

## Conference Report

The conference given by President Rafael CORREA during his official visit was organized by the Embassy of Ecuador with the support of EGMONT. It took place in the palace of Academies on 27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2009 and was attended by a large audience.

The Director general of EGMONT gave a short introductory speech, followed by a personal note by Mr. Jean-Marc Nollet, Vice-President of the Walloon Government, a friend of the President, who announced the decision of his Region to support the Yasuni-ITT initiative to protect the rain forest. During the conference, Mr. CORREA highlighted a few significant elements of his policies:

- The lasting inspiration of the EU model for the latin american countries which remain very diverse and are in need of common economic policies and alliances. But according to him, the EU shows a surprising lacks of interest for Latin America!
- The necessity to take into account the economic and social asymmetry between the countries in development and the old continent. This pleads for a new partnership, far from the neo-liberal policies followed by the Bretton Wood institutions and, unfortunately, by the EU through unbalanced free trade agreements...
- The important role of populism in latin American countries, which according to him embodies the feelings of the impoverished majority and helps to change the balance of power against the traditional dominating minority. This necessitates more State intervention. For instance, in many countries to ensure press freedom means developing state medias against the monopoly of privately owned medias
- The necessity to follow a new development path which repudiate the economic orthodoxy by rising the living standards of the majority, thereby allowing further economic growth and the transition towards a new economy.  
Regarding that issue, he underlined the negative impact of the economic answer to the Latin American crisis of the nineties by which developing countries became net exporters of capital to the developed world! To him, the "Bolivarian" alternative, based on a strong role of the State, could ensure the development through a correct balance of planned infrastructure, social policies and support to indigenous production and SMEs
- The will to ensure a more sustainable model of development, less dependent on big export resources such as oil and gas. As a reward to that preservation of the environment, the developed world should share some resources with the developing countries

All along, he remained very critical of the EU, primarily because of the trade dispute on bananas, which Ecuador repeatedly won in the WTO, and of immigration control measures taken by the EU.

On that issue, the director general of Egmont reminded the President and the audience of some facts:

- that the EU remains by far the first provider of development aid to the developing countries
- that the bilateral EU free trade agreements, while not being perfect, have ensured that the less advanced countries and many countries in transition got access to the richest market of the world without any import duties on their industrial and agricultural production!

Answering to that issue, President Correa, emphasizing the closeness between the two continents and underlined his desire to see the EU develop new relations with the Latin American countries beyond neo-liberal policies.

Report by X. Vanlauwe