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El Salvador's President-elect Mauricio Funes Attends Sica Meeting, Explains Governing Philosophy

by LADB Staff

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President-elect Mauricio Funes of El Salvador used his presence at the regional summit with US Vice President Joseph Biden (see other article, this edition of NotiCen) to give an international audience a better idea where he stands on the political spectrum and how he might negotiate the rapidly shifting ground in the hemisphere. Running as the candidate of the traditionally far-left Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN), he could be expected to toe the party line, but Funes was not a member of the FMLN prior to his election, and his choice was widely read as a signal that the party was moderating toward the center. Funes accompanied President Antonio Saca, whom he will succeed in June, and largely eclipsed him in the media as reporters sought to devine, in the leftward drifting world that is Latin America, which way Funes will turn toward the pole represented by the US, the traditional enemy of the FMLN, or toward the Venezuela pole of trusted friend President Hugo Chavez. It is difficult to say. For Funes, the US has changed with the coming of President Barack Obama no less than has the rest of the hemisphere. Said Funes, "The changes now come not only from the South, but they also come from the North." He said he also wants the best of relationships with Venezuela but quickly fired a warning shot over Chavez's head. "I'm not going to stick a finger in the politics of Venezuela," he said, "and I expect that Venezuela will not stick a finger in the politics of El Salvador." He has expressed his intention to establish full relations with Cuba and to maintain close and cordial ties with associates of the Alternativa Bolivariana de las Americas (ALBA), Bolivia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Dominica, and Ecuador. That done, he turned to the third cardinal direction on the Latin American compass, the so

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