

PALABRAS DE APERTURA DEL 98TH, CONGRESO CONTINENTAL DE  
PUERTOS DE LA AAPA, GALVESTON, 2009.

DIGNATARIOS.....

SEÑORAS Y SEÑORES:

Good Morning, Bon Gia, Buenos Días. The dream of our friend Steve and his staff is a reality today. We are in Texas enjoying the efforts of these wonderful hosts, delicious food and excellent country music, as was evident at last night's welcome. In addition, there is great happiness in again seeing good friends and colleagues from the AAPA family of ports at this wonderful opportunity to share friendship, energy and affection. We will learn new things and share knowledge to continue to grow personally and professionally.

Allow me to recall some words I said before, when I said God had blessed the Americas because this is where Paradise was located when the continents separated; all the good things remained here, such as huge quantities of water and abundant food. This is a great strength for us and a good opportunity to form a large community, a large economic block, a real union for support and sustainable development, but so far we have lacked the vision and the political will. Against all odds, the Europeans already did it, even though they faced different and more limitations than we do; so has the Asian giant. Let's unite around the common aspects!! Let's identify the opportunities, let's form a large economic front and nurture it so we may compete against anyone!! Let's bring technology to the unequaled labor force in Latin America, let's preserve and improve all natural sources and resources, so that we may become a world class economic, food and water power that will help the rest of mankind to survive.

**This is the most noble way to acquire the greatest strength and supremacy of the world**, by helping to alleviate social conditions and the misery that many times give rise to conflicts. We have to make social investments, help our less fortunate brothers simply by giving them job opportunities and education for them and their children. We have to care for the environment and for the great wealth of natural resources we have in the Americas, **THAT IS SUSTAINABILITY!!** And that is the path we should follow. Little ones grow up some day and remember their own history. We have to sow friendship and gratitude among our neighbors, who someday will be our allies and advocates. A good example can be found in my country, Colombia, where thanks to the support and assistance received from the US government, overcame a difficult situation and now is one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America and has become a clear and convincing example of sincere alliance, friendship and loyalty.

I want to say that I end my term as Chair of the Latin American Delegation, and have learned the most wonderful things from my colleagues, mentors and the masters of the great ports of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean, which have helped me along in my personal and institutional functions and activities. They have taught me about working tirelessly, sincerely

and with dedication, they have taught me to love what we do and to have faith in the future we will build together. Thank you for your support, patience and help in accomplishing my goals. Our delegation today has shown its resilience by overcoming the challenges it faced during the last year, but its desire to fight and the great support received from the Canadian and American ports has allowed it to emerge victorious and consolidated from Argentina to Mexico and even including the beautiful Caribbean and continues to be one of the important pillars of our great AAPA family.

What we do at AAPA is proof that we can unite and work together to reach a common ideal, as it is a model of how the various countries of the Americas can work together under excellent leadership. My dear colleagues, let's all continue to work together in sowing this seed of unity and sincere affection, it is worthwhile effort. GOD BLESS THE AMERICAS!!!