

South American neighbours offer support to Bolivia's Morales

Nine South American countries have expressed their 'permanent solidarity with the people and government' of Bolivia in the wake of a building political showdown over President Evo Morales' efforts to enact a new constitution, Spanish news agency EFE reported Wednesday.

They also expressed their conviction that Bolivia 'will manage to resolve the present situation in a framework of democratic principles,' a statement signed by the leaders of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Argentina, Venezuela, Paraguay and Uruguay, said Monday.

The respective heads of state were in Argentina to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Cristina Fernandez as president.

Earlier Monday, opposition governors from five of Bolivia's nine provinces rejected the draft constitution approved by Morales supporters in the constituent assembly.

In a statement signed after a meeting in the central city of Cochabamba, the governors of Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni and Pando provinces said the charter has 'no legal validity whatsoever'.

The leaders of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni and Pando - known collectively as 'the crescent' - also said they planned to push ahead with their demands for regional autonomy in defiance of La Paz and the draft constitution.

The Declaration of Buenos Aires by the nine South American leaders, issued by the Argentine foreign ministry, expressed confidence in 'the ability of the Bolivian political forces to maintain a climate of dialogue and understanding, rejecting all attempts to damage the stability of the institutions and the democratically elected government'.

Morales said at a press conference Tuesday he appreciated the support expressed by the region's countries amid the political dispute surrounding the new Bolivian charter.

Among other things, the socialist president said he will 'withstand' what he calls a conspiracy by his country's oligarchs and the 'international oligarchy, headed by the US', adding that the groups who oppose him 'are increasingly smaller, but increasingly violent'.

Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, sees the new constitution as key to his project of 're-founding' the nation in favour of its poor, long-suffering indigenous majority.

(© IANS / India eNews)