



On the one-year anniversary of the Zone of Peace Campaign's launch, we share a summary of the campaign's regional planning committee's in-person strategic meeting

4 April 2024

Today, April 4, 2024, is the one year anniversary of the launch of the Campaign for a Zone of Peace in Our Americas. In recognition of this, we are sharing details about our first in-person meeting of the regional planning committee.

Overview

From March 11-12, 2024, the regional planning committee of the Campaign for a Zone of Peace in Our Americas met in Bogota, Colombia for the first in-person strategic meeting, since the committee was first convened in July 2023. 13 organizations participated. The primary purpose of this meeting was to advance the strategic direction of the Zone of Peace Campaign, broadly, and to deepen the work of this committee as the coordinating and strategic arm of the campaign, specifically.

Vision and Objectives

This was designed as a strategic meeting with core organizations of the regional planning committee to advance the Zone of Peace campaign. Some members attending in-person included: Black Alliance for Peace, BX Boricua Resistance, Caribbean Movement for Peace and Integration, Conmarca Esmeraldas, Consejo por La Emancipación Plurinacional de Perú, Diaspora Pa'lante Collective &, Friends of the ATC, Movimiento Evita, Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition, Observatorio de los Derechos Humanos, Proceso de Comunidades Negras, Red de Organizaciones Afrovenezolanas, Soli Puerto Rico, World Beyond War.

Vision

This strategic meeting worked to further build out the popular movement element of the Zone of Peace campaign by reinvigorating the declaration and building

support across the region. We are committed to building an international “Zone of Peace” in **Our Americas** informed by the Black radical peace tradition. This strategic meeting helped build the collective nature of the campaign and move toward that goal.

Objectives

1. To initiate strategic planning for the campaign.
2. To reinforce the regional organizing committee for this campaign in order to materialize deeper solidarity across the region.
3. To build and strengthen solidarity among the individuals and anti-imperialist organizations throughout the entire Americas based in transnational grassroots struggle.
4. To connect with organizations in host country (Colombia) that haven't been deeply involved in campaign but want to increase their involvement

Key Meeting topics

Over the course of the day and a half, we had several presentations and discussions. Some of the core topics and matters raised are detailed here.

Political education. The committee spoke on the importance of political education to the campaign. As a way to concretize the connection between peoples in the U.S. and Canada to peoples throughout the rest of the region, we can link the Stop Cop City campaign to this work and educate those US activists about how this is a model the US uses in Latin & Caribbean countries. Other topics to develop material around include WHINSEC and the undue influence of NGOs as a type of soft power.

SOUTHCOM as a focus. The committee affirmed the need to articulate SOUTHCOM and further militarization as the biggest threat to our region. Aside from this type of hard power, the committee agreed to elaborate on the use of western backed NGOs as a form of soft power to also dominate “civil society”.

Haiti and intervention. The committee affirmed our consensus that imperialist countries have no role in determining the future of Haiti's governance, and that we must be steadfastly opposed to foreign intervention. To this end, we agreed to film videos of support, which were disseminated afterwards.

Core campaign demands. The committee reaffirmed our commitment to our core demands of the campaign, and made the decision to focus on building these more deeply before expanding.

Suggestions were made to connect the core demand around the **return of Guantanamo to Cuba** to acknowledge that this is a starting point to the anti-colonial liberation of the hemisphere, with specific attention to the liberation struggles of Puerto Rico, Malvinas, and perhaps other European colonies in the Caribbean.

There was agreement that our opposition to sanctions should be expanded to include unilateral coercive measures, shifting the language to **'Say No to Sanction and Unilateral Coercive Measures'**.

There was agreement that in addition to demanding an end to US/NATO exercises, we should oppose all forms of imperialist militarism, shifting the language to **'End US/NATO Exercise & Militarism'**. For those in the US, tactics discussed were direct actions at locations where trainings take place and recruitment centers.

Finally, we acknowledge that all six demands and their realization fall across the intersection of: **anti-imperialism, self-determination, and Pan-Africanism.**

Connection to CARICOM and CELAC. The committee agreed that agitating and engaging with multinational forums like CARICOM and CELAC is critical. In particular, the current leadership of CELAC (Honduras) and other countries – Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua – have taken positions either against intervention or in support of Haitian sovereignty. Engaging with this body is critical. For CARICOM, there was significant disappointment with the recent betrayals of Haitian sovereignty over the last year, so agitation against this was deemed necessary.

Auditing progressive forces. Along these lines, an idea was shared to 'audit' the so-called progressive movements, groups, and political parties of the region to clearly show their positions vis-a-vis Haitian sovereignty and broader commitment to a Zone of Peace in the Americas, which requires saying no to imperialist interventions in the region.

Territorial and regional focus. The committee established that though the core demands should not be expanded at this moment, it is important to enable campaign organizations to establish regional focuses. Among other things, this would include:

Encouraging organizations to **work on a national level to build Zone of Peace formations** with their groups and others. Puerto Rican Zone of Peace organizations have already done this and may serve as a model for other regions that want to build that national aspect. This allows nation-specific demands to move forward.

Making space for urgent regional concerns. In particular the results of the **US-led drug war in Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru, especially in African communities** in those countries. Establishing this territorial dimension that is not limited to state-centered multinational efforts, but by establishing ways for Afrodescendant (Black/African) communities and organizations in those nations to be supported in their direct engagement with one another, was seen as a critical step and possibility of this effort.

Enhancing our **views on self-defense and what peace and opposition to imperialist militarism** looks like in different contexts. This is particularly related to the Drug War and regional peace processes, especially in Colombia and countries that border it.

Importance of principle solidarity with Nicaragua. The group reaffirmed the importance of maintaining principled solidarity with all peoples facing imperialist violence and coercion, with a particular emphasis on Nicaragua, which has often been left out of conversations despite the presence of imperialist sanctions and unilateral coercive measures.

Calendar and coordination. The committee agreed to a shared calendar, to be laid out as soon as possible, to increase coordination of important dates throughout the region. The committee agreed that this will also help analyze the strengths and resources we have to coordinate rather than being redundant.

Meeting in Person. The committee affirmed the importance of meeting in person and showing up in various spaces to spread awareness of the campaign, build deeper working relationships with each other, agitate around Haiti and other actively targeted countries, and build for a true zone of peace.

US/NATO Out of the Americas Network. The committee reaffirmed the necessity of a mass-based formation to bring in more organizations and individuals into this struggle to build a Zone of Peace in Our Americas, based in an anti-imperialist, People-Centered Human Rights perspective. This will be the US/NATO Out of the Americas Network, and its construction is in process.

Nuestra América/Our Americas. One of the main objectives of the campaign is for peoples of North America (in particular the US and Canada) who are internally colonized to see their struggle as part and parcel to the struggles of the peoples throughout the rest of the region that acutely lives the everyday realities of US/Western imperialism. As such, the committee reaffirmed the importance of pushing the phrase Nuestra América (Our Americas in English) to raise consciousness of the masses wherever we are based.