

Press Releases: Remarks With Paraguayan Foreign Minister Luis Castiglioni at a Press Availability

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Palacio de Lopez

Asuncion, Paraguay

April 13, 2019

FOREIGN MINISTER CASTIGLIONI: (Via interpreter) Good morning to all the members of the media. Again, we give our cordial and special greetings and a welcome to the press and to Mr. Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America. It is a great honor, it is a great pleasure, to receive Mr. Secretary of State in the Republic of Paraguay.

Last night when I received him, when I greeted him – the Secretary of State, I told him that he was going to be a part of history of Paraguay, because after half a century as Secretary of State of the United States of the Government of the U.S. had returned to a friend, a country, a friendly country, an ally of Paraguay, and then in – on behalf of Secretary Michael Pompeo we're going to be – his name will be set in history as the second Secretary of State who visited Paraguay after more than half a century.

We have had with Mr. Mario Abdo Benitez, President of Paraguay, a very – an excellent meeting with the Secretary Michael Pompeo and his staff in which we have faced several subjects, all of them of interest, bilateral interest, and also we have dealt with other subjects of multilateral interest.

Firstly, I want to highlight that Paraguay for over 30 years has decided to take the road of consolidation of public freedoms, on the road of democracy, and on the road of the absolute respect of human rights here in our country, and also to help the strengthening of these values anywhere in the world. The commitment of Paraguay is in Paraguay, but it is also a commitment of Paraguay to defend democracy, public freedoms, human rights, will be beyond our borders. It will be in the region, in the hemisphere, and in the whole world.

For that reason, President Mario Abdo and I have spoken with Mr. Secretary of State that our position in the case of Venezuela is a position founded in principle and values and has – that has made that from the very beginning the Government of the U.S. and the Government of Paraguay have really tread together in this road, because both governments are committed to help so that the people of Venezuela recover its – their fundamental rights, recover the democracy, recover the freedoms, and that the human rights be respected, observed.

Paraguay and the U.S., we will walk together so that this humanitarian tragedy that the millions of Venezuelans who are surviving, eking out a life in pain, will live again in liberty, in freedom and democracy, and recovering their consecrated rights. The position of Paraguay is very firm in this Venezuela subject, and it is still strong and firm with the U.S., together with the U.S. We have said always with dictators, with tyrants, we do not dialogue. Tyrants and dictators are combatted, are fought against. We have to combat them in order to recover the basic liberties of the Venezuelan people so they can live with dignity again, once again.

At the same time, we have spoken with the Secretary of State on the commitment that is absolutely firm and unconditional that Paraguay has to fight transnational crime in all its areas, in all its facets. Paraguay has declared a war without quarters, without asking for quarters to international crime, to drug trafficking, to arms dealing, to contraband, to the laundering of assets and money. In this combat, in this battle, it's a battle that has no point of return. We will have to vanquish, and we have assured that the Secretary of State.

Paraguay in that sense will want to cooperate closely with the Government of the United States because we tread the very same road, and the Secretary of State has told us that he recognized our enormous effort and struggle and that they are here to cooperate, so that both countries, the U.S. and Paraguay together, jointly with other friendly brother countries – Brazil, Argentina – could establish a positive alliance to fight transnational crime and obtain the victory that our people deserve.

At the same time, we are – we have decided to have a permanent interaction between both governments, between both secretaries – in my case, Secretary Pompeo and myself – so that this cooperation be permanent. This cooperation not only be point by point, but it is also be transported into time and to really go beyond the administration. The friendship and alliance of Paraguay go over a century, and the friendship and alliance of Paraguay will extend for another century and other centuries because we have ideals and principles and values that are common to all of us. We are sure that with the visit of the Secretary of State we begin. There is an inflection point. We always had a very positive relations. But with your visit, Mr. Secretary, there is a point, a departing point, and the tendency of our relation will be much more useful and positive.

The Secretary of State has brought the greetings of President Trump to President Abdo, and we are convinced that not long from now President Abdo will be greeting personally again President Trump in Washington. We have two

governments, two people, that have the same principles, the same values, the same ideals. For that reason, they should cooperate and they should work together.

Also, President Abdo has manifested the Secretary of State of the great interest that we have in Paraguay to strengthen our relations commercially, the trade area. Economic trade relations that will help to get us closer not only of our business sectors but also getting closer our peoples, because those who will benefit will be the peoples of Paraguay and the U.S.

For that reason, we have put a lot of faith that in the next few months, working together, we will make it possible that we will have more investment for business people from the U.S. and Paraguay so that the trade that will benefit both parties, so that we will have in a short time the opening of the market of the U.S. to Paraguayan beef, the best beef in the world right now, Mr. Secretary. We are number one. Despite what you were told, at this point, our beef is the best in the world. That beef should be also enjoyed in the U.S. and every one of the States, and that will be possible in a short period of time with this relation that we are developing.

Finally, I want to remark to (inaudible) to Mr. Pompeo and to President Trump, who have taken the decision of coming to Latin America, to come to this part of the world, to come to talk to their friends and to their natural allies. And I am convinced that this decision that you have made and this concrete action shall be recognized by us, and also in the same sense we commit ourselves to strengthen a lot more, a lot more our relations, our cooperation, and at the same time sharing ideals, values, principles to go fighting and vanquishing transnational crime, making the region more safe and secure, and so that the flag of freedom will be really prevailing in the region, in the hemisphere, and everywhere in the world. Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Next, the words of Secretary of State of the U.S., Mr. Mike Pompeo.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you, President Abdo Benitez and Foreign Minister Castiglioni, for hosting me. Thank you, too, to the people of Paraguay. It is wonderful to be here. It has been too long for sure, and my commitment is it will not be another five decades before another American Secretary of State returns. Our friendship is too important. The amazing people of Paraguay are too important.

Please recognize too that my visit is part of this administration's effort, as the foreign minister described, to re-engage with our good friends, with our partners from this – in this hemisphere, from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego. We are re-engaging in ways that America has not.

I spoke yesterday in Santiago about why we're making this push, because we see an opportunity to partner with true democracies. They share our values, they share our goals, and they share our aspirations. We see Paraguay as just such a partner. Look no further than the current crisis in Venezuela to see our teamwork in action. Together, we are working to restore stability and democracy from the chaos caused by Maduro.

As a member of the Lima Group, Paraguay stands among the leaders in our hemisphere in defense of democracy, in calling out Maduro for what he truly is – a power-hungry tyrant who has brought ruin to his country and to his people. This is not just the view of the United States nor just the view of Paraguay. It's the consensus of 54 nations worldwide that have banded together in recognition that the constitutional authority of the Venezuelan National Assembly and Interim President Guaido are proper.

One important aspect of the U.S.-Paraguayan relationship I want to highlight: It's the work that we're doing together to weed out corruption and fight transnational crime. As President Abdo Benitez put it well, "Caiga quien caiga," – the law applies to all. The USAID programs are helping train the next generation of Paraguayan lawyers and judges. Through the efforts of Senabico, illegal-gotten gains now serve the people of Paraguay instead of its criminals. The United States Department of State as well is helping Paraguay do this by assisting with a new Office of Asset Forfeiture.

Along with each of these specific efforts, President Benitez and I also discussed international criminal organizations that are abusing the sovereignty of Paraguay and its neighbors in the tri-border area. We are diligent. The United States is diligent in lending a hand in this fight. Our Treasury, the United States Treasury, has sanctioned a number of individuals, front companies, and other tri-border area-based entities tied to Hizballah.

We've led workshops on investigating and prosecuting complex terrorist financial organizations and schemes, and as a result – as a result – Hizballah-linked individuals from the tri-border area have been arrested and extradited.

Importantly, the economic ties between our two countries are strong and, importantly, growing, largely because of the success that you have had in growing your own economy. Growth has averaged 4 percent for much of the last decade and a half, outpacing the rates of many of Paraguay's regional neighbors. Poverty is significantly reduced all across the country, and the middle class has almost doubled since the year 2003. You should be very proud of that.

Paraguay's rise has clear benefits for the United States of America. Our national two-way trade in goods totaled 2.5 billion in 2018. Paraguay exported \$131 million in goods to the United States just last year alone. And the United States is the number-one source for foreign direct investment here in Paraguay.

I would urge – rather, continue to urge – in the future to ensure inbound foreign investment is sustainable, transparent, and works for the benefit of the people of Paraguay. As I said in my speech yesterday, the United States urges caution about predatory practices from countries like China. We welcome Paraguay's warm relations with Taiwan through strong cooperation and agriculture, education, and commerce.

Just as important as our economic ties are the connections between our two people. I think it's a great note to end on. There are no people to better

represent these connections than the nearly 2,000 students, 600 teachers, and 1,800 volunteers who have participated in exchanges with my home state of Kansas back in the United States. The Kansas-Paraguay Partnership celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, and I am delighted to hear that President Abdo Benitez' own family includes a Kansas State Wildcat and a future Pittsburgh State Gorilla.

As these ties suggest, our nations have a lot in common. The United States and Paraguay have experiences and will continue to share even more of them. And on behalf of President Trump, I want to congratulate Paraguay on its transformation to a truly thriving democracy. We look forward to building on our strong, strong bilateral relationship, as the construction of our new embassy compound here quite clearly symbolizes.

Thank you, Mr. Foreign Minister, for having me here with you today.

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen (inaudible).

QUESTION: Thank you very much, gentlemen. Mr. Secretary – can you hear me? North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said in a speech yesterday that the breakdown in talks with the United States has raised the risk of reviving tensions. He also said the U.S. has until the end of the year to agree on another summit but not if it's like Hanoi, where he said the U.S. came to the table with unrealized plans. President Trump, as I'm sure you saw, tweeted this morning that his personal relationship with Kim is excellent and he thought a third summit would be good now that we, quote, "fully know where each other stands."

My question is: Is that accurate? Do we have a better understanding of the North Korean position now than we did in Hanoi? If so, what do we know now that we didn't previously? Will the U.S. change its approach, and are there current talks for a third summit?

And sir, Mr. Foreign Minister, you've taken a very strong stance against Maduro in support of Interim President Juan Guaido. You just said that with tyrants we do not dialogue, they are fought against. And my question is: If Maduro continues to refuse to leave office, would you support military intervention either by regional or international powers?

Thank you both very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So with respect to our negotiations with North Korea, I don't have anything to add other than even after Hanoi we have continued to have conversations. I am confident that what we did in Hanoi put us in a better place to continue to move forward. Chairman Kim made a commitment. He made the commitment to me personally no fewer than half a dozen times and to President Trump that he wanted to denuclearize. We have work to do, but I am confident we'll continue to make progress.

FOREIGN MINISTER CASTIGLIONI: (Via interpreter) We are convinced that all the diplomatic effort to isolate that regime will have results in a short time. We know that everything we are doing together with the Government of the U.S.

and other countries of the whole world, more than 50 countries, and they're going to be adding more and more countries, it's going to have concrete results, and these results will be seen from the reaction of the people of Venezuela, of the very armed forces of Venezuela's. It's going to be the Venezuelans themselves who will change the situation of their country, and it's going to be the very Venezuelan who will be really liberate their country from tyranny, from tyranny, with the cooperation and help of the U.S., of Paraguay, and all the other countries in the world. Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) The second question, the response? To Ruth DiGiovanni of ABC TV.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Good morning, Mr. Secretary. We have spoken of the tri-border area that is spoken by President Abdo. What perception do you have about the antiterrorism situation and the money laundering in the tri-border area? And you have also spoken of investment, and if the U.S. has intention of investment in the energy area, soon Paraguay will negotiate the Treaty of Itaipu and the last time the Secretary of State came they really – and they had some link with the subject of signing the treaty for Itaipu.

SECRETARY POMPEO: To your first question, I think real progress has been made on money laundering, the transnational criminal organizations, but that there remains a great deal of work to do. We talked about the ability of the 3+1 to begin to continue to build out capacity, because the will is there. Everyone understands that for the Paraguayan people, it's an imperative that we take down these transnational criminal organizations. And so we'll use – the U.S. will certainly be there to continue to support this effort. And while I think there has been real progress and this government has been determined and very forthright about the need to get this right and has taken real steps to do so, there's more work to be done. The United States stands strongly with helping Paraguay in being successful in that endeavor.

And I hope – as for investment here, one of the reasons for my trip was to demonstrate to American companies that this is a great place, a great partner, a great democracy, not just in the energy field but in all other fields. I hope that foreign direct investment here in Paraguay will continue to grow.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Ladies and gentlemen, this conference has come to an end.

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Press Releases: Joint Statement: Ministerial of the U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 13, 2019

The text of the following joint statement was issued by the governments of the United States, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago following the Ministerial of the U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership in Miami, FL on April 12, 2019.

Begin text:

Recognizing our collective vulnerability to natural disasters, affecting the lives and the economies of the people and nations of the United States and the Caribbean;

Whereas partnerships can build regional resilience through efficient and interoperable platforms, protecting people and speeding recovery; and whereas the United States and Caribbean partners, including Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago met on April 12, 2019 and affirmed their intention to deepen cooperation and investment to strengthen our disaster resilience throughout the Caribbean region;

Now, therefore, the United States and aforementioned nations of the Caribbean hereby launch the new "U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership" to strengthen resilience within the Caribbean region on key issues of shared interest, and in furtherance thereof, intend as follows;

- To streamline early warning response networks and formalize communication channels;
- To enhance, encourage, and work collaboratively on further developing

- aviation disaster resilience plans and partnerships;
- To prioritize regional technical exchange in energy planning, risk reduction, and resilience;
 - To increase communications network interoperability between Caribbean partners and the United States;
 - To utilize storm surge mapping data and share real-time information in preparation for potential damage resulting from tropical cyclones and tsunamis;
 - To use meteorological services to strengthen and deepen physical and communications infrastructure, data collection networks, and human and technical capacity throughout the region, as well as interactions with the public.
 - To understand that while the use of international and military and civil defense assets in disaster response may only be considered as a last resort—when local, national, and international civilian capabilities are overwhelmed—civil-military coordination should occur, in support of the affected nation;
 - To develop a framework that would govern the deployment of international military and civil defense assets in disaster response when local, national, and international civilian capabilities are overwhelmed, in support of the affected nation;
 - To seek common mechanisms for ensuring rapid disaster response and recovery, including waiving or expediting diplomatic clearances, waiving of or reducing customs fees, streamlining overflight and airspace clearance, and ensuring that the first responders have the ability to rapidly respond to disasters in other countries;
 - To promote the integration and coordination of regional response mechanisms in the Caribbean, including through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, the Regional Security System, U.S. Government Agencies, and Allies in ways that facilitate more effective and efficient planning, mitigation, response, and resilience to natural disasters.
 - To share best practices in improved building codes with national disaster organizations, including building better programs, at regional, national and community levels;
 - To promote community-based disaster preparedness and mitigation activities, particularly in underserved communities, with the aim of increasing broad public participation and resilience;

Further, through the establishment of a new U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership Working Group, the United States and participating Caribbean countries intend to seek to coordinate and operationalize ongoing and future efforts across all countries in the region; identify and resolve gaps, best practices, and lessons learned; and find innovative solutions through reducing risks from disasters and jointly increasing resilience.

End text

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Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With President Abdo Benitez of Paraguay

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 13, 2019

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus:

Today, Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met with President Mario Abdo Benitez in Asunción, Paraguay. They affirmed a commitment to deepen the vibrant partnership between the United States and Paraguay, rooted in our shared democratic values. Secretary Pompeo commended Paraguay for its leadership in the region to promote the restoration of democracy in Venezuela. The leaders highlighted the importance of working together to promote security, prosperity, and democracy across the region, including combatting transnational crime and terrorist financing in the Tri-Border Area. Secretary Pompeo also recognized Paraguay's strong commitment to increase transparency and fight corruption. The Secretary and President Abdo Benitez discussed Paraguay's continued efforts to strengthen its relationship with Taiwan, and the importance of maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, including diplomatic recognition.

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[Press Releases: Ministerial for the “U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership”](#)

Fact Sheet
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 13, 2019

On April 12, Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan led an interagency team of United States senior officials and experts to U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) headquarters in Miami, Florida, where he hosted ministers and disaster management officials from 18 Caribbean countries, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, and the Regional Security System to launch the new “U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership.”

The “U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership” will strengthen the U.S.-Caribbean relationship and advance our shared interests in achieving greater resilience to natural disasters. The Partnership involves the following initiatives:

Understanding Risk and Enabling Action

- **Weather Information-Sharing and Storm Surge Mapping:** The United States, through funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will roll out storm surge mapping to additional countries in the Caribbean, enabling governments to assess and mitigate flooding risks from tropical cyclones and tsunamis. The United States, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will continue to offer weather information sharing capabilities with Caribbean countries.
- **Space Technologies for Risk Reduction and Resilience:** The United States, through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), will make geospatial information openly accessible, understandable, and readily useable with Caribbean partners to ensure the region’s decision-makers and stakeholders have the tools necessary to implement sustainable resilience policies. U.S. and Caribbean officials will continue high-level policy dialogues and collaboration on the use of Earth observation tools to build resilience and reduce risk during the

Understanding Risk: Caribbean Conference in Barbados, May 27, and a NASA-led workshop on vulnerability and exposure of infrastructure in Puerto Rico, August 6-8. The United States will be an active partner when Jamaica hosts the first United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Americas and Caribbean Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction meeting in 2020.

- **Monitoring Terrestrial Hazards:** The United States, through USAID and in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), will offer technical assistance to the University of the West Indies' Seismic Research Center for Dominica and other Caribbean nations to build technical skills in monitoring volcanoes via the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program. This assistance will help Caribbean countries continue improving their ability to provide early warning. The United States supports resilience to terrestrial hazards through the installation of seismic stations for the Caribbean Tsunami Early Warning System, as well as technical consultations and capacity building on coastal inundation and erosion hazards.

Building Resilient Communities

- **Empowering Local Community Resilience:** The United States, through the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), plans to provide \$650,000 in grants to eastern Caribbean community organizations to improve disaster mitigation and resilience.
- **Planning Smarter, Responding Better:** The United States, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), committed to sharing best practices and lessons learned from its recovery efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and other parts of the United States recently impacted by hurricanes. Information sharing will include the use of industry standards and building codes to build back and improve the resilience of disaster-impacted facilities and infrastructure.
- **Network Resilience:** The United States, through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), committed to share with its Caribbean regulatory counterparts best practices in emergency communications and disaster preparedness.
- **Resilient Energy Systems:** Under the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI), the Department of State is working toward resilient, cost-effective, and secure energy re-development efforts in support of disaster recovery in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica. Building on this effort, U.S. and Caribbean officials announced the Advancing Caribbean Energy Resilience (ACER) Workshop to be organized by the Department of Energy in partnership with the Department of State and the Organization of American States (OAS) in Puerto Rico, May 2-3. The ACER workshop will further advance energy resilience in the Caribbean and bring together technical experts and regional policymakers to learn about tools for powering critical infrastructure and microgrids.

Improving Disaster Response

- **U.S. Assistance to the Caribbean:** The United States, through USAID, will offer skills development training to the Caribbean Red Cross National Societies and to their volunteers. The United States will also work with

the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and Regional Security System to strengthen regional response capabilities. Ongoing USAID programs in the Caribbean help islands prepare for their annual hurricane seasons. USAID maintains prepositioned emergency supplies in Florida, Texas, and Haiti. USAID has trained on-call local disaster relief staff and consultants that monitor and collect information on potential disasters in the Caribbean and enable the U.S. government to respond immediately should a country request assistance.

- **Civil-Military Coordination and Training:** In addition to sharing best practices in military and civilian disaster response, SOUTHCOM officials announced U.S. participation in the establishment of a Multi-National Caribbean Coordination Center in Barbados that will support information sharing and coordination among allied partners when responding to disasters in the Caribbean. The Coordination Center will support the Caribbean-focused Tradewinds Exercise in June to train over 600 Caribbean military and security personnel in responding to natural disasters and land and maritime threats. This exercise will also incorporate civilian authorities in a disaster simulation planning exercise. On behalf of the United States, the Deputy Secretary and a representative of the Regional Security System signed an End Use Agreement, which outlined a new plan for cooperative activities to help build the defense and security of the eastern Caribbean region.
- **Civil Aviation in the Caribbean in Time of Disaster:** The United States and participating Caribbean countries signed a declaration of intent to expand civil aviation cooperation to promote the resumption of critical services quickly after a disaster. The declaration of intent specifically calls for the creation of a disaster resilience-planning group, the "Caribbean Aviation Resilience and Recovery Group," to share information and lessons learned for recovery from disaster events, and to enhance partnerships and communication mechanisms to mitigate vulnerabilities and strengthen recovery efforts in Caribbean aviation. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will work with aviation partners in the Caribbean to achieve the goals of the declaration of intent.

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Press Releases: Convening of Parliament in Yemen

Press Statement
Morgan Ortagus

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 13, 2019

The United States congratulates Yemeni parliamentarians who convened today for the first time since 2014. This is an important step taken by the Yemeni government to reinvigorate legitimate government institutions, resume progress on implementing the National Dialogue Conference outcomes, and complete the peaceful transition of power envisioned by the GCC Initiative. A reinvigorated Yemeni parliament will play an important role in advancing political and national reconciliation so the Republic of Yemen government, and all political parties, can better focus on meeting the needs of the Yemeni people. We fully support the parliamentarians and encourage them to honor the principles of honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, and rule of law as they undertake their important responsibilities.

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