

I am aware that many people have doubts about how to establish social solidarity funds. We must think creatively and horizontally.

I propose today, by way of example, that the countries of Latin America contribute a percentage of what we spend on defence to launch a social solidarity fund.

The other countries and the multilateral development banks could do something equivalent.

We share something more than a geographic space. We have something more than neighbourly relations. Our ties are as deep as our history and as rich as our culture. It is time to convert these shared assets into a wager on the future.

Latin America must be more daring. Our values form a strategic reserve. We should act firmly and strategically to face up to the enormous challenges of democracy, respect for human rights, the war on poverty, the challenges of the new economy and the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development.

We should and we can convert the entire region into a spearhead, a place of innovation and dynamism, of opportunities for all men and women, a shared future, a certain and hopeful future for the children and young people of this continent, for our sons and daughters.

We must not permit ourselves the luxury of drifting rudderless in the wind, at the mercy of market forces. We must define our destiny, channel it and then move directly toward our goals.

I invite you to make our efforts transcend national borders. Through cooperation and close contact among us, let us build a new hemispheric space for development.

Let us turn the 21st century into the Century of the Americas!

