

Press Releases: Remarks With Peruvian Foreign Minister Nestor Popolizio

Remarks

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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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