Distinguished Delegates:

The task before us cannot be measured in short periods. If in fifty or a hundred years, no one remember our efforts because we did not contribute to change, well be it, but if in fifty or a hundred years no one remembers our efforts, because by that time to have one single great country made up by Latin America and the Caribbean shall be as natural as the air we breathe, then our silent work will have had meaning.

We invite all Latin American and Caribbean countries, those of us who dream in Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Dutch; on behalf of my country, a small country with a stockpile of wonderful utopias, we invite you all, delegates present here today, to meet next year in Chile, so that we can all -for at least a few days- perceive the world from the southernmost part of America, and to make great strides in a history which we hope will be great. Thank you very much.

ADDRESS BY DR. JOSE ANTONIO ABREU, PRESIDENT OF THE
CONSEJO NACIONAL DE LA CULTURA OF VENEZUELA (CONAC),
DURING THE CLOSING SESSION

As you are all aware, during these events it is customary for the host country to take the floor during the Closing Session, but at the closure of this Encounter which has been so momentous, fruitful, cordial and propitious, I have rightly asked Brazil, pioneer country of these Encounters, to let us have the honor of having them address us during this important assembly.

We shall therefore listen to the illustrious and impressive speech of this great humanitarian, this wonderful person, whom all of us have learned to get to know and admire during this Encounter, someone we Venezuelans have discovered is one of the great masters of contemporary America: His Excellency, the Culture Minister of Brazil, Antonio Houaiss.

ADDRESS BY ANTONIO HOUAISS, CULTURE MINISTER OF
BRAZIL, DURING THE CLOSING SESSION

Permit me to refer directly by name to Don Jose Antonio Abreu, as through him I wish to refer also to his distinguished collaborators present here today, as they have taught us how a united work group can properly and thoroughly carry out a noble and difficult task.

When I accepted the invitation to speak on behalf of all the delegates present, I could not elude the certainty that it was something beyond my capacity. However, there was a feeling which prevailed within me; I am old enough to say that since 1945 I have participated in many international meetings, held in diverse venues, but I believe it is imperative to stress the fact that I had never seen such closeness among participants of a meeting of this type. And by this I am not referring to the fact that we are all dedicated to the field of culture, as we have gathered together in such a fraternal way, that one must conclude that the reasons for this success are evident: these Encounters had a marvelous beginning, a marvelous development and they shall have a marvelous future.

I am certain that the mandate assumed by Chile as of this moment shall be accepted as a challenge, one which if it does not exceed, at least shall be equal to the task carried out by our Venezuelan friends.

In the hospitality offered during the past days there is a certain magic, enchantment and beauty, as beyond the efforts undertaken to achieve a cultural fraternity, the artistic activities were very well presented, and one can feel proud of this fact.

We had the opportunity to be close to the magician who orchestrated all this, and we know who it is, as we saw him in action and because we perceived how Venezuelans refer to him, with gratitude and admiration. We all sense how behind the brilliant cultural and artistic activity which we have witnessed, is the personality of Don José Antonio Abreu. I think Venezuela is justly proud of him, as he is justly proud of his Venezuela, and she responds in the same manner to his efforts.

When acknowledging his extremely generous attitude -comparable to a genuine patron of the arts- I had the impression

that we were back in the Renaissance period in Italy (but with the positive Medicis, not the negative ones). We have all really come out of this meeting with "saudade" - I know this is a Portuguese word, but one cannot substitute it, although we could probably use the word "nostalgia"- remembering the wonderful moments enjoyed here in Venezuela. We also believe that this is due to the fact that this country's people are very close to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is an example that each one of us will endeavour to repeat, and if possible, even surpass, until we return to the country to once again face the same challenge posed by its beauty and hospitality.

Mr. President, Mr. Minister:

I hope that you will be present in all the next Encounters, with the example you have set of dignity, competence, determination, and collaboration. Personally, and I am sure that this also applies to all the delegates present here today; we extend a heartfelt thanks for the hospitality extended, and we congratulate you, along with your government, for the mission achieved. This mission's success is due above all to the activities and efforts undertaken by the Venezuelans, headed by Your Excellency.

Thank you.