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**INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, MARTÍN  
VIZCARRA CORNEJO, AT THE EIGHTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

April 13, 2018

On behalf of the entire Peruvian people, allow me to welcome you most cordially to Peru, which receives you today at the Eighth Summit of the Americas with all the richness of its culture and the warmth of its people.

The Heads of State and Government of the Hemisphere have decided to assemble here today with the aim of adopting concrete commitments to strengthen democratic governance and fight corruption, an ill that has held up our peoples' development for decades and cut short the life plans and dreams of millions of citizens.

It is particularly meaningful for us that this Summit is being held in Peru at a time when we are beginning to recover from a political crisis. Exactly three weeks ago today I took over the presidency of the Republic in complex circumstances not unrelated to the issue that we are here to address, a crisis that made it abundantly clear that in Peru, like the rest of the region, corruption has enormous repercussions on governance, economic growth, and the citizens' quality of life. However, at the same time, the events today in our country are a demonstration of the capacity that we Peruvians have to take on difficulties and move forward. As governors, our challenge is to meet the clamor for transparency and fight corruption. We must restore the public's confidence in institutions, so that we can live in a more just society and rebuild Peruvian pride. And that is a challenge that we share with all of you.

We know all too well that corruption is one of the biggest obstacles to development and effective enjoyment of human rights. It is a problem that generates enormous losses and prevents us from efficiently seeing to our countries' most urgent needs in the areas of education, health care, housing, and infrastructure.

According to the World Bank every year, 2% of global GDP is lost to the payment of bribes, which is roughly equivalent to US\$1.5 billion. That is 10 times what the world invests in development assistance!<sup>1/</sup> However, the amounts involved in corruption as a whole are even greater. That figure multiplies once you take into account embezzlement of public funds and the theft or misuse of public assets.<sup>2/</sup>

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1. World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance/brief/anti-corruption>
  2. UNODC. <https://www.unodc.org/colombia/es/press/2014/diciembre/corrupcion-mayor-obstaculo-al-desarrollo-economico-y-social-en-todo-el-mundo.html>

Our countries face myriad challenges: climate change, food security, nano- and biotechnology, rebuilding business hubs, increasingly advanced information technologies, and many others. While all this goes on, our governments are still unable to tackle such issues as crime, informality, and corruption. If this situation continues it will be very hard to make any progress in meeting the sustainable development targets and goals that we have set ourselves for the near future, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda.

That is a reality that demands firm decisions, since 186 million people in Latin America are still surviving on less than US\$4 a day, while 61 million citizens still lack the tools to break free from extreme poverty.<sup>3/</sup>

In a society beleaguered by corruption, it is the poorest who are most defenseless against that scourge. That perverse reality increases inequality and deepens social divides, eroding the social pact, democratic governance, and, thus, the rule of law

The findings of corruption perception surveys in the Americas are emphatic. Seven out of ten of the Hemisphere's inhabitants have little or no confidence in their governments;<sup>4/</sup> more than half of its citizens rate the performance of their authorities as poor in fighting corruption. This situation is also reflected in people's daily lives: over the last 12 months, one in three people seeking to access to basic public services admitted to having to pay bribes.<sup>5/</sup>

The Hemisphere's States have attempted reforms to boost transparency, accountability, and judicial independence over the last two decades. However, a recent wave of corruption scandals has revealed that our efforts have not been sufficient. We owe a debt to our peoples.

Twenty-four years ago at the Miami Summit, the issue of how to curb corruption was included on the international agenda. Given the results, that commitment clearly has not been met. Corruption in our Hemisphere is not episodic, but pervades the whole of society. It is the upshot of our daily actions, behavior, and decisions as governors, officials, business owners, and citizens.

A real hope is emerging against this panorama. These days most members of the public are not indifferent to corruption; on the contrary, it is one of things they most care about. Recent studies show that seven in ten people in the Hemisphere are in favor of anticorruption measures. There is our base for bringing about meaningful change in favor of development for the peoples of the Americas, who are urgently calling for it. We must not live with corruption as if it were normal or inevitable because there is a lot that each one of us can do to tackle this scourge head on.

That is why we who have gathered here today are firmly committed to reaching decisions for effectively preventing and confronting this transnational threat. We must unite to fight the corruption that hinders and obstructs the gains that we have made in the region in terms of poverty reduction, economic growth, and trade integration. That is why I propose that we work together.

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3. ECLAC. *Social Panorama of Latin America 2017*.

4. ECLAC, CAF, OECD. *Perspectivas Económicas de América Latina: Repensando las Instituciones para el Desarrollo. Aportes para la Cumbre de las Américas 2018*.

5. Transparency International, *People and Corruption: Latin America and the Caribbean*.

I would like here today to invite the Heads of State and Government of the Americas to adopt concrete commitments against corruption. I also call on you, representatives of international organizations, business owners, civil society organizations, citizens, and young people of this great land that stretches from Alaska to Tierra de Fuego. I invited you to form a “regional alliance against corruption” with a focus on prevention and deterrence throughout the Hemisphere, as well as a policy of zero-tolerance for corrupt acts.

The Lima Commitment “Democratic Governance against Corruption” will be the foundation that underpins our efforts. At the Summit that brings us here today we will take concrete steps to boost transparency and access to information, strengthen civil society participation in monitoring government performance, and consolidate respect for freedom of expression and whistleblower protection.

We will also move forward with other preventive measures, such as strengthening education in democratic and civic values, so that our citizens can know their rights and defend them. In our fight against corruption women’s empowerment will also be a crosscutting plank of our policies.

In addition, we will implement concrete measures to increase transparency in public works and political party finance, as well as seeking a greater commitment from the private sector in the fight against corruption. The Lima Commitment will also allow us to advance with sharing information and legal evidence, as well as enhancing asset recovery initiatives.

I exhort you to redouble the efforts to build a hemisphere where citizens come first. We owe it to them. We owe it to their hopes, we owe it to their dreams, and we have a responsibility to build a healthy society where they can exercise their rights and have the chance to fulfill those dreams.

I welcome you most warmly to this Eighth Summit of the Americas and hope that we can make progress in adopting joint commitments to build a fair and democratic society that enshrines human dignity as the overarching aim of the State’s endeavors. That is the challenge that we face.

Thank you very much.