

Panama vows to combat drug trafficking, asks for help to eliminate 'blood money' driving scourge

20 September 2017 – The most effective way to solve problems that affect the world's people is always placing human beings at the centre of all decisions, the President of Panama told the United Nations General Assembly today, stressing that his country, which joins North and South and which is bordered by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, would continue to be a beacon of cooperation and understanding.

"I have always been aware of Panama's calling as facilitator of dialogue and understanding; a country [that will] work in the service of the international community [and] contribute our resources to address the common problems affecting the region" contributing to wider peace and security, Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez said in his address to the Assembly's annual general debate.

While the countries of the wider region, including Colombia, are indeed making solid progress, he said "our continent faces a problem which transcends borders: increasing production of drugs and drug trafficking," he said calling on leaders to tackle this pressing challenge head on.

Panama, for its part, reiterated its commitment to maintain a fight against drug trafficking, putting all its capacities and resources at the service of the region to eliminate the scourge. "At the same time, I appeal to the leaders and Heads of State of producing countries and consumers of drugs to support us in this struggle; every dollar generated by the drug trafficking represents a death in our region," he underscored.

Turning to Venezuela, he said it would be a serious miscalculation for that country's Government to try to impose a single-party political model. Among other things, such an action would increase outward migration. Amid such challenges, he vowed to remain "on the front line" of efforts to strengthen unity among countries of the Americas and called on Panama's neighbours to do to the same.

"We do not have time and space to waste in squabbling amongst ourselves," he said as he turned to global challenges. Condemning all acts of terrorism, he called on the Security Council to strengthen measures to foster lasting peace in such places as Syria and Iraq, and condemned the irresponsible leadership of such Governments as that in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which sought to destabilize regions.

[Full statement \(in Spanish\) available here](#)