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SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATION, MAURICIO MACRI, AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE EIGHTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS, IN THE CONVENTION CENTER OF LIMA, PERU **April 14, 2018**

Thank you, Mr. President.

Good morning to all of you, distinguished Heads of State, my friends: it is a pleasure to be in Lima, the cradle of the history of the Americas.

I would like to thank President Vizcarra and the Government of Peru for their hospitality and I congratulate them on the organization of this Summit. But allow me also to convey to the Government and people of Ecuador, and to their President, Lenín Moreno, our condolences on the tragic death of the three journalists who, in the exercise of their profession, were killed in an act that we all condemn. In the aftermath of that deplorable incident, we express our solidarity with the families that have lost their loved ones in what is clearly an attack on the freedom of the press.

And also—in light of yesterday's events—Argentina again condemns the use of chemical weapons, as occurred recently in Syria, together with the existence of facilities that produce or store them.

In these delicate circumstances, Argentina calls on the international community to take steps to preserve international peace and security and to avoid increasing tensions by choosing the path of dialogue, within the framework of existing international commitments.

And, returning to today's topic, and echoing the words we heard today and yesterday from President Vizcarra and the OAS General Secretary: I congratulate you on bringing the issue of the relationship between corruption, democracy, and sustainable development to the forefront; this is one of the greatest challenges facing our region. Experience shows us that when democracy weakens, corruption increases; and that where inequality prevails, corruption plants roots. Our people deserve honest politicians with a vocation of service, who work to help raise the people's living standards and not to benefit themselves: a stable and transparent democratic system that provides answers is an essential tool in combating corruption. We need to ensure that public goods reach those who need them the most through transparent institutional processes, and not through networks of clientelism or exchanges of favors.

In Argentina we are addressing this issue with the utmost seriousness, and the results are apparent: for the first time our country has improved 21 positions in the Transparency International Index, and

we achieved that in the space of only two years. We are working to create an open, 21st-century state, one that is at the service of the people, with more open data, creating new avenues for citizen participation, demanding ever-greater commitments from our civil servants, and showing how taxpayers' money is spent. We have also increased the funding and scope of our Anticorruption Office, and we have opened up new channels to facilitate whistleblowing.

But those changes are not easy: many people would like to impede initiatives to increase state transparency out of fear of seeing their own interests affected; many people would still choose the path of impunity. Corruption crosses borders and so must our efforts to combat it; only by doing so will we be able to construct a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous future for the Americas.

The security of our Hemisphere is another of our great challenges. We are a zone of peace, that we know; but we also know that we have a zone with alarming levels of insecurity and violence. Over our shared history, we have developed forums for cooperation to make wars and coups d'état a thing of the past. We now need to optimize our collaboration to eradicate the scourge of drugs, human trafficking, and organized crime. For that, we need greater cooperation among our security agencies and our judicial systems: information sharing using the new opportunities provided by technology is a vital undertaking.

And another great challenge is connectivity, one of the region's biggest stumbling blocks. To ensure our intelligent inclusion in the global economy, we must resolve that deficit in physical connections between our countries and the rest of the world: if we are more connected, there can be no doubt that we will be more competitive. Promoting the integration of our production systems and of our people, in a framework of respect and celebration of diversity, will allow us to better adapt to the challenges of the 21st century.

We present ourselves to the world from a region with the potential to integrate itself with the four cardinal points, one that has unequaled natural riches and vast human talent distributed among young populations that are full of energy and ideas. We share a common identity based on coexistence, diversity, and the near absence of crossborder conflicts. All that sets us apart and allows us—and will allow us—to make valuable contributions to the world.

Democracy and human rights are still principles that must be defended at this Summit of the Americas. Therefore, before concluding, I would like once again to express our concern for Venezuela, for the millions of Venezuelans who have been forced to leave their country, and for those who every day suffer from the lack of food supplies and basic health services. We have to redouble our efforts so that the Government of Venezuela stops denying the facts and accepts regional cooperation and international assistance so it can overcome this unsustainable humanitarian crisis. Given the topic that has brought us together, there can be no doubt that the Venezuelan case provides an extreme example of where an uncontrolled process of corruption can lead a society. Meanwhile, we cannot look away as the right of the Venezuelans to enjoy free elections is violated, with political prisoners and without minimum guarantees of transparency. Argentina will not recognize any election result that arises from a process of this kind. I insist: Argentina will not recognize any election result that arises from a process of this kind. This is not a democratic election! We have to continue working together for a real democratic and peaceful solution for Venezuela.

The reason for these Summits is not—nor should it be—to offer a series of recriminations in which we all blame someone else and then return home safe in the knowledge that others are responsible:

our presence here represents a commitment to a hemispheric agenda that is in full force. Let us ensure that it makes sense and that we are capable of looking forward, in the understanding that collective efforts are always more effective in resolving the challenges we share.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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