



EIGHTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS
April 13 and 14, 2018
Lima, Peru

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HIS EXCELLENCY JUAN CARLOS VARELA RODRIGUEZ,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA
REMARKS FOR THE EIGHTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS,
LIMA, PERU, APRIL 14, 2018

- I would like to thank the people and Government of Peru, as well as President Martin Vizcarra for presiding over and organizing this meeting of Heads of State of the Americas, and to express our full support for Peru's democratic institutional process.
- In the name of the Panamanian people, we express our solidarity with the people and Government of Ecuador over the cowardly murder of two journalists and an associate.
- We also call on the major powers to seek ways to achieve lasting peace for the Syrian people.
- I come to Lima with conflicting emotions, having presided over the Summits of the Americas in Panama in 2015, where the world was shown that we can put ideological differences aside and come together to address problems impacting our peoples.
- On the one hand, since the Panama Summit, major advances have been made in combating corruption throughout the region. However, we face a region divided, one with new challenges, such as rising drug production and drastic changes in migration policies in some countries.
- Corruption is a scourge stoking the region's two principal problems: inequality and organized crime.
- In Panama, major progress has been made in combating corruption: we have rooted out corruption in infrastructure works, thereby protecting 40,000 jobs and 10 billion Balboas in works, while at the same time recovering nearly 50 million balboas in assets, without impacting the innocent population in no way responsible for these acts.
- Companies have shouldered their responsibility, and have been sentenced to pay large fines and ordered to complete their works. The officials responsible for these acts must be held accountable and reimburse the State for the harm done.

- Panama has chosen its path and there is no turning back. Society is demanding and its demands will be satisfied: as of today, companies and officials perpetrating corrupt acts will no longer be able to enter into contracts with the government or remain part of public life.
- The time has come to promote a public-private compact wherein governments and the private sector commit to take actions that ensure that this does not recur in our region.
- Our region must return to the path of robust growth in public and foreign investment that generates jobs and well-being.
- Today Panama is executing over 15 billion Balboas in works benefiting the population. Works transparently tendered and contracted that improve the quality of life of our citizens and boost the competitiveness of our economy.
- Latin America must make its way forward in unity, strengthening its democracies and ending corruption.
- Another complex challenge facing our Hemisphere that is linked to another type of corruption is increased production of drugs, which has doubled, and for which new markets such as Europe are paying thrice over to obtain.
- Seventy percent of crime and incarcerations are related to drug trafficking. Our response is hard-hitting and we are coordinating a frontal assault on this scourge with countries in the region.
- Corruption impacts economies and leads to drastic migration movements, such as that of the Haitians who were living in Brazil.
- I would like to recognize Chile's courage and solidarity in addressing the crisis of these migrants, who left Brazil owing to the economic situation that resulted from corruption.
- Panama has acted responsibly with the migration flows transiting our country in search of a better future.
- The States must monitor and control migration flows to prevent irregular migration from promoting corruption and must also protect migrants from human trafficking.
- I wish today to applaud the presence of Cuba at this Lima Summit and to express support for the measures taken to open its economic model, which has made possible the normalization and regularization of its migration flows.
- I regret the absence of Venezuela and the debilitation of its democracy. The closing down of its political system has brought it to an economic and humanitarian crisis of great concern to the region as a whole.
- I call for all countries to seek, through dialogue and concrete actions, a peaceful and democratic solution to the current crisis of the Venezuelan people, and to be prepared to

provide humanitarian assistance in the event of mass exodus stemming from the elections imposed without participation by the opposition.

- This Summit must serve as an opportunity to rethink a more united Hemisphere that enables us to promote social peace and cooperation in the ongoing quest for better quality of life for our citizens and for resolution of the problems impacting our people.
- You will ever find in Panama a friend and promoter of dialogue and unity, fulfilling the role of its geographic position as bridge of the world and heart of the universe.