

Press Releases: Press Availability With Peruvian Foreign Minister Lucia Cayetana Aljovin Gazzani

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Lima, Peru

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MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon (inaudible) declaration of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru Cayetana Aljovin.

FOREIGN MINISTER ALJOVIN: (Via interpreter) Welcome, press. Thank you for being here with us today. I just wanted to welcome Secretary of State of the United States Rex Tillerson for coming here in such an important event. We have talked about the excellent relationship between Peru and the U.S. We have agreed that we will continue cooperation to solidify them, especially in investments.

And we have also addressed the Summit of the Americas and we agreed how important it is (inaudible) selected by Peru, which is: Democratic Governance Against Corruption. We agree that the results of this summit should be to address and get to concrete results and not just declaration.

We talked about the – Peru being party of the Security Council of the UN, and he said that Peru will look for consensus within the council. We also talked about the aspirations of Peru to be to the OECD, and we thank Mr. Tillerson for his continued support as well as the U.S. support to our national aspiration.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) declaration of the Secretary of the U.S.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well first, thank you, Minister Aljovin, for welcoming me to Peru. It is indeed a pleasure to be back in Peru. It's only been 48 years since I was last here. (Laughter.) But interestingly, I came here as an 18-year-old college student on a relief mission in 1971, actually January the 2nd, after a terrible earthquake in Peru. I came down with my university band to bring awareness to the situation.

And that was also a very special year for Peru. 1970 was the year the Peruvian football team made it to the quarterfinals of the FIFA World Cup in Mexico City, and a composer had written a tune, *Peru Campeon*, to celebrate the 1970's football team. And in a plaza just about three blocks over here, when I was 18 years old I was standing in that plaza with my university band at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and we struck up *Peru Campeon*, and people poured out of the buildings and into the street to celebrate the national soccer club, the football team.

And you know what I realized is how easy it is to bind people together around something. And what that tells me is Peruvians know how to bind together, and we look forward to the future with Peru as well. But I have very fond memories of that first trip to Peru, and it was nice to drive by that plaza today and it brought those memories back.

The United States and Peru have a very longstanding relationship. It's really built on the shared values of democracies, prosperity for our people. And with – just within the last few days, we marked the 9th anniversary of the U.S.- Peru Trade Promotion Agreement, PTPA, which has really been a cornerstone of our bilateral relationship. This agreement really sets a high standard for both of our countries on market access, investment safeguards, intellectual property rights, environmental and labor rights. And because of that agreement, two-way trade continues to increase between our two countries, from \$9.1 billion in 2009 to \$14.3 billion in 2016. That's an almost 60 percent increase in trade as a result of that agreement.

We also have a very strong law enforcement and security relationship which is essential to our partnership in keeping our people safe and promoting stability. All of our nations suffer the results of transnational organizations who are marketing narcotics, trafficking human beings, weapons, and we have a very good joint effort with Peru to counter these transnational criminal organizations.

Just last October, Peru posted a gathering of general prosecutors and attorneys from more than 20 countries to promote more effectiveness in criminal prosecutions of transcriminal organizations. This really is helping us create a network throughout the entire hemisphere of sharing information on these organizations so we can interdict, hold them accountable, and disrupt their activities.

We also want to welcome Peru to its growing international leadership role on a range of issues, and we discussed Peru just recently took up its seat for a two-year term on the UN Security Council. And we look forward to Peru's important voice on many, many issues that will be important coming before the Security Council, and we know we will have wonderful collaboration with Peru because of so many shared values.

Also, I want to acknowledge Peru's strong support for the international effort to send North Korea's leadership a message that they must give up their nuclear weapons. Peru has taken significant steps to – in sending diplomats home and other steps to ensure that the North Koreans understand Peru's stance on this, and they are an important part of the entire international effort on that regard.

I also want to acknowledge all of the very positive steps that have been taken by Peru and the progress that they have made in putting in place all the elements to meet the requirements for an invitation to accession to the OECD, and we think they are well-positioned. We look forward also to supporting Peru as you host a successful Summit of the Americas in April. This is a terrific opportunity, and I think Peru has chosen an important theme: Democratic Governance Against Corruption. It is certainly relevant and timely for all the nations participating.

Lastly, I do want to touch on an issue that both President Trump and President Kuczynski discussed when they were together last year, and that's the serious concerns we all share around the political situation in Venezuela. Our governments appreciate Peru's leadership of the Lima Group in an effort to bring some reconciliation between the Maduro regime – encouraging the regime to return to its constitution and allow the people of Venezuela's voice to be heard in the selection of their leaders. And we had a very good exchange on the issue of what else can we do together to ensure the people of Venezuela receive the right for their voice to be heard that they – that they deserve, and to relieve the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

Again, it's a real pleasure to be back in Peru. I promise I won't wait 48 years to come back again. But it's a delight to be here. Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Now we will have four questions from the press – two, those that come with Secretary Tillerson, and two locals. Thank you.

QUESTION: Gracias. I'm Tracy Wilkinson from the *Los Angeles Times*. Minister Aljovin, President Trump has criticized your country and other countries in the region for failing to do enough to fight drugs. He said we send a lot of aid, millions of dollars, and you all are laughing at us and not doing enough. And he's even threatened to cut aid. What is your response to that?

Did you talk to the Secretary about it?

And Secretary Tillerson, are you re-evaluating aid to Peru? And to the broader point, you kind of keep getting pushed off message. The Trump – President Trump made those comments literally as you were standing in the press conference in Mexico. Could you speak a little to the frustration of that, of being pushed off message? And what is the message? Is it your message of building closer relationships? You talked about the – how well Peru is doing in terms of law enforcement. Or is it President's Trump's message of punishing these countries? Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER ALJOVIN: (Via interpreter) Well, we have talked with Secretary Tillerson regarding the fight against drug trafficking. We agreed that in the bilateral relationship this is an issue that is important in our agenda. The Secretary of State acknowledged the efforts made by Peru in the fight against drug trafficking, the increased budget that Peru passed to be able to fight this scourge, and we agreed that we have to continue working together in this fight. We also agreed that sometimes drug traffickers work with terrorists, joint forces to carry out these terrorist attacks. And we agreed in how important it is for both of us to work together so that this scourge is eradicated and is something that affects negatively our region.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, we did have an exchange, a discussion about our joint efforts on transcriminal organizations, not just here but in every stop I am making throughout the hemisphere, because this is really a hemisphere-wide challenge. And every country has its own challenges in responding to that, and there are victims of these transcriminal organizations in every country in the hemisphere. The U.S. is victimized certainly by the flow of narcotics to the U.S. But the countries in which these narcotics are transiting or where organizations are carrying out their activities to move these drugs, they also suffer as well from violence in their neighborhoods, violence in their cities and towns, and it has its own effect on their nations.

I think one of the things we've been very clear in the joint dialogue we've had with Mexico, for instance, is the U.S. has to acknowledge that we are the market, and we are the largest consumer of illicit drugs, and so we have to begin to work on that problem. And President Trump has recognized it and he has put an initiative forward on drug demand reduction, ready to put a billion dollars behind that effort to reduce the demand for drugs among the American people as well, because of the devastating impact it's having.

But this is an issue that touches every country in the region and it's why we're setting up so many joint efforts and we're beginning to connect these through networks like the hosting of the 20 countries that I mentioned at Peru. The more we can share, the more we can connect our activities, the more progress we can make to disrupt these organizations.

I don't get frustrated about anything, so I don't need to answer the question.

QUESTION: Thank you. Kylie Atwood with CBS News. Madam Foreign Minister, the

U.S. is looking to counter China's economic influence in the region, and Chinese investments, they said, are threatening to the pillars of democracy here. Do you view Chinese investments as threatening to Peru? And how can you trust the U.S. given that they said that they would be a reliable partner for Peru in terms of trade, but the Trump administration has pulled out of the TPP and is also threatening to terminate NAFTA?

And Mr. Secretary, I've got a question for you: This week, the Vice President is headed to the Olympics in South Korea, and North Korea is also going to be there with a delegation. You have continually pressed that diplomacy is the way to solve the North Korea threat. And there has been a period of relative calm in terms of North Korea nuclear tests and missile launches. Is the time when you would consider U.S.-North Korea talks getting closer? And would the Trump administration accept an invitation for North Korean officials to meet in South Korea this coming week? Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Do you want me to go first?

QUESTION: Sure.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Okay. Well, with respect to the Vice President's trip to the Olympics and whether or not there would be an opportunity for any kind of a meeting with North Korea, I think we'll just see. We'll see what happens. And I would comment too that with respect to the trade relations – I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Sorry, so it's not a "No." It's "We'll see"? It's possible.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yeah, we'll just have to – we'll see. We'll see what happens. With respect to the trade relations, again, I would point you back to the PTPA agreement between Peru and the United States. This has been a very successful trade agreement. We have other agreements in the region as well. As you know, I think we have something like 12 free trade agreements. Of the 23 trade agreements the United States has globally, 12 of them are in this hemisphere, so we have very strong trading agreements already in place. So I think it's important to keep that in the context of TPP being yet another trading architecture, which the U.S. and the President's assessment at the time was didn't really meet our needs.

Now, having said that, the President has said on TPP 11, which is being concluded – he said we could take a look at it. He hasn't rejected that out of hand. But we also have very strong trade agreements already in place with many of the countries in this hemisphere and we should use those fully. As I mentioned, we've had a 60 percent increase in trade between the U.S. and Peru just in the last over-five-year period since that agreement was put in place. So we think it's in a very positive trajectory.

FOREIGN MINISTER ALJOVIN: (Via interpreter) Regarding your question, regarding our relationship with (inaudible), I would like to say that we do have free trade agreements with China, we also have it with the U.S. As Secretary Tillerson just mentioned, that we talked about the increase of almost 60 percent of trade, and this is why we have talked about how the 60 percent could become in a larger amount. So we also have trades agreements

with European Union, TPP, the free trade agreement with Australia. So Peru is an open economy, and we have relationships with most countries of the world, and we continue along that path.

INTERPRETER: I am sorry, but I cannot hear. There is no mike.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon. My question – I have a couple of questions for Secretary Tillerson. The first one is: our country expects the extradition of Alejandro Toledo from your country. And my question is: Is President Trump to approve the extradition of former President Toledo for money laundering and traffic of influence among other accusations?

Another question for both of you would be in this meeting that you had, did you make any decisions regarding the announcement of President Maduro to attend the next Summit of the Americas? Will he be received or won't he? And can you confirm if President Donald Trump will come to the meeting that will take place in April?

FOREIGN MINISTER ALJOVIN: (Via interpreter) Well, I cannot answer regarding the invitation. Peru sent invitations to all the countries in the region to come to the summit. We have not received any formal response yet, and therefore we have not made any decisions because the formal response has not been received as of yet.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: With respect to the Summit of the Americas, we certainly want to respect the host country's decision – they are the host country – in terms of attendance, and so we will support the host country in this decision. And in terms of President Trump attending, there's been no final decision made. The President's calendar – we don't normally confirm that this far in advance. But he is considering his attendance and we'll have more to say about that when a final decision is made.

With respect to the extradition, I would have to refer the question to the Department of Justice to get their answer on that.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Julio Cisneros from RPP.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon. Julio Cisneros from RPP. Two questions, actually. First for Secretary Tillerson, what do you understand or government Trump about the – what is your reading about the problems of (inaudible) in the region, and do you think that there will be a will of President Trump to come to the summit? Because Nicolas Maduro could attend as well. Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, as I said, we've made no final decision, certainly President Trump has made no final decision yet, as his schedulers have yet to put forward a plan together for his decision.

I think in terms of whether President Maduro attends or not, I think what's important – and the Madam Minister and I spoke about this – is I think a very, very good agenda has been put together by the host country, Peru, to deal with issues that are very important to everyone in the region. And everyone wants to see progress made. And I would hope that there would not be

a distraction to sticking to that agenda. And I think that's what we want to support, is a very successful Summit of the Americas with a very good agenda that's been put together, and not have other issues take away from what's a very important opportunity for leaders together in Lima, and discuss how to make progress on corruption, strengthening governance. These are all very important issues for everyone in the region to strengthen our democracies.

FOREIGN MINISTER ALJOVIN: (Via interpreter) (Inaudible) the issue of (inaudible) affected the whole region, and of course this is the reason why the main issue that Peru chose is the fight against corruption, and this is the reason why we agree with Secretary of State that the results of this summit is not just declaration but concrete results on how to fight corruption to benefit our peoples.

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