



## **ALAS FOUNDATION ACHIEVES THE AGREEMENT OF LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENTS ON EARLY EDUCATION**

ALAS Foundation obtained today a historic commitment for Latin America. In a forum organized by Alas Foundation in New York, the presidents of Argentina, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and El Salvador committed to discuss the topic in the next Iberoamerican Summit of Chiefs of State that will take place next October.

**New York, September 24, 2008** – During the United Nations General Assembly, ALAS Foundation, represented by Shakira, Alejandro Sanz and Alejandro Santo Domingo, gathered the presidents of five Latin American countries to discuss the importance of investing in Early Childhood Development programs. In the meeting Shakira stated: “We want to ask the Presidents here present to take the topic of early childhood development to the next Summit of Chiefs of States in El Salvador.”

At the end of the forum, where the economist Jeffrey Sachs and the president of the Interamerican Development Bank, Luis Alberto Moreno, also participated, the presidents Felipe Calderón from Mexico, Cristina Fernandez from Argentina, Martin Torrijos from Panama, Fernando Lugo from Paraguay, and Antonio Saca from El Salvador committed to officially take this topic to the next Iberoamerican Summit of Chiefs of State that will take place next October. The purpose is to seek for a regional agreement on early education, so it becomes a universal initiative in all the countries of the region. Furthermore the activist and artist Alejandro Sanz said: “We want to ask you this. As simple, as valuable, and we would have opened the doors to the future of Latin America.”

During the meeting a positive dialogue took place between the Presidents and ALAS, where the Latin American leaders of these five countries agreed on the importance that 40% of the population of girls and boys from zero to six years old in the region (32 million) that have no access to preschool education can obtain it through programs promoted by public and private initiatives. President Saca from El Salvador concluded: “We want to present the results of our meeting to the Summit in documents that can be turned into state policies.”

9 million Latin American children younger than 5 years old suffer of chronic malnutrition and 22 million don't have access to education. Malnutrition and the absence of care in the early stages of life are the main mechanisms for the transmission of inequality. This is why experts agree that early childhood development is one of the most effective tools to end with the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

In addition, ALAS Foundation proposed a statistical census in order to establish the concrete situation and needs of children younger than six in each of the Latin American countries. Shakira, Alejandro Sanz and Alejandro Santo Domingo also suggested the importance that the regional governments develop Early Childhood Development awareness campaigns oriented to the parents, so that they will learn to stimulate their kid's development.



Various studies have confirmed that the main potential of development of a human being takes place during the first six years. Once this time passes by, the opportunity to form more capable people with more potential of personal and professional development decreases substantially.

ALAS Foundation was born with the objective of mobilizing the Latin American society, from individuals to their governments, on the importance of Early Childhood Development as a fundamental tool to defeat poverty and to offer better opportunities to the new generations. The President of Argentina Cristina Kichner praised: “Alas had a fantastic vision, and it can make this generation be the one that ends with poverty.”

Since its beginnings, ALAS has summoned more than 40 artists, thinkers and businessmen from the region, and has made two simultaneous concerts in Mexico and Argentina to raise awareness in the entire continent about this topic. This agreement with the Latin American Presidents is the next fundamental step in accomplishing the pass from the rhetoric to the practice, so that our kids receive an adequate education since the day they are born.

ALAS will maintain an active participation in the next Summit that will take place from October 29 to October 31<sup>st</sup> in El Salvador.

For further information contact:  
Ruth Infarinato  
[ruth.infarinato@fundacionalas.org](mailto:ruth.infarinato@fundacionalas.org)