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**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA,
OTTO PÉREZ MOLINA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEVENTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

His Excellency Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama;

His Excellency José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organization of American States;

His Excellency Luis Almagro, Secretary General Elect of the Organization of American States;

Distinguished heads of state and government;

Distinguished heads of delegation;

Esteemed observers and special guests;

Friends:

I would like to thank the distinguished President of Panama, Juan Carlos Varela, for his hospitality, and to express my gratitude for the warmth with which the Panamanian people have received us at this Seventh Summit of the Americas.

In December of last year, Guatemala proposed the declaration whereby the OAS member states congratulated Cuba and the United States of America for beginning talks toward the resumption of full diplomatic relations.

We did so because we are convinced, as I stated in Cartagena de Indias three years ago, that it was only through frank and open dialogue that we were able to bring an end to the wars in Central America.

With the conclusion of those conflicts, the Cold War came to an end for our region. Today we are celebrating because we believe that with the restoration of relations between Cuba and United States of America, the Cold War in the Americas is coming to an end.

In the near future, we hope to see the Organization of American States become the vehicle for presenting the global community, for its consideration, with the voice of our Hemisphere and the contributions it can make to building peace and prosperity for all the peoples of the world.

Three years ago, in Cartagena de Indias, we proposed that this forum embark on a high-level intergovernmental dialogue which, with the support of science and human knowledge, would enable us to identify more effective answers for the oversight and regulation of the drugs market and alternative mechanisms for fighting the global drugs problem.

Accordingly, in reiterating Guatemala's commitment to that challenge, I would like to inform you that with the support of all the region's countries, the necessary steps were taken to direct a constructive, coordinated, and constant dialogue in search for answers to the global scourge of drugs, as a result of which we organized two sessions of the OAS General Assembly in Guatemala.

This effort has yielded significant progress: perhaps most importantly, the paradigm shift that is beginning to take root in our Hemisphere. In both the Declaration of Antigua and the resolution of Guatemala City, we agreed to substantially modify our approach to the problem, placing people, and not substances, at the center of our policy formulation efforts. In addition, the agreements reached enable us, for the first time ever, to speak with a single voice on the global drugs problem and to present a coordinated position at the special meeting of the United Nations that is to take place in 2016.

Dealing with the scourge of drugs with absolute respect for individual dignity is not only a debt we have toward our citizens: it is perhaps the only truly viable alternative for addressing this scourge.

Mr. President:

In June of last year, the United States Border Patrol intercepted more than 67,000 unaccompanied minors from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador who were seeking to reunite with their families. Following those events, the governments of the Central American Northern Triangle, with the support of the United States of America, agreed to draw up the Alliance for Prosperity Plan, which aims to create economic opportunities in our countries and to make migration an option instead of an obligation.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are committed to carrying out this Plan and to assigning the funds necessary for its execution from our budgets. I would like to thank President Obama for his initiative in providing economic support for this Plan and for the backing he has given us. I would also like to acknowledge the major assistance provided by Mexico and by other countries of the region, together with the unconditional support of the Inter-American Development Bank in its capacity as the Plan's technical secretariat.

Our countries have made significant progress in different areas, such as social development, security, and economic growth, and this Plan will bolster those efforts.

But this is not a task that falls solely on the shoulders of governments. Civil society and the private sector must participate actively. We invite investment in our countries, in order to create more jobs to reduce migration among our citizens.

And to be more competitive and to attract additional investment into our countries, I would like to tell you about the commitment we have entered into with the President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández, to finalize a customs union by December of this year, which will lead to the elimination of border crossings.

I would like to note the challenge that some of our countries face in the areas of security and justice. I am convinced of the efforts we must make to strengthen our national institutions and ensure their independence.

International cooperation is an important tool, within the framework of full respect for sovereignty, the rule of law, and the principle of nonintervention, as enshrined in the OAS Democratic Charter.

We cannot strengthen our institutions by subordinating the exercise of our sovereignty to the will of third parties.

During Secretary General Insulza's time in office, we were able to make progress in the negotiations between Guatemala and Belize, a process that we expect to conclude soon, in a way that is satisfactory for both states, under the aegis of the International Court of Justice, and we hope to enjoy the assistance of the OAS on this issue.

I would also like to applaud the terms in office of Secretary General José Miguel Insulza and Assistant Secretary General Albert Ramdin and, at the same time, to congratulate and offer our support to the Secretary General Elect, Luis Almagro, and to the Assistant Secretary General Elect, Néstor Méndez.

And I would again like to highlight the leadership of President Juan Carlos Varela in overseeing this historic Summit of the Americas.