

Press Releases: Remarks With Peruvian Foreign Minister Nestor Popolizio

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Palacio de Gobierno

Lima, Peru

April 13, 2019

MODERATOR: (Via translation) Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. With the presence of the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Michael Pompeo, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru, Ambassador Nestor Popolizio Bardales, we will begin with a statement to the media. Next, remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru, Ambassador Nestor Popolizio.

FOREIGN MINISTER POPOLIZIO: (Via translation) Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, friends of the press, and distinguished delegation. We just finished an extremely fruitful and cordial work meeting with my President Mr. Martin Vizcarra. And it was preceded by a meeting in the Peruvian Foreign Ministry to discuss topics of the bilateral relationship. The President of the Republic Martin Vizcarra as well as the Secretary of State Pompeo highlighted the good level of bilateral relations. Firstly, we are countries that have a positive agenda and we have innumerable coincidences and really there are indications that [inaudible] we can continue cooperating. Mention was made of the very important significance that the Free Trade Agreement has had and now, in February, with ten years in force and how this has spurred an important increase of trade between the two countries.

(Via interpreter) Peru, after 10 years since this free trade agreement entered into force, exports 50 percent more to the United States where nontraditional exports are the most important. The United States is our first destination for these types of products, and it is our second trade partner worldwide. It is an important investment partner in Peru, and it is a permanent ally in all areas of cooperation that we get from the United States on a number of issues.

Within this context, the Secretary of State complimented President Martin Vizcarra for his leadership in the fight against corruption, and this fight

against corruption is obviously not only a fight that Peru is waging alone. He mentioned the output of the eighth Summit of the Americas held in Lima last year as well as the Lima commitment, where the United States and Peru are allies to combat corruption at all levels, particularly internationally.

Also we talked about the fight against drug trafficking. This is of the utmost importance and a priority for the Government of Peru, and we have agreed that the cooperation of the United States is very important for this fight to be more efficient in a context in which we can provide comprehensive and overarching approach the Government of Peru is implementing to develop alternative development interdiction as well as eradication of coca plantations. This comprehensive approach is accompanied by shared responsibilities that some countries have in fighting against drug trafficking.

In addition to that, President Martin Vizcarra gave information on the actions Peru has taken against illegal mining, particularly in the area of La Pampa in the region of Madre de Dios. this is a task that Peru has undertaken to reaffirm the principle of authority and for us to implement development projects in this area that we are recovering. We count with the cooperation of the United States in this effort.

We also discussed a topic that is of the utmost importance for our two countries and for the region as well, the defense of democracy in the region. This means all the areas in which we agree upon to support the people of Venezuela in recovering their democracy. And recovering democracy means supporting fully the president in charge of Venezuela, Juan Guaido, so that he can consolidate his position as a transition government and so that free, fair, and democratic elections can be held in Venezuela. This obviously means that the illegitimate government of the dictator Nicolas Maduro has to exit. This we are working with the other countries of the Lima Group to further all international pressure to isolate the illegitimate government of Maduro and that we can soon see a change in Venezuela to support the Venezuelan people.

And within this context we are trying to help better the peoples of Venezuela through humanitarian aid so that it will help them in overcoming the huge difficulties they have experienced recently that have been implemented by this illegitimate government of dictator Maduro which creates a political, social, and humanitarian crisis that has become even more serious because of the blackouts and lack of water in certain parts of the country. So here we too are allies in the region to defend democracy, human rights, because in Venezuela human rights are constantly being violated, as well as the freedoms. So we're going to continue working under the scope of the Lima Group as well as with other countries to continue to isolate the illegitimate government of dictator Nicolas Maduro.

Once again, I would like to thank the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for his visit to Peru and highlight the great level of relationships at bilateral level and the huge area in which we continue to build our relationships in trade, cooperation, and investment.

Thank you very much, Mike. Welcome to Peru.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Next we are going to hear the remarks by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Michael Pompeo.

SECRETARY POMPEO: *Buenos tardes.* It is terrific to be here in Lima's historic city center, a stone's throw from the house where Ricardo Palma, the great historian and short story writer, was born. It is a beautiful place. It is an honor for me to be here.

Thank you to the Peruvian people for hosting me. This is the first time I've had the chance to come here as Secretary of State. Sorry that it took me so long to get here.

Now, today I had the privilege to meet with President Vizcarra as well as my foreign minister counterpart, Popolizio, to talk about the areas of cooperation between our two countries, and they are many. We had a very warm, productive discussion, and I know that we will continue to do so.

We, of course, covered the topic of Venezuela. Peru has felt firsthand the effects of the disastrous Nicolas Maduro and the pain that he has brought to the Venezuelan people. Peru has shown enormous leadership in responding to this challenge. They – the people of Peru – generously host almost three quarters of a million refugees from Venezuela. Now, they fled their home country to escape the breakdown of health services, the limited water supply, the bare bread shelves, rolling blackouts, and hyperinflation – part of the reason that the United States has provided more than \$30 million in humanitarian aid to Peru, complementing your government's efforts to provide protection to these Venezuelans. The United States commends Peru for its generosity, and we want to ensure that all – we want to ensure all Peruvians that you are not shouldering this burden alone. The international community – including, of course, the United States – stands with you.

I would also like to thank my Peruvian counterparts for their work in the Lima Group and at the UN Security Council to support Juan Guaido as the leader of the interim government during this very difficult time of transition. The United States is pleased to support this week Peru's hosting of the health ministerial this month that will focus on improving healthcare coordination among nations that are hosting large numbers of displaced Venezuelans.

Despite the gravity of the situation in Venezuela, it did not monopolize our discussions. We talked about many things. We talked, for example, about how Peru has been fighting public corruption as one of its top priorities. We saw this commitment last year during the Summit of the Americas and the signing of the Lima commitment.

Too often, we see China's predatory lending and debt diplomacy reverse positive advances in this area. Our shared goal, our shared goal to be to resist Chinese overtures and promote transparency.

President Vizcarra deserves high praise for creating a government entity exclusively focused on safeguarding public integrity. The Peruvian Government also now requires that high-level officials report conflicts of interest.

These are steps in exactly the right direction.

On a separate front, Peru has also been relentless in the fight against the production and distribution of narcotics. Last year, the Peruvian National Police and Military eradicated more than 25,000 hectares of illicit coca crops, surpassing their annual goal, seized more than 55 metric tons of illicit substances, and destroyed more than 350 drug laboratories. The United States applauds these steps by Peruvian authorities and encourages Peru to go even further.

Finally, when it comes to trade, the United States and Peru continue to reach even greater heights. As the foreign minister said, this year marks the 10th anniversary of our bilateral trade partnership agreement – trade promotion agreement, which eliminated tariffs that were hindering each of our respective economies. Since the agreement came into effect in 2009, trade between the United States and Peru has virtually doubled. In the days ahead, we look forward to spurring additional private investment under our America Crece Initiative.

In closing, I want to thank the Peruvian Government and the people of Peru for their fine hospitality. I can't wait to see what else is in store for our great nation in these areas and more as we move forward together. Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Next, there are two media that will ask questions to the Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru. The first question will be asked by Mr. Carlos Alfredo Viguria Chavez from Newspaper 21.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. My question is more addressed on the current status of the extradition process of former President Alejandro Toledo. Where does it stand? And this process has been in place for several years now in your country, and has this been discussed in your meeting with President Vizcarra, considering that last year the fight against corruption was addressed in the Summit of the Americas? Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I appreciate the question. When it comes to judicial processes in our country, I can't say much. We've discussed this. We know the priority your country places on this.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) The second question, John Hudson from *The Washington Post*.

QUESTION: Thanks very much, gentlemen.

For Foreign Minister Popolizio, what if this Western campaign that is joined by many allies around the world of economic sanctions against Maduro begins exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and creating more refugees in Peru? Will your country consider changing strategies and other diplomatic tactics, potentially engaging with Maduro, or are you set in the policy and confident of the way forward?

And Secretary Pompeo, as you just stated, Peru has carried the burden of

hundreds of thousands of refugees from Venezuela, and so have other countries on your visit. At the same time, President Trump has been urging countries to block migrants from crossing borders and even suggested dropping illegal migrants in the districts of domestic political opponents. What's your message about how countries should be treating refugees and migrants in Latin America? Should they follow President Trump's lead?

And just lastly, following the summit in Hanoi, you and Ambassador Bolton were specifically called out in a colorful statement by the North Korean diplomat, saying you created hostility in the summit. If there is a third summit, do you expect to change tactics or demeanor in any way? Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER POPOLIZIO: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much for the first question you have addressed. I have to emphasize that Peru, under the Lima Group as well as the OAS and the Security Council, has made a number of activities that focus on supplementing the measures that the United States and other countries of the European Union have already taken in economic terms, financial terms, in order to isolate the illegitimate government of Maduro.

That framework that we have in place will continue to be deepened. On Monday, we have a meeting in Santiago, Chile of the Lima Group. We are going to highlight the importance of working more intensively within the OAS. You have seen a key change in the OAS. Today, the OAS has a representative of Juan Guaido sitting in the desk of Venezuela. This is a significant change. We're going to continue working so that we continue to press the regime, not only the Maduro regime but also the military group that is supporting him, so that we may continue with this international pressure together with the domestic pressure of the Venezuelan people that's out on the street so that we can help them to recover democracy as soon as possible.

As for the second part of your question, this is related to the exodus of a magnitude that has never been seen before in Latin America. Since 2015, over 3 million – 3.5 million – Venezuelans have left to different countries, other countries. In the case of South America, there are two countries that have received the most of them are Colombia and Peru. In the case of Peru, we have received about 750,000 Venezuelans that have arrived to our country and all in all have a strong impact in the labor market, in the health system, in the education system, that has made us take a number of initiatives not only within the Andean community but also within the region and at a multilateral level so that all the countries know that this is an issue that is not regional exclusively but world, and all of us have to come together so that the host countries of Venezuelan migrants may have greater cooperation so that they can properly serve this migration that has never been seen before. We're going to continue working with these subjects within the OAS, the Group of Lima, and the Security Council of the United Nations.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I want to echo what the foreign minister just said. Your question showed an incredible lack of understanding to have suggested that somehow the policies that Peru has taken or that the Lima Group has taken or that the United States has taken have driven these refugees. You shouldn't ask questions like that. The responsibility for these refugees lies squarely

with Nicolas Maduro, not any policies that any democratic nation has taken with our deep intent to make lives better for the Venezuelan people. A hundred percent of the refugee challenge that is faced by Peru and Colombia is the direct result of the Russians, the Cubans, and Nicolas Maduro.

Second, you asked about how the American policy with respect to immigration is consistent. We in each case have exactly the same objective. Our objective is to allow people to stay in their home countries. This is President Trump's desire. We want to create conditions in these countries where they can stay in their own country and they don't have the need to migrate somewhere else from Venezuela.

It is our deep hope that we can achieve our objectives quickly, timely, so that these individuals will return to their home countries. It's what they want. I think it's what the people of Peru and Colombia and the other countries that are graciously, generously hosting and educating these people today. We want to create the conditions in every country so this migration, these refugees, don't need to travel to these places.

And with respect to North Korea, we made real progress in Hanoi. I am confident that the leadership in America will continue to make progress to solve this challenge of the nuclear threat that is posed to the world. There remain in place today the world's strongest sanctions, UN Security Council resolutions which make clear the objective: the denuclearization of North Korea. I am very confident we'll continue to move down the path of achieving that outcome.

So thank you very much for your questions.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) Ladies and gentlemen, the press conference has come to an end. We would like to thank the media for being here today. Thank you very much.

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Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Asuncion, Paraguay

April 13, 2019

QUESTION: Thank you, Secretary Pompeo, for another time, another opportunity to talk to you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's great to be with you again.

QUESTION: Thank you. Let's begin with one of the hottest topics, Venezuela. This is one of the topics you have been talking about for quite a long time already, and I would like to know how you can explain to the Venezuelan people who is the real president. We take into consideration that some Venezuelans still pay taxes to the government of Nicolas Maduro. If a government, a foreign government, needs to help their own citizens living in Venezuela, they need to get in contact with Maduro's officers. How can we explain that to the Venezuelan people?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's a great and important question. The Venezuelan people have spoken. The sham election that gave Maduro the pretend authority that he has – the world has recognized. There are now 54 countries in addition to the people of Venezuela who recognize that Maduro is not a legitimate leader. He still has control of elements of power, to be sure, but the people have spoken; we know what they want.

Maduro and his henchmen have destroyed this nation. The Venezuelan people can see that very plainly. It's why they didn't want him back. They gave power to the National Assembly, now Juan Guaido, in a way that will ultimately deliver true democracy and prosperity back to Venezuela.

You know the history. This is a rich nation, a wealthy nation, a nation of people who are industrious and are prepared to work very, very hard. What they need is a leader who is prepared to help them, not be corrupt, not turn over power to the Cubans, and demand interventions to save them by the Russians. The new leadership will do that, and the United States stands ready to support not only the Venezuelan people but all of the countries in this region – we're sitting here today in Paraguay – the countries of this region who recognize the same.

QUESTION: What about if Maduro continues to hold the military power and to hold the city? Does the U.S. have a new strategy to go – does Maduro have a deadline, for example, for the U.S. Government?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the strategy is not just an American strategy. It's the

Venezuelan people's strategy. The opposition groups banded together, made clear that it was unacceptable what Maduro's regime did. They gave Juan Guaido the authority through the National Assembly to lead their nation forward. This won't be an American solution to this problem. It'll be the solution that the Venezuelan people choose.

I remark sometimes people think Maduro is winning, and yet he's handed over all of his power to the Cubans, to the Russians. This is weakness from Maduro. And so this weakness will ultimately lead to his departure, and democracy and prosperity will be restored in Venezuela. I am very confident of that.

QUESTION: And I know you already answered this question many times, but I have to ask. Are all options on the table still?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Of course. They remain on the table. We keep all options on the table because it's very important, in that we don't know how things will proceed. The Venezuelan people are entitled to the democracy that they have demanded, and we want to make sure that the resources of the United States of America aren't foreclosed from being used if that turns out to be the right thing to do.

QUESTION: Now, as you mentioned, Maduro has the support of Russia and China. Does that turn a decision against the government of Maduro more complex to take? Could this rise tensions between Washington and the Kremlin?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I always remark I'll hear some of the Maduro people talk about intervention in Venezuela. The Russians will say the Americans shouldn't intervene in Venezuela. I mean, it's almost funny to say, right? They have intervened in the most fundamental ways. The Cubans own the security apparatus. I would think if you were a Venezuelan military leader, you'd be embarrassed by that, right? The people, the people of Venezuela, want their own security. They want their own democracy. They want Venezuelans to lead their nation, not people from a small island, not people from Russia. They want their country to be led by their own people, and that's what – that's what Brazil and Colombia, the Lima Group, the OAS, here in Paraguay, that's what all the leaders of the region are demanding, and it's what the United States stands ready to support.

QUESTION: Is there any line of communication between U.S. officials and Venezuelan militaries?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't think there's any mistake about what America's position is with respect to the Venezuelan military. We've made clear publicly that they ought not to continue to support Maduro, that this regime is over, it's done, its day is finished, and that a new page needs to be turned, and that those who continue to support Maduro will face their own consequences, and those who make a different decision, those military leaders that make the decision to defend the Venezuelan people, will find happier days.

QUESTION: And does the U.S. support or has given any advice to the Guaido

government about giving amnesty to any Venezuelan military who turns their back on Venezuelan government?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure, we've talked with Juan Guaido about what a first day would look like, right? Maduro will leave, and we want to make sure that that next day that the world stands ready to support Venezuela. That will involve making decisions about how to address the transgressions of senior military leaders, those that inflicted violence, those who did harm to Venezuelans – well, they'll be held accountable. Those who made a different decision, a better decision, a decision on behalf of the democratic institutions of Venezuela, will be treated very differently.

QUESTION: With many countries in Latin America turning to the right and with the economical crisis in Venezuela at its worst, do you think the Iranian Government still have some presence in Latin America? And if it does, is it still a threat for the U.S. national security?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the question is does the – do the Iranians? Yes. There's no doubt Iranian money remains in South America being used for malign purposes, supporting Hizballah, supporting transnational criminal organizations, supporting efforts at terrorism throughout the region. The United States is working with our partners in this area to take down those networks, to take down that risk.

IRGC – you saw the other day there was an air flight straight, straight from Tehran to Caracas. This is Iran intervening in South America. That's not in the best interest of the South American people, and the United States stands ready. We see Iran for what it is, the world's largest state sponsor of terror. That's a global threat, and we're prepared to push back against it not only in the Middle East but in South America and wherever we find that threat present.

QUESTION: Moving forward, Secretary Pompeo, yesterday you mentioned in a speech from Santiago, in Santiago, and you used Chile as an example, as a model for economical growth. But Chile also have many trades with China – \$43 billion, if I'm not mistaken – and the U.S. comes as a second partner. Can any country from Latin America have economical and diplomatic relationship with China while at the same time they do with the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, of course. What we have said about China is very clear. The United States has big economic relationships with China. We want China to thrive and prosper.

Here's what we don't want, especially in South America. We don't want China to show up with bags full of money and bribe officials. We don't want China to show up and put Huawei or Chinese technology into the infrastructure of these countries so that the citizens, the citizens of Chile or the citizens of Paraguay, have their information, their private information, stolen by the Chinese Government. We don't want corrupt activity.

China should compete. We have democracies here in South America now. This is a glorious thing where there's free markets and capitalism and opportunity.

That value set of transparency, of the rule of law, that's the one the South American people are demanding. It is not what China brings.

If China shows up to compete on a commercial basis, that seems perfectly reasonable. When they show up with malign intent, to give money with strings attached, which will destroy the sovereignty of a South American nation, that's not good for the people in that country, and the United States is prepared to help those countries recognize that threat and to offer alternatives to it.

QUESTION: Changing the topic a little bit, the U.S. cut the funds for three countries in Central America – Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Is this a final decision, or can they make things better and gain the confidence of the U.S. Government and also the money?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, of course, they can. The United States is the most generous nation when it comes to both humanitarian and foreign assistance of any country in the world. The Trump administration has maintained that.

What we want to make sure is where we provide those resources, those dollars from the American taxpayer, that they are effective, that we get outcomes not only what we want but that those countries want as well. So President Trump's decision, we saw that those countries weren't doing what needed to be done to prevent this enormous migration challenge, this crisis that the United States has at its southern border. As those countries work to develop systems to prevent their citizens from taking this incredibly dangerous journey from Guatemala, from Honduras, or from El Salvador through Mexico into the United States, when those countries begin to take actions that stop that, we'll reconsider that decision.

QUESTION: And my last question, Secretary. This week Nicaragua will remember a year since the political and social crisis began. More than 350 people died in this crisis. The negotiations are very slow right now, and their oppression continues with people who has demonstrated publicly. Is the United States taking new steps against the government of the president in Nicaragua?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's a great question. Here I am in Paraguay. I was in Chile. I'll be in Peru, I'll be in Colombia, before I head back to the United States. You watch most of the countries in South and Central America turning in the direction of freedom, in the direction of liberty, in the direction of democracy; and yet, you have Venezuela and Nicaragua stuck in history, stuck with dictatorships, stuck with bad leadership, kleptocrats, stealing from their own people.

Our efforts in Nicaragua are very similar to those in Venezuela. We want the Nicaraguan people to have all the great things that they are entitled to have and that they so desperately want. And Mr. Ortega and his wife both need to change their ways in order to give Nicaragua that very opportunity.

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thank you very much for your time with Voice of America's Spanish Service.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. Thank you, sir. It's great to see you again.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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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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