

Press Releases: Remarks on U.S. Latin American Policy

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Casa Piedra

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MS GUAZZOTTI: Good afternoon. On behalf of the Chilean North American Chamber of Commerce, AmCham Chile, I would like to welcome you all to this important event in honor of the visit of the Secretary of State of the United States, Mr. Michael Pompeo.

A hundred years ago, a group of visionary entrepreneurs created AmCham Chile with the purpose of strengthening bilateral commercial ties, encouraging investments, free trade, and the full integration between both countries. These goals were not only valuable to the members of the chamber, but also to Chile.

The founding entrepreneurs of AmCham Chile would be proud of the results we have achieved. We are commemorating the 15th anniversary of the signing of the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement, one of the most successful trade agreements for both countries. The U.S. has made over \$30 billion U.S. of investment in Chile, and the U.S. also offers ever-increasing investment opportunities for Chilean outward investment. More importantly, the presence of American companies has brought forth less visible yet impactful consequences. Significant investments in human capital, technological developments designed to enhance the quality of our daily lives, incorporation of best practices, investments in research and development, and the introduction of policies to promote diversity and inclusion have been hallmarks of American participation in the Chilean economy.

The legacy left by the partnership for development between Chile and the United States is undoubtedly a source of pride for both countries, and provides us with an immense challenge: that of having to define the next 100 years of bilateral relations. We're confident that Chile will continue to be competitive as a country and maintain key conditions that attract foreign investment – the rule of law, strong institutions, democracy, and a commitment to human rights as well as nondiscriminatory treatment of foreign investors.

Secretary of State Pompeo's visit today reflects the longstanding, broad-based ties that bind Chile and the United States. He was sworn in as the 70th secretary of state one year ago, but this is only the latest in a long line of extraordinary accomplishments. Secretary Pompeo previously served as director of the Central Intelligence Agency and as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In the private sector, he founded Thayer Aerospace, where he served as CEO, and he was president of Sentry International. Secretary Pompeo is a graduate of the United States Military Academy and of Harvard Law School. It is my honor to welcome to the podium the Secretary of State of the United States Mr. Michael Pompeo. (Applause.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you, Sandra, for that kind introduction. *Buenas tardes*. And it's a wonderful, warm welcome that I have received here in Chile. It's truly been overwhelming. I don't find that every place I go, so thank you.

President Pinera and Foreign Minister Ampuero, you have demonstrated again this morning that the U.S.-Chilean relationship is strong and getting even stronger today.

Today we had the opportunity to build on the meeting that President Trump had with President Pinera in the White House in this past September. And I was with President Trump right before I got on the plane to come here, and he sends his warm regards to President Pinera and all of you here in Chile.

I also want to acknowledge my counterpart foreign minister. We have become good friends. The Chilean members of congress are here; thank you. The diplomatic corps that has joined us, distinguished guest, thank you all for being here today. I want to make sure that the message that I share with you today is taken just the right way, and your presence gives me the opportunity

to do that.

You all know the beauty of this place, this landscape. It is really awe-inspiring, from the Andes, the beautiful lands up north, to Easter Island, to Patagonia, and all of the wonderful, gorgeous, special places in between.

Just like the American West, it's rugged. It's clear too that Chileans are people of extraordinary talent, of extraordinary vigor and bravery, not only because they settled such terrain but because they built a true republic on that terrain.

One of the first leaders of the Chilean nation was Andres Bello, who reminds me a bit of a Chilean Thomas Jefferson. For one thing, he's on your currency, and that's for a good reason.

He was a diplomat, a statesman, a founder of the University of Chile, and the principle author of the Chilean civil code. Today our embassy in Santiago proudly sits on Avenida Andres Bello, and that should tell us something. We're now at a moment in history where the proximity, the proximity, that connection – that connection, it resonates more than ever before and actually has boundless potential to continue to increase.

That's the subject of my remarks today.

The Trump administration believes that our two nations and the rest of the Americas have an incredible opportunity, the chance truly to cement a future of democracy, prosperity for all of the people of all of this hemisphere. It's not an impossible dream, although a few years ago we might not have believed it. Today we all can. Nor is it a forgone conclusion that it will take place. We'll have work to do. But the chance is ours collectively to seize or to squander.

Over 100 years ago, former Secretary of State Elihu Root paid a visit to Chile. At that time he saw the remarkable economic changes that were taking place in the region and he said that, "There is seen in South America the dawn of a new life which moves its people as they have never been moved before." He called it a "great awakening."

Today I am convinced there is another great awakening. It's happening right here in South America, and it's not just an economic one, although that's an important element of it.

Just look, just look at the once unthinkable changes that have taken place in Chile and other countries. Chile made the transition peacefully to a democratic nation and embraced competition, free markets, and capitalism. Chile champions transparency. Chile is a leader in the role – Chileans did all of that.

And look how it's borne fruit for your country. You've reduced poverty more than any other Latin American nation, from 36 percent in the year 2000 to less than 9 percent today.

You've diversified your economy, and the United States is grateful to have

benefited from that economy diversity. Since we signed a trade agreement back in 2004, trade between our countries has nearly quadrupled.

You've done all of this under different political parties of different stripes. Our nations' respective political cycles may not always align perfectly, but the underlying relationship is rock-solid, based on a foundation much deeper than politics.

Many countries, many countries on this continent, are following Chile's example. A generation ago, many South American countries were military dictatorships.

And even after those regimes ended, many of the continent's democracies were saddled with corrupt leadership.

Well, that's no longer the case.

A wave of democratization is sweeping the continent, and it's coupled with anti-corruption movements and a healthy dose of something no nation can live without: common sense.

Brazil's citizens said enough is enough to the corrupt ruling class. They'd seen the scandal, they'd seen how rotten their government had become, how big business colluded with politicians to the detriment of the poor and of the middle classes.

And voters in Brazil said no more. They opted, rather, for law and order and ditched the status quo in favor of action.

Peru has been fighting public corruption as one of its top priorities, too. We saw this effort come to fruition last year during the Summit of the Americas and the signing of the Lima Commitment.

Meanwhile, the Colombian miracle greatly strengthened institutions in that country. Colombians now benefit from a more independent judiciary. They've seen expansion of modernized, world-class businesses.

And next door in Ecuador, President Moreno has removed restrictions on freedom of the press and welcomed a new national dialogue.

And finally, in Argentina, Argentina has decided that old models aren't delivering. Those solutions no longer work. It's not what they're looking for.

There's a saying in English, and probably in Spanish too – I'll do it in English today – that what is popular isn't always right, but what is right isn't always popular.

President Macri is doing the hard work of trying to reform his economy.

We thank him for that. His people will be better off for it. The government there is taking difficult but important steps to build sustainable growth. It's a tough road to walk, and it's not without peril. It's also not without

results. Argentina has returned to global credit markets recently for the first time in 15 years.

This is how prosperity is built; it's how democracies are strengthened – voters opting for bolder visions, countries fighting their own internal challenges, building on strong external relationships. We cannot miss how important this momentous time is.

You should know that the Trump administration is not just talking, we're acting in support of this, because this is all encouraging progress and democratic nations around the world rightfully deserve our support.

The question is how. Some leaders even as recently as a few years ago have come here and declared their intentions.

But they were all talk and no action. We'll never do that. The Trump administration will not make that same mistake.

You can already see through the concrete steps we've taken.

President Trump, Vice President Pence, and I have all crisscrossed the region and we'll be back more.

My first step this year – first trip this year, rather, was to President Bolsonaro's inauguration in Brazil. After leaving Chile today, I'll be heading to Paraguay, the first time a secretary of state has visited Paraguay since 1965. Can any of you recall who was secretary of state then? That tells you it's been too long. And then I'll head on to Peru and to Colombia.

Less than a month ago, President Bolsonaro visited the White House. He didn't come there for just the photo op.

We signed a major technology safeguards agreement that will allow us to launch satellites from Alcántara. It was 19 years in the making. Another agreement will allow market access to American farmers in Brazil. And a third will pave the way for Brazil to become a major non-NATO ally. These are enormous steps of partnership.

Elsewhere, President Trump has praised what he called a "new day" in Latin America, and he has shown that he means it by leading the way on trade for all of us.

United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement was signed in Buenos Aires, a major signal to the region that's home to 12 of the 20 countries which the U.S. enjoys free trade agreements.

Meanwhile, the administration's America Crece program, launched in 2018, will increase trade and investment in energy and infrastructure. It's removing legal barriers and all the barriers to greater investment between our two countries.

And then there's the Caribbean. Deputy Secretary Sullivan, my deputy, is sitting today even as we speak in the Caribbean working with leaders in that

part of this region.

When President Trump met with many from the same group recently, one of them remarked that it was the first time in decades, the first time in decades they'd seen a U.S. administration so engaged in the Western Hemisphere. He described the meeting as one of a much broader piece of an American initiative.

We think he had that right.

You should know that we have an important task, each of us, to cement these hemispheric ties and support good trends, because when we don't, there's always the risk that some other nation, some other purported friend will attempt to fill the vacuum, to the fill the void.

If you've been listening recently, you have watched the Trump administration speak quite a bit about the risks that China presents.

Make no mistake, China is an important trade partner for Chile, for the United States as well. President Trump's been working hard to make sure our trade with China is fair and reciprocal. But you should know there is a problem.

The problem, though, is when China does business in places like Latin America, it often injects corrosive capital into the economic bloodstream, giving life to corruption and eroding good governance.

You saw this quite clearly here in the region at the Coca Codo Sinclair dam in the jungles of Ecuador. (Inaudible) and built by – excuse me – built by China under a previous administration, the dam was supposed to solve Ecuador's energy needs and help save the country and keep them out of poverty.

But of course we know how this story ends. The dam now runs to half capacity. The steel used to make it is full of cracks and there are accidents. Nearly every top official that was involved in the dam's construction is either imprisoned or sentenced on bribery charges.

The project included over \$19 billion in Chinese loans as collateral. China, in exchange, received 80 percent of Ecuador's oil at a discount and then resold that oil to make a profit. This does not seem like a reliable partner to me. I am confident that it does not seem like a reliable partner to you either.

It was the Ecuadorian energy minister who put it quite bluntly. He said, quote, "The strategy of China is clear. They take economic control of countries." We're glad, indeed we're thrilled, that President Moreno's administration has taken swift action to convict those responsible for doing so much harm to their own people.

The United States will always encourage Latin American partners to avoid these debt deal traps.

Also consider Venezuela. I spoke with President Pinera at length about this today. China's bankrolling of the Maduro regime helped precipitate and prolong the crisis in that country. China invested over \$60 billion – \$60 billion – with no strings attached. Well, it's no surprise that Maduro used the money to use for tasks like paying off cronies, crushing pro-democracy activists, and funding ineffective social programs. And you all know, better than anyone in America could know, the crushing, devastating results of that.

I think there's a lesson, a lesson to be learned for all of us: China and others are being hypocritical calling for non-intervention in Venezuela's affairs. Their own financial interventions have helped destroy that country.

And speaking of hypocritical advocates for non-intervention in Latin America, you need to worry about the Russians, too. Venezuela, Latin Americans should be worried. Flying in troops and opening a training center in Venezuela are obvious provocations.

We shouldn't stand for Russia escalating an already very precarious situation in that country.

Russia, as everyone in this room knows, has longstanding ties to authoritarian leaders in Cuba and in Nicaragua. It sells arms, it propagates lies, it disseminates all types of propaganda in those countries.

In Nicaragua, Russia has opened a police training center and a satellite compound near the capital. Like China in Venezuela, the results of Russia's involvement in Nicaragua, to put it mildly, aren't good.

The citizens of Nicaragua, they're suffering. They're suffering at the hands of leadership that engages in blatant human rights abuses, stifles free speech, and refuses to admit its own extraordinary incompetence.

But the good news is, the good news for all of us, is that South American countries are pushing back against this external meddling. The Inter-American Development Bank, celebrating its 60th anniversary, canceled its meeting in Chengdu. It did this – it did this for the basic reason that China had refused to grant a visa to Venezuelan Juan Guido's official representative.

Countries like Paraguay – countries like Paraguay, meanwhile, are staffing [\[1\]](#) up for their own interests and beliefs by supporting a democratic Taiwan.

And the Lima Group countries – I cannot say enough about how they have stood up. They're seeing Russia and Cuba for what they truly are. They were opposed to China's efforts at the United Nations to protect Maduro in Venezuela.

Perhaps the best news is that all of these bold steps represent a fundamental shift – a fundamental shift in regional leadership. It's part of a trend in countries that have voluntarily stepped up to support peace, to support prosperity and freedom throughout this hemisphere.

Another great example in Chile, along with Colombia: Each of you helped launch a new regional integration forum called *Prosur*.

Free of both bureaucracy and inflexible ideology, it will facilitate cooperation in areas of infrastructure and healthcare and management of natural disasters. This is an important step for this region.

Last month, President Pinera hosted the first gathering of South American heads of state in five years. The United States commends him for taking this incredibly important step.

The United States wants to partner. It wants to partner as this region takes every major step, especially those that are particularly difficult. Together, that's what we're doing in Venezuela. A coalition, a broad coalition of now 54 nations, supports the peaceful, constitutional transition of power inside of that country.

In the days ahead, the United States and all of its Latin American partners will continue to work together to coordinate humanitarian help in places like Cucuta, Colombia, where I'll be heading in just a couple of days. You should know too that the island of Curacao has stepped up, permitted us to provide humanitarian assistance from that location as well.

And we'll convene a ministerial in Peru focused on the healthcare needs of those who have been displaced from Venezuela.

And make no mistake about it: The United States and all of these coalition partners will continue to isolate Maduro.

So far, the United States has revoked the visas of 718 of Maduro's henchmen and has issued sanctions on over 150 individuals and entities. In fact, just this morning, just today, the Treasury Department designated four additional companies along with nine more ships that operate in the Venezuelan oil sector, including some that transport oil to Cuba. And this week the Organization of American States voted to give Juan Guaido's ambassador a seat at the table. This is unheard of and this is good news.

The United States and each of its partners asked to do its part, and you should know we will continue to do our part.

To close, I want to reiterate my central message from this afternoon: On this continent, the United States is showing up as never before – reminding our friends of how much we have in common, of how much our interests align, and how much we love you.

We have entered a new era, as governments across the region are shrugging off failed socialist models, plucking out the thorns of corruption, and creating dynamic economic systems with real and true reforms that will be lasting, that will benefit your children and your grandchildren. With this new strength and with this new vigor comes robust regional leadership.

South America has truly become more clear-eyed and more wary of its pretended friends. China, Russia – they're showing up at the doorstep, but once they enter the house, we know the debt traps. They will use debt traps, they will disregard rules, and they will spread disorder in your home. Thankfully, you all, South America, is not buying it. You should know that the United States

will stand behind you.

I'll bring you all back now for just a moment to what happened in this country nine years ago: The world's attention was fixed on the San Jose mining accident. All of us remember. I mentioned it to my son last night. He remembers it well. Despite being 700 meters below the Earth, the famous *treinta-y-tres* created their own miniature democracy.

It was the shift manager, the last man pulled out of the mine, who the other miners credited with help keeping order so that they could all survive. The world was amazed. The world wondered how they had all prevailed.

Luis – Luis said simply, "You just have to speak the truth and believe in democracy."

Like his countryman Andres Bello, he is a Chilean statesman of our time.

The United States looks to these examples and wants our countries' ties to continue to grow deeper. We now know it can happen and how it can happen.

Please, now is not the time to lean back into the past, but rather avoid strongmen saviors and socialist models.

No, now is the time to come together, like the miners did in San Jose.

Now is the time to move forward together for the good of us all. Thank you and may God bless you. (Applause.)

[\[1\]](#) standing up

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