



PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DE LA REPUBLICA  
**ENRIQUE BOLAÑOS GEYER**

**CONFERENCIA DE LA ACCION CARIBEÑA LATINOAMERICANA SOBRE LA CUENCA DEL CARIBE**

Miami, december 10, 2003



1. A year ago I had the good fortune to address this important gathering. I am honored to have been asked to return this year.
2. Also, I am humbled to have been awarded the 2003 Central American Award of Excellence presented by the Central America – United States Chamber of Commerce.
3. Thank you very much – not just for honoring me, but for honoring the many people in my country who are struggling to make a better future – for themselves and for future generations.
4. It is on behalf of them all that I accept this award. It is on behalf of the New Era of the New Nicaragua that I accept this award today.
5. This is an exciting moment -- for the newly renamed CCAA and for the countries that share the Caribbean Basin, representatives of most of which are here today.
6. The theme of your conference this year is very appropriate. We are committed to strengthening the strategic knot that binds this region together.
7. We are all concerned with strengthening the Third Border, with strengthening ourselves. Of course, that strengthening takes place in many ways. Greater vigilance to stop terrorism. Greater efforts to control drug traffic and consumption. These are obvious.
8. For my part, I have committed my administration to a war against corruption in Nicaragua.
9. I have done so because corruption hurts two vital parts of a society – its moral foundation and the poorest of society who lose when government is robbed of funds that should be available to provide services and better enforcement of laws and regulations.
10. This war must continue, and I urge my colleagues in other countries to join me in being equally committed to the fight against corruption.
11. We are also strengthening the state by depoliticizing it and making it the servant of the people.
12. But the strengthening I want to focus on in my remarks this afternoon is economic. As we are meeting, the CAFTA negotiations are in their final week.

13. This is an exciting moment. My vision for my country is for CAFTA to provide a new horizon for all our people, to create meaningful jobs for everyone and to overcome the dead hand of the past. More than that, it can also provide a new horizon for the region.
14. I have two visions I want to share with you this afternoon.
15. My first vision is for a Nicaragua that modernizes its agricultural production so that our rural farmers can increase their incomes and create better lives for their families.
16. So, we are seeking greater market access for our competitive agricultural goods – and I call on the U.S. this last week to open its markets further.
17. But we know that expanded trade will also mean some of our people will need to seek new employment, so we call on the U.S. this week to be understanding of our needs for access in textiles and apparel.
18. We also know that we shall need special assistance in adapting to the new trading environment in the short and medium terms, so we call on the U.S. and the multilateral development institutions to provide special assistance to help us during our transition period.
19. A successful CAFTA will allow our people to benefit from the much greater U.S. market. We cannot expand our economy producing only for ourselves.
20. A successful CAFTA will also mean improved conditions for our workers and expanded efforts to protect our environment.
21. These are our goals, and our inadequacies in the past have been a function of our lack of development and lack of resources.
22. Those who fail to see how the CAFTA will help in these areas are doing a great disservice to our people – and to their rights. They need to reconsider their positions!
23. We all know that there are limits to what the government can do.
24. That is why it is so important that so many of you from the private sector are here today.
25. You are partners to our vision. We need modernization. We need expanded investment. We need to produce new products and services in order to create the new Nicaragua that we envision.
26. You will be the investors and the modernizers. Our negotiators are creating the opportunities for you, and we urge you to move quickly to take advantage of these opportunities.
27. But I have a second vision, one that is broader than just my country, Nicaragua.
28. I want to see a true economic integration of Central America.
29. Once a hotbed of civil war and revolution, this 30 million people isthmus is an oasis of peace seeking prosperity.
30. I want to see a renewed commitment within the region. We would dream of a process by which the Central American region can allocate more of our resources to education, public health and internal security that our people demand.
31. In this endeavor the Nicaraguan Army has set the pace in creating a Civil Defense Corp which is a model for all of Central Americans to follow. It provides an excellent service to the population in a natural disaster prone region.

32. We hope that CAFTA's potential will be developed to full capacity and full benefits by the end of the first decade of its initial application.
33. In the mean time we feel uneasy of the danger posed by Colombia's cocaine fields and the spillage, both physical and moral, which accompanies the drug trafficking through Central America to reach the US market.
34. We cannot put aside the fact that the unparalleled drop in the prices of our main crops, chiefly, coffee make our producers economically and morally vulnerable.
35. Our farmers are full of debts while subsidies granted to farmers in the US and Europe makes their crops valueless while oil prices and costs keep rising at the rate of the beating of the drums of war.
36. As I said: We want to see a true economic integration of Central America, and we can do it.
37. Talking about Nicaragua, I may proudly say that Nicaragua is nowadays the safest place in Central America, and one of the safest in Latin America.
38. Oil workers' strikes and violent street protests, currency upheavals and riots involving banks, terrorist bombs and kidnappings in other places of the world, and even in our continent, have not affected our region.
39. Our economies have grown modestly; only 1%, while the rest of Latin America has perhaps a negative growth the year 2002, because of the after effects the whole world suffers as a consequence of 9-11.
40. For the first time in many decades, there are six civilian presidents (including Panama) elected by popular vote who know each other well and share values and visions to lead their people out of poverty.
41. Border disputes and internal quarrels have been put aside.
42. Besides, we are all committed to erase our mutual customs by the end of this year. This is a very difficult task especially due to the high subsidies handed out to farmers in the United States and in Europe.
43. We have to standardize our tariffs in order to protect our own farmers and peasants, and these negotiations are, as you may understand, very sensitive. But we need to create a single Customs Union as a supplement to the CAFTA.
44. We need to show all in the Caribbean Basin that small countries can take advantage of our being close to the largest market in the world.
45. Trade between Central America and the US is third in Latin America, after Mexico and Brazil, and larger than that of Russia, India and Indonesia combined. There is surprising economic weight in the decision to have Central America as a closer trade partner.
46. In the other hand, CAFTA can and will give new impetus to economic development through attracting investment to Central America, both domestic and especially foreign.
47. We need to show that the Caribbean Basin is the next Southeast Asia!
48. My goal is to lead the call for us to believe that we can thrive in the coming years.
49. The growing economic success of our region will cement the strategic relationship with the U.S. that I referred to earlier.

50. This is an excellent way to make the Third Border a reality and one that is in our true interest.
51. If I may, I should like to note the importance of where we are today.
52. Florida not only is located to be a bridge for my vision, but it is the home of many people who are themselves part of such a bridge.
53. It is most appropriate that Governor Bush will address this group later. He and his state are actively taking the lead to help bring about the things I have talked about above. I urge even greater efforts in this direction.
54. Let me conclude by reiterating my vision. We must look forward.
55. We must see new directions and new opportunities. I want to know that my administration has helped form the foundation for a better future for all our people – for all Nicaraguans and for all in the Caribbean Basin.
56. We cannot forget that man does not live by bread alone, and that man does not live without bread!
57. The lack of true free trade and the lack of access to market our products in a competitive environment do not put bread on our tables. This is our main concern.
58. Perhaps at this point in time in Nicaragua we may sadly say that our main export product is people. We have to take measures to reverse this sad situation because it also brings thousands of illegal immigrants especially to US.

59. Helping the economies and development of the Central American Nations with direct assistance and through the Free Trade Agreement to open up a true Free Market and equal opportunities for all parties involved, may provide an ounce of prevention which is in order!

60. This is the message I bring to you today. A message of opportunities, hope and optimism tempered with reality.

61. Thank you very much. God Bless America and God bless Nicaragua.

**1,720 PALABRAS**