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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, JUAN MANUEL SANTOS
CALDERON, FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE SIXTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Cartagena de Indias, April 15, 2012

As President of the Sixth Summit of the Americas, I would like to express my satisfaction at the results of the meetings that we have held over the last two days here in Cartagena.

The active participation of the Heads of State and Government and the quality of our discussions allowed us adopt a number of commitments on the issues with which our work was concerned.

We reiterate that the search for development and prosperity are core aims of the Summits of the Americas process.

We had two options: to focus solely on the wording of a declaration, as has so often happened, or to talk frankly about the issues that unite, as well as about those that divide us.

This Sixth Summit has been the summit of dialogue and sincerity.

Dialogue entails discussing the issues on which we agree, but also addressing those on which our positions differ.

On this occasion we showed that no topic is off the table.

We discussed all the topics in a polite, direct, and candid manner.

Putting aside long silences will bring benefits in the short and long terms, as well as strengthening integration and convergence of interests in the region.

Respect for, and tolerance of, differences proves that we are a mature region with enormous potential for carrying out ambitious projects such as those set out in the mandates of the Sixth Summit, whose leitmotif was *Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity*.

Most countries are in favor of Cuba's participation in the Summits of the Americas process and vowed to make that goal a reality as of the next summit.

On the issue of the Malvinas Islands, all the participants in the Summit have set out their positions of consensus in declarations issued by the Organization of American States. On this occasion, the discussions took place without modifying those decisions and the vast majority of countries called for a peaceful settlement to this dispute.

We, the region's leaders, held an invaluable discussion on the global drug problem. We agreed on the need to analyze the results of the current policy in the Americas and to explore new approaches to strengthen this struggle and to become more effective. We have issued the OAS a mandate to that end.

The Sixth Summit afforded greater opportunities for the participation of, and dialogue with, social actors.

Cartagena hosted forums for young business leaders, workers, civil society, and indigenous peoples, and raised the level of interlocation with governments thanks to the participation of two presidents and a significant number of foreign ministers.

Cartagena was the setting for the first Business Summit of the Americas, an initiative of the Colombian private sector that had the endorsement of the Colombian Government as well as technical support from the Inter-American Development Bank.

This forum provided an opportunity for constructive dialogue between a number of heads of state and government and a sizable gathering of entrepreneurs in the Americas. The interest that this initiative generated warrants consideration to repeating the exercise on a regular basis.

Five mandates came out of the Summit:

First, natural disasters.

We agreed to mitigate their social, economic, and environmental impact by allocating resources and designing strategies geared to adaptation, risk management, and the creation of efficient prevention and response mechanisms.

Second, citizen security.

This is a matter of priority for ensuring the quality of life of all citizens in the Americas.

We agreed to strengthen cooperation and coordination as fundamental tools for combating violence, corruption, and transnational organized crime in all its forms.

Third, integration of physical infrastructure.

This is a critical priority for advancing the development and well-being of our peoples. The execution of projects with a view to establishing hemisphere-wide road, rail, and electrical networks will make the Americas a pole of global development and growth.

Fourth, use of information and communication technologies.

We agreed to promote education, share educational materials, and empower each student in their education and in overcoming social and economic barriers.

We adopted the goal of designing and deepening public policies that would enable us to apply ICTs to education, healthcare, innovation, entrepreneurship, productivity, competitiveness, and the rise of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Fifth, poverty eradication, inequality, and the search for equity.

This is the most important mandate of all. Everything we do to improve infrastructure, education, security, and disaster prevention underpins poverty elimination policies.

Establishing inclusive social policies that foster decent, dignified, and productive employment will be the priority for the region.

Implementing the mandates will require regular dialogue with the inter-American institutions and agencies that support the Summits of the Americas process.

I would like to express my appreciation to President Ricardo Martinelli of Panama for his generous offer to organize the Seventh Summit of the Americas in his country.

The spirit of this Summit was one of building bridges and connecting with one another, in order to turn economic prosperity into social prosperity. People should always come first.

We reiterate our commitment to moving forward together toward the consolidation of a Hemisphere of respect that lives with its differences and develops a dialogue of equals.

We want one America, an America more united and more prosperous.