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**Transition Ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Summit of the Americas Process**

<https://www.state.gov/Ambassador-Kozak-Remarks-at-Summit-of-Americas-Chair-Transition-Ceremony>

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Thank you very much and thank you, Secretary General Almagro and Director General Chavez.  And I also would like to thank the Summit of the Americas Secretariat for hosting this event and doing such a fine job.

I am pleased to represent the United States as we assume the chair of the Summit of the Americas process.  And I was pleased to receive the Inukshuk the other day—it arrived here at the Department and will accompany us through our term as the chair of the Summit.  We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with partner governments, the private sector and civil society, and youth from around the region.  They and the institutions of the Joint Summit Working Group will help us develop a relevant agenda for our leaders at the Ninth Summit of the Americas to advance our common priorities in these unprecedented times.

This marks the first time the United States has hosted the Summit of the Americas since the inaugural meeting in Miami in 1994.

We are a long-standing partner of free nations.  We will work together to advance prosperity and democratic values.

The United States is also proud to celebrate Peru’s stewardship of, and vision for, the Summit of the Americas process.  The region faced the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela under the Maduro regime.  Peru used its role as Summit host to re-focus the Summit around the forum’s founding principles – democracy and economic growth. Under Peru’s leadership, the Summit took on one of the most pressing issues facing our region: “Democratic Governance Against Corruption.”

The emphasis on collective action with respect to a specific issue led to a true consensus in the adoption of the Lima Commitment.

The Ninth Summit of the Americas will build on the transparency and anti-corruption principles of the Lima Commitment.  Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, as the Secretary General mentioned. The Ninth Summit will reaffirm our region’s commitment to protecting democratic institutions while strengthening our economies.

Our Vice President led the U.S. delegation to the Eighth Summit in Peru and offered to host the Ninth Summit in the United States in 2021. He could not have anticipated the challenges that we now face, not only in the Western Hemisphere but globally.

The Ninth Summit will occur as our region recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.  The United States will support the global economic recovery as the world’s largest economy.  And we will remain the most generous humanitarian donor and the most steadfast partner of the people of the Americas.

However, governments alone will not propel economic recovery.  It will depend on the acts of individual investors and the hard work of our citizens, and there is no limit to what they can accomplish given the right environment.

And in that respect the Summit of the Americas can contribute.  The United States will ensure the participation of democratic leaders and effective institutions, as well as diverse voices from the private sector and civil society, including marginalized and vulnerable groups.

All over the Americas, citizens are increasingly demanding more accountable and effective governance. Summit priorities must reflect the practical needs of people and industry in the Americas.

The United States has supported the participation of independent civil society representatives from every

country in the region in the Summit of the Americas. We actively support the work of the Citizen Forum of the Americas to organize and formalize civil society participation in the Summit process.

As the Summit host, we look forward to providing the opportunity for independent civil society leaders to interact directly with government representatives.

The United States enthusiastically supports the incorporation of regular consultations with the private sector as an integral part of the Summit process through the Americas Business Dialogue.  The CEO Summit of the Americas will convene business leaders to work with governments on improving economic growth and fighting corruption.  Increased, high-quality private sector investment will be critical to economic growth.

The United States has long been bound together with our partners by geography, economic and cultural ties, and shared values such as democracy, freedom, the protection of human rights, and the rule of law.

Through the Summit of the Americas, we can work together to address the region’s shared challenges and opportunities and advance the freedom, prosperity, and security of our hemisphere.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Organization of American States to maintain the collective defense of democracy as a top priority for the hemisphere.  This includes efforts to restore democracy in Venezuela and end the suffering of Venezuelans under the illegitimate Maduro regime.  It also means restoring democracy in Nicaragua and holding the Cuban regime accountable for its abuses.

In closing, I would like to thank Secretary General Almagro, Ambassador Chavez, the Summits Secretariat, and the Joint Summit Working Group, and the National Summit Coordinators for all the  support. Thanks to your efforts, the Summit continues to serve as the premier forum to address the challenges of our hemisphere and create opportunities for all of the people of the Americas. Working alongside of all of you, the United States will utilize our role as host to ensure the Ninth Summit of the Americas advances freedom, prosperity, and security for us all of us and is just as successful as the Eighth Summit of the Americas under the leadership of our colleagues from Peru.