

VIO Venezuela Weekly News Roundup

Friday, November 7, 2008

Dear Colleague,

Please find below a roundup of Venezuela news for the week ending on Friday, November 7th, 2008.

PRESIDENT CHAVEZ CONGRATULATES OBAMA ON 'IMPORTANT VICTORY'

Messages of congratulations continue to roll in from around the world after Tuesday's Obama victory in the U.S. elections. In a statement released Wednesday, Venezuela's Foreign Ministry called it an "important victory" and reaffirmed the commitment of the Chavez government to building better ties with the U.S. It reads: "we are convinced that the time has come to establish a new relation between our countries and with our region based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, equality and real cooperation."



Ahead of the elections, Chavez declared "I am ready to sit down and talk ... and I hope we can enter a new stage," according to Reuters. The AP reported that Chavez said he anticipates meeting Obama "on equal and respectful terms." Chavez has been cast as an "anti-U.S." figure in the media, which often passes over the context of aggression against Venezuela by the Bush administration.

LATIN AMERICA REACTS TO NEW U.S. LEADERSHIP

In Latin America more broadly, Reuters and Bloomberg reported that leaders are poised to begin a new era of diplomacy in the region. The presidents of Brazil and Bolivia, for example, are urging an Obama administration to lift the crippling embargo against Cuba. Experts, though, expect only modest changes, according to the BBC. While increased dialogue and multilateralism are expected under Obama, many wonder to what extent relations with the region will be made a priority in the coming years.

In an article in the Guardian today, British scholar Richard Gott is cautiously optimistic about US-Latin America relations in an Obama presidency. He suggests that the new administration should end the embargo against Cuba and reach out to new elected leaders in the Andes. Dialogue with Venezuela's Chavez would be particularly productive, Gott predicts: "If a personal meeting can be engineered, these two improbable leaders, with many similarities in their outsider backgrounds, will get on famously."