

Venezuela blasts World Bank envoy over Haiti handling of PetroCaribe funds

Written by Australian Business

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Dec. 11, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Venezuelan government has rejected comments made last week by Mary Barton-Dock, the World Bank's envoy to Haiti who suggested that the Caribbean country's handling of PetroCaribe funds lacked transparency.

The Venezuelan Ambassador to Haiti, Pedro Antonio Canino Gonzales, called Barton-Dock's comment disrespectful and denounced the Bank's interference in the bilateral affairs and the cooperation relationship between Haiti and Venezuela.

"(Venezuelan) President Nicolas Maduro is very satisfied with the way the Haitian government has spent PetroCaribe funds," Canino told HCNH on Tuesday in a phone interview.

"It is not up to the World Bank to determine whether the funds were well used or not," he said. "This is simply insolent," denounced Ambassador Canino.

Under the leadership of the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, PetroCaribe was created in 2005 to allow member states to accumulate funds by purchasing oil from Venezuela at favorable rates and with easy payment terms.

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The funds are used to finance projects and programs with significant social impact and a potential to create jobs and sustainable development. PetroCaribe funds well over 100 such projects throughout Haiti.

In an article published last week by the Haitian daily Le Nouvelliste, Barton-Dock was quoted as saying that there was a lack of transparency in the use of PetroCaribe funds by Haitian authorities.

Ambassador Canino stressed that any "questions related to the cooperation between Venezuela and Haiti are only the responsibility of President Martelly, Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe, President Maduro and the populations of both countries."

The Venezuelan official reminded HCNN that a group of Venezuelan experts conducted a 27-day audit of the PetroCaribe program, following which President Maduro praised the Haitian government's management of the funds and their efforts at establishing transparent reporting mechanisms.

"Our cooperation with Haiti is based on solidarity values and respect for its national sovereignty, not on the imperialist mindset which consists of denying social empowerment for the most vulnerable," Canino told HCNN.

Last week Prime Minister Lamothe had already rejected Barton-Dock's comment which he called "unfair and unfounded."

A World Bank official in Port-au-Prince told HCNN that the comments made by Mrs. Barton-Dock were misinterpreted.

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"I can tell you that the remarks by Mrs. Barton-Dock were misinterpreted because there are things they say she said that she never said," explained the World Bank functionary who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to publicly comment on the issue.

The official promised to further inform HCNN on the issue shortly.

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