

\$100 billion in Ibero-America over the next ten years.

Nov. 19, 2004: Russian President Vladimir Putin visits Brazil, signing accords for space cooperation and transfer of rocket technologies.

Nov. 24-25, 2004: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez visits Russia, signing various accords, including for arms purchases. He offers cooperation on oil technology and exports, on the same terms offered U.S. companies.

Dec. 22-25, 2004: Venezuelan President Chávez visits China, and offers oil cooperation on the same terms afforded to U.S. companies. Eight agreements are signed, which are described as consolidating the “strategic alliance” between the two countries, and which include plans for Chinese investment in Venezuela’s railroad grid and mining. Colombian President Alvaro Uribe asks Chávez to represent Colombia as well, in his discussions with the Chinese.

Jan. 24-30, 2004: Chinese Vice President Zeng Qinghong and 130 Chinese businessmen visit Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. In Mexico, an agreement is signed establishing reciprocal credit lines for binational construction contracts and energy exploration. In Peru, eight bilateral economic accords are signed. In Venezuela, China agrees to help develop oil and gas reserves in Venezuela, in exchange for increased sales of these products to China.

Feb. 3, 2005: Representatives of China’s state oil company, Shengli International, sign an accord with Bolivia’s state hydrocarbon company, YPF, for \$1.5 billion in investments in Bolivian natural gas and oil.

Feb. 14, 2005: Brazil’s Lula visits Venezuela, and announces that “the integration of South America is priority number one of my government’s foreign policy.” Political dialogue, increased trade, and the integration of infrastructure are the three pillars of the Brazilian-Venezuelan “strategic alliance,” he announces.

Feb. 15, 2005: Colombian President Uribe visits Venezuela, and agrees with President Chávez to continue negotiations to build two pipelines (one for oil, one for natural gas) between the two countries. The two Presidents concur that such projects are the means to resolve the tense political climate between the two countries.

March 2, 2005: Lula of Brazil, Kirchner of Argentina, and Chávez of Venezuela—in Montevideo, Uruguay for the inauguration of President Tabaré Vázquez—sign a joint statement supporting Kirchner’s negotiations on Argentina’s public debt, and announce that they will consult and follow a unified policy on debt matters in the future. While there, Chávez also announces the upcoming March 29 summit with himself, Colombia’s Uribe, Brazil’s Lula, and Spain’s Rodríguez Zapatero.

March 4-10, 2005: Venezuela’s Chávez visits India and France, in both cases offering oil cooperation agreements, along the lines offered previously to China and Russia.

March 29, 2005: The Presidents of Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, and Spain hold summit talks in Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela.

UN Reports on Rise in Tuberculosis in Africa

by Leni Rubinstein

A recently released report from the UN World Health Organization (WHO), “The Global Tuberculosis Control Study for 2005,” reveals that tuberculosis has reached alarming proportions in Africa, with a growing number of TB cases and deaths linked to HIV.

One of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to achieve by 2015, is to halt and begin to reverse the spread of TB, as one of the world’s major diseases. In a message to the UN’s World TB Day in late March, Secretary General Kofi Annan said in a message, that much harder work is needed to halt a scourge “both preventable and curable.”

In Africa, 5,000 people are dying from tuberculosis daily, which is a “glaring exception” to a global trend of falling or stabilized rates. Since 1990 the global rates of TB have fallen 20%, and rates are now falling or stable in five of the world’s six regions. The exception is Africa, where the rates have tripled since 1990 in countries with a high number of HIV cases, and the rates are still rising across the continent at a rate of 3-4% annually, according to the report.

If strong commitment and resources are sustained, four regions—The Americas, Eastern Mediterranean, Southeast Asia and Western Pacific—are on track to reach the Millennium Development Goal. The two exceptions are Africa, due to the TB/HIV co-epidemic, and Europe, where there are high levels of multi-drug-resistant TB and slow advances in DOTS in countries of the former Soviet Union. DOTS is the internationally recommended strategy to control TB, and combines five elements: political commitment, microscopy services, drug supplies, surveillance and monitoring systems, and the use of highly efficient treatment regimes with direct observation of treatment.

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