

says about who we are, two proud nations bound by the conviction that change is possible, that every nation can be free, and that there can be no denying the dignity and human rights that are so eloquently expressed in our Constitution and are now lived out in Chile today.

*Salud.*

## The President's News Conference With President Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena of El Salvador in San Salvador, El Salvador

March 22, 2011

*President Funes.* Good afternoon, and thank you so much for your presence. Thanks to all the friends of the press, both domestic and international.

First of all, I would like to thank President Obama for his visit, and also to his family and his committee—his delegation that accompanied this morning. And on behalf of my wife Vanda and all the people of El Salvador, I really thank you, Mr. President, for the support that you have given to the people of El Salvador and to the process of transition and building of democracy that we're going through. It is a great honor to have your presence in El Salvador. So welcome once again, Mr. President, and I hope that you enjoy, the few hours that you're going to be here, the hospitality of our people.

President Obama has asked me if this is the weather characteristic of this time of the year, and I was saying that, yes, and that it is a pity because if he had stayed a little bit longer we could have invited you to get to see the beaches of our country that are one of the best in the region.

Dear friends of the press, this visit of President Obama is historical. This encounter is produced when our country is immersed in a process of deep changes that started with the political—[inaudible]—a transition that took place in a very orderly and peaceful manner that has meant a transcendental step forward for the consolidation of our democracy and of our institutions in the fight for transparency.

Therefore, we are in face of a great opportunity for our political, economic, and social de-

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 p.m. at the Palacio de La Moneda. In his remarks, he referred to Cecilia Morel de Pinera, wife of President Pinera; and former Presidents Patricio Aylwin Azocar, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, and Ricardo Lagos Escobar of Chile.

velopment, an opportunity that is historic in nature, to get—to do away with the obstacles that in the past did not allow us to advance as a unit towards a new model of development with social justice.

Your visit, Mr. President, is circumscribed within this process as showmanship of your recognition of the advancements in our democracy and the efforts that we have carried out as a people to reach international consensus that will allow us to continue progressing together facing the great challenges, especially poverty and the commitment to get greater levels of citizen security.

We coincided when we were talking with President Obama that this visit to the Latin America region is fundamental, and he was telling me some details of his meeting with President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil and the President of Chile.

The truth, Mr. President, is that this is a fundamental visit, first of all because Latin America, after the democratization process that we've gone through the last two decades, is now a region in peace that enjoys the deserved fruits of this great struggle for human rights and the strengthening of our democracies.

But also it is fundamental from point of view—the economic point of view because the majority of the Latin America countries are just overcoming this international crisis better than other countries in the world based on models against poverty and betting on their productive sectors and the hard-working people that they have.

We celebrate these circumstances that situate Latin America as a fundamental point within the international reference after this international crisis. And I think that the criteria with which you have based your visit to Latin America is a support to the path that my country has taken, to take Brazil and the United States as my points of reference.

First, because Chile represents for us an example of democratic transition that was very successful of overcoming dictatorships and polarization. It is a country that has been able to cure its injuries to reach this institutional soundness that we admire so much.

And Brazil has also shown in the 8 years of the Presidency of my friend Lula, and now with the starting of the Presidency of Dilma, Brazil has demonstrated that the struggle against poverty is the greatest engine for growth, and that this model that strives to improve production is also our inspiration.

So we celebrate being part of this visit, of this tour, and to be able to go more in depth in this friendship that we started on March 8 last year when I visited you in Washington.

And allow me briefly before I give the floor to President Obama to synthesize from my perspective some of the topics that we developed in this bilateral agenda.

First of all, as I said in private, now I say it in public in front of the friends of the press, I want to thank publicly the President of the United States for including our country in such important initiatives like the BRIDGE project and the Partnership for Growth.

Both are very important processes for us. And in this sense, we have requested the President to dynamize this process so that these projects can become a reality as soon as possible. We already have a schedule that foresees the definition of great projects in June, with which we will start this partnership.

I also want to thank the words of President Obama when he recognizes the importance of our population in the development of his country: the presence of more than 2 million of Salvadorans that work and live in the United States and the importance that this population

has in the development of El Salvador through the remittances that they send year by year.

Of course, migration was another key issue in our conversation. We coincided once again with President Obama on the need to have focus for development and joint responsibility in this sense. We also coincided that with regards to migration, the best strategy is the struggle against poverty and the creation of opportunities to have our people stay in their places of origin.

Migration is a painful expression of a world that has not been able to establish accessible parameters of justice and inclusion. I have expressed to President Obama my pleasure when I heard in his speech at the Union State the commitment of pushing an agreement of both parties, bipartisan agreement for comprehensive immigration reform and present it to the Congress of the United States.

And finally, we also talked about security, and we did so in an extended meeting with the presence of officials of the Cabinet of President Obama, as well as ours. This has been a key issue in this meeting, and I have expressed to President Obama the willingness of my Government to continue with the efforts of Central American security.

We said that narco-activity, such as an insecurity, is not an issue that is only a problem for El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua isolatedly, not even Colombia or Mexico alone. It's a problem that attacks us as a region. And this is why we are building a regional strategy through the CARSÍ Initiative.

Of course, I also insisted that this is an issue that should not only be approached through the persecution of the crime by our armies and police, but that we have to stress on prevention policies. And therefore, the best weapon to combat and reduce crime in the region is through the investment in social policies.

And finally, I thanked President Obama, as I do it right now in public, for his decision to visit the tomb of Monsignor Arnulfo Romero and the kindness of his invitation to accompany him in this historical visit. As I have said, Monsignor is the spiritual guide of this nation, and the visit that you are going to carry out to the tomb of

Monsignor implies for us a recognition of a leader, an international leader like President Obama, to the message of Oscar Arnulfo Romero and the universal validity of his message.

Thank you once again for your stay in our country, and we thank you for the expression of kindness by your wife and your children in this visit to El Salvador. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

*President Obama.* President Funes, thank you so much for your very generous words. It was a pleasure to welcome you and First Lady Pignato to the White House last year. I want to thank you today for welcoming me and my wife and our daughters to El Salvador. We are honored to be here.

Yesterday in Santiago, Chile, I outlined how the United States is forging partnerships for progress with nations and peoples across Latin America. And there are few better examples of both the opportunities and challenges facing the Americas today than here in El Salvador.

Fortunately for El Salvador, it enjoys the wise leadership of President Funes. And, Mr. President, I want to commend you for your courageous work to overcome old divisions in Salvadoran society and to show that progress comes through pragmatism and building consensus. You've articulated a vision of economic growth and social progress that is inclusive of all segments of Salvadoran society. And I want to make it clear today that the United States wants to be a partner with El Salvador in this process. We want El Salvador to be successful.

Thanks to smart investments in education, rural development, and infrastructure, El Salvador has made gains in reducing poverty. And to build on this progress, El Salvador is one of the first four countries in the world in our Partnership for Growth, which is a key element of my administration's new approach to development.

Instead of the old donor-recipient model, we're working as partners, with El Salvador in the lead, to confront the hurdles to growth and development. As El Salvador's largest trading partner, we'll help identify reforms that can mobilize private investment, increase trade, and create opportunities for the Salvadoran people. And one of the most important steps is

to foster collaborations between government and the private sector, because both have so much to gain when people are lifted out of poverty and contribute to their country's prosperity.

At the same time, we need to increase trade and economic growth across Central America. I very much appreciated the President's insights on the region. Today I'm pleased to announce a new effort, our Crossroads Partnership. We'll work with countries in the region to make borders more efficient and more secure so we're encouraging trade and economic growth rather than constraining it.

As President Funes mentioned, we discussed immigration. President Funes is committed to creating more economic opportunities here in El Salvador so that people don't feel like they have to head north to provide for their families. As I told the President, I remain firmly committed to comprehensive immigration reform in the United States.

I know this is especially important to the some 2 million Salvadoran people who are living and working in the United States. They're making extraordinary contributions to our country, even as they support their families and communities here in El Salvador. So I updated the President on the new consumer protections that I signed into law, which give people more information and make sure their remittances actually reach their loved ones back home.

Today we're also launching a new effort to confront the narco-traffickers and gangs that have caused so much violence in all of our countries and especially here in Central America. Our two nations already cooperate very closely in the fight against these criminals. As I said in my speech yesterday, the United States will do our part as the nations of Central America develop a new joint security strategy this spring.

Under the Central American Citizen Security Partnership that I'm announcing today, we'll focus \$200 million to support efforts here in the region, including addressing, as President Funes indicated, the social and economic forces that drive young people towards criminality.

We'll help strengthen courts, civil society groups and institutions that uphold the rule of law. And we'll work closely with regional partners like Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Canada, and international partners like Spain, the European Union, and the Inter-American Development Bank. This has to be a coordinated effort that draws on the unique expertise of different countries and institutions.

Finally, we're deepening our efforts to pursue sustainable energy and to address climate change, which is already a harsh reality for Salvadorans and people across the region who face more frequent and more severe storms. El Salvador is already a leader in geothermal energy. Under the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas, El Salvador is working to connect grids in this region to make electricity more reliable. I want to commend President Funes for taking another step today, agreeing to host a regional center where the nations of this region can come together to find new ways to reduce emissions and prevent deforestation.

So again, Mr. President, I want to thank you for welcoming me here today and for your commitment to closer ties between our nations. I think the partnership that we're forging together are exactly what's needed in the Americas today: neighbors joining with neighbors to realize progress that none of us can achieve alone. Every nation, I believe, no matter how large or how small, can contribute to that progress. And I believe that under the leadership of President Funes, El Salvador can be a source of great prosperity and security for this region for many years to come.

So thank you very much.

*Moderator.* And now we will start with the questions and answers. We have two questions by the press of El Salvador and two questions by the press of the United States. El Salvador, Oscar Diaz, a journalist of *La Presna Grafica*.

*Central American Citizen Security Partnership/Central American Regional Security Initiative*

Q. Good afternoon. President Obama, I would like to ask you if you could explain a little bit more how you are going to distribute

these 200 million throughout the region with regards to security.

And we would like to know the opinion of President Funes on the commitment of El Salvador and Central America in this effort.

*President Obama.* The emphasis is to work with a regional approach, and the various Central American countries have come together to help shape and design how that money might be best spent. So rather than the United States coming in and saying, here's the best way to do things, what we want to do is to hear what are the respective challenges that each country is facing.

The regional security initiatives that are already taking place, we can build on. We obviously need to focus on basic policing, security, rule of law, the judicial system; that's a component of it. But as President Funes indicated, part of the key is making sure that we're also using this to reach young people and give them the better path.

I thought President Funes gave a very eloquent response to one of my questions during our bilateral meeting. He said, "I don't want a young man in El Salvador or a young woman in El Salvador to feel that the only two paths to moving up the income ladder is either to travel north or to join a criminal enterprise."

And that's why emphasis on education and emphasizing social programs, giving young people other pathways has to be part of this overall program.

But we're in close consultation. This is a program that will be designed and led here in Central America by the respective governments. And I'm confident that President Funes will show great leadership in making sure that that money is appropriately used here in El Salvador.

*President Funes.* Thank you very much, President Obama, for your comments, especially for your expectations of this new contribution for the Central American region that President Obama is announcing today.

When we started with the CARSI Initiative, this initiative aimed at responding to a concern that we had as Presidents of the region, which is that organized crime, particularly as common

crime and crime in general, is not a problem only of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, or Colombia, or Mexico. It's a problem that we can only face as a region. The capacity of operating of these criminal organizations, the financial capacity to buy institutions, to permeate the different institutions and penetrate our institutions is so large that if we do not join as countries, as nations, and if we do not use the successful experiences of countries like Colombia and Mexico, we will not be able to defeat this problem.

This is why I have been insisting in international fora and with Central American integration meeting in June last year, where we said that besides trade, we need to have a regional security policy. We have submitted our request to the authorities and the Government of the United States to have greater cooperation funds earmarked to perfecting our police, modernize our military institutions, and to also perfect and modernize our public ministries, especially in the development of a greater capacity to investigate crimes, specific crimes like financial crimes. We are projecting a training program with the assistance of the United States for 150 prosecutors to specialize on the investigation of complex crimes like the organized crime.

And something that is very important—and I'm pleased to hear that President Obama agrees with us—that the efforts that we make in repression and persecution of criminals is not going to do anything unless we take away from the criminals the fertile soil that they have found in this region. And this fertile soil is thanks to the fact that we have a lot of youngsters that are living in a situation of poverty and social exclusion, exclusion from the benefits and the services that the state should give them. And this is why I insisted with President Obama that we cannot continue offering our youngsters in El Salvador and the region, or go to the United States to find employment and entertaining and education opportunities that they don't find here, or to fall in the hands of the criminal gangs, especially the gangs.

How can we avoid this? Investing more in prevention policies. Our focus as a region, and

particularly as the Government of El Salvador, is that the crime, and particularly drug trafficking and the consumption of drugs, is not only going to—by attacking supply, but also demand.

This is why this afternoon I also heard with great pleasure the President of the United States reiterate that his Government has invested a large amount of money in the combat of the reduction of consumption. Without consumption, you don't have any demand, no supply, and the criminal organizations dedicated to drug trafficking cannot continue making a profit. And this is what we want to do throughout the region because Central America is no longer a transfer or a passageway, but it's also a consumption strip.

*White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney.* The first question from the White House press corps will be from Julianna Goldman of Bloomberg.

#### *Situation in Libya*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, President Funes.

Mr. President, on Libya, coalition partners can't seem to agree on who will take the lead in the next phase of the military campaign. Can you today still assure the American people that the U.S. will be in charge for only a matter of several—a few more days?

And also, we also learned today of two American pilots who went down in Libya. We're assured that they're safe. But have you sufficiently prepared the American people for the costs of war—of course, the human costs, but also the financial costs?

*President Obama.* Let me first of all say, obviously, we were extraordinarily relieved to find out that these two young men were safe in American hands. As the Pentagon indicated, this appears to have been a malfunction in the aircraft, and it is a testament to our military that we had fully prepared for any contingency, including something like this, and they were able to recover these individuals rapidly.

And in fact, as part of the planning effort leading up to this, I specifically had discussions with Admiral Mullen and other of our military personnel to make sure that we had the kind of

standard recovery efforts in place, because there are risks involved. And on the day that I indicated that this was a possibility, and then on the day that I indicated that we, in fact, were moving forward, I said that there is no military operation that does not entail risk. And that's why this is always the most difficult decision that I make as Commander in Chief and as President of the United States.

Now, I have absolutely no doubt that we will be able to transfer control of this operation to an international coalition. I had discussions with Prime Minister Cameron and President Sarkozy today. In fact, NATO is meeting today as we speak to work out some of the mechanisms for command and control. I would expect that over the next several days you will have clarity and a meeting of the minds of all those who are participating in the process.

We're already seeing a significant reduction in the number of U.S. planes that are involved in operations over Libya, because, as I said initially, our job was to take our unique capabilities and create a space to shape the environment so that the operation of a no-fly zone could operate effectively and to make sure that our immediate humanitarian goals could be met.

And I just want to emphasize to the American people, because of the extraordinary capabilities and valor of our men and women in uniform, we have already saved lives. In Benghazi, a city of 700,000 people, you had the prospect of Qadhafi's forces carrying out his orders to show no mercy. That could have resulted in catastrophe in that town. Qadhafi's forces have pulled back because of this timely intervention.

And obviously, there are always risks involved in this kind of operation, but for us to be able to structure something where we bring our unique capabilities to bear to fulfill a mission that is supported by the international community against somebody who was about to direct his armed forces against his people in the most vicious of ways is something that, I think, the American people, and certainly our American military, should be proud of.

I said at the outset that this was going to be a matter of days and not weeks. And there's

nothing based on how we've been able to execute over the last several days that changes that assessment.

*Q.* And on financial costs—[inaudible].

*President Obama.* We will continue to provide details to the American people about the costs of this operation. But because it is limited in time, scope, with a well-defined mission, we're confident that this is something that we can budget as part of our overall operations. I mean, keep in mind that there are costs involved in the rescue efforts that we are assisting in Japan. Events happen around the world in which the United States, with our unique capabilities, has to respond as a leader in the world community. We build those into our budget. This was something that we can build into our budget, and we're confident that not only can the goals be achieved, but that at the end of the day the American people are going to feel satisfied that lives were saved and people were helped. Okay.

*Moderator.* Now the Salvadoran media with Channels 2, 4, 6, we have Emilio Correa asking.

*Immigration Reform/Development Assistance for El Salvador*

*Q.* Good afternoon, President Obama. President, in the last few days, we have heard your statements where you talk about starting partnerships such as Partnerships for Growth and for Progress. Now we're talking about Crossroads Partnership. Going to more punctual matters, what does this consist of? Is there seed money? Is it going to be reimbursable or not? What projects are we talking about here and how much money could be generated?

And if possible, Mr. President, I would like to know about immigration, taking advantage of your presence here since we haven't been able to talk to you before. We have about 25 percent or 30 percent of our population without—well, living illegally in the United States. So what are your short-term plans, President Obama? Are you going to lobby for comprehensive reform or temporary residence for the Salvadorans that are working with the TPS or that are living with a TPS who are there? Thank you.

*President Obama.* Specifically on immigration reform first, as I indicated in my remarks and as I said in my State of the Union speech, I continue to believe in comprehensive immigration reform. America is a nation of laws and it is a nation of immigrants. And so our job is to create secure borders, to make sure that we're got a legal immigration system that is effective and is not frustrating for families, doesn't divide families.

But we also have to make sure that those who are in the United States illegally at this point, but in some cases have been there for a long time, in some cases have children who were born in the United States and are United States citizens, that they have a pathway to get right by the law. And several years ago, we were able to craft a bipartisan consensus, at least in the United States Senate, around this issue. Senator John McCain, Senator Ted Kennedy had a comprehensive immigration reform bill that I supported and was a part of when I was in the Senate. And we were able to get it passed through the Senate, and we couldn't get it passed through the House of Representatives.

Over the last 2 years, it's been more difficult to gain Republican support for some of these efforts. And my hope is, is that they begin to recognize over the next year that we can't solve this problem without taking a broad, comprehensive approach. And that will benefit not only those Salvadorans who are living in the United States, but it also, more importantly from the perspective of the region, can ensure that relations between neighbors and trade and economic relations between neighbors is more orderly and more secure, more regularized.

It is the right thing to do. This is the time to do it. And I will continue to push hard to make it happen. It won't be easy. The politics of this are difficult. But I am confident that ultimately we are going to get it done.

Now, with respect to particular programs, I will have my team provide a sheet that has details of how these various programs would work. We already mentioned the 200 million for security. There are other initiatives that are very important. The Partnership for Growth,

the immediate plans involve our experts meeting with President Funes's economic advisers and exports to determine what exactly are the barriers for improved growth and development here in El Salvador.

So one of the ways that we are redesigning our development assistance programs is to recognize that dollars are important, but institutional reforms may end up being more important, or at least, they have to go hand in hand, because what a country like El Salvador does not want is perpetually to be looking for the outside for its own development. Ultimately, it wants to be able to find growth and tap into its own potential here inside the country.

And so those are the kinds of systematic consultations that are currently taking place, which will help determine how we can best spend any develop money that's put forward.

Of course, we already have currently a Millennium Challenge grant coming into El Salvador that involves several hundred million dollars and is helping on a wide variety of fronts. And we want to continue to build on some of the successes that are taking place there.

*White House Press Secretary Carney.* The next question from the White House Press Corps is Savannah Guthrie from NBC News.

#### *Situation in Libya/Situation in the Middle East*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, President Funes. President Obama, you mentioned a few minutes ago how this mission in Libya was narrow in scope, limited in duration. But potentially it seems quite open-ended in the sense that as long as Qadhafi remains in power, civilians presumably will need protection from him. My question to you is, what is your exit strategy for U.S. military involvement if Qadhafi does not succumb to the international pressures to leave? Are you saying, essentially, the U.S. will hang in there militarily in Libya if Qadhafi hangs in there?

And in the grand tradition of U.S. press asking multipart questions, one more. Setting aside the humanitarian goals that you just mentioned a few minutes ago, can you articulate the U.S. national security interest in military action in Libya? Thank you, sir.

*President Obama.* The military action that we moved forward on, in conjunction with our international partners, was defined by the U.N. Security Council resolution that said we have a humanitarian threat and we need to deal with that humanitarian threat quickly, in part through a no-fly zone, in part by ensuring that humanitarian assistance can get into places that need it. And what we've done is to create the space for that to happen.

I think fairly shortly we are going to be able to say that we've achieved the objective of a no-fly zone. We will also be able to say that we have averted immediate tragedy.

Now, you were absolutely right that as long as Qadhafi remains in power, unless he changes his approach and provides the Libyan people an opportunity to express themselves freely and there are significant reforms in the Libyan Government, unless he is willing to step down, that there are still going to be potential threats towards the Libyan people.

And we will continue to support the efforts to protect the Libyan people, but we will not be in the lead. That's what the transition that I discussed has always been designed to do. We have unique capabilities. We came in, up front, fairly heavily, fairly substantially, and at considerable risk to our military personnel. And when this transition takes place, it is not going to be our planes that are maintaining the no-fly zone. It is not going to be our ships that are necessarily involved in enforcing the arms embargo. That's precisely what the other coalition partners are going to do.

And that's why building this international coalition has been so important because it means that the United States is not bearing all the cost. It means that we have confidence that we are not going in alone and it is our military that is being volunteered by others to carry out missions that are important not only to us, but are important internationally. And we will accomplish that in a relatively short period of time.

Now, with respect to our national interests, the American people and the United States have an interest, first of all, in making sure that where a brutal dictator is threatening his peo-

ple and saying he will show no mercy and go door-to-door hunting people down, and we have the capacity under international sanction to do something about that, I think it's in America's international—in America's national interest to do something about it.

That doesn't mean that we can solve every problem in the world. It does mean that when you have not only the United Nations, but also the Arab League and also other countries in the Gulf who are saying, we need to intercede to make sure that a disaster doesn't happen on our watch, as has happened in the past when the international community stood idly by, it is in America's national interest to participate in that. Because nobody has a bigger stake in making sure that there are basic rules of the road that are observed, that there is some semblance of order and justice—particularly in a volatile region that's going through great changes like the Middle East—than does the United States of America.

Now, we've already seen what happened in Egypt and Tunisia: peaceful transitions. We have a huge national interest in making sure that those are successful because if Egypt can make a transition from an autocratic regime to a democracy, if Tunisia can make those same changes, they become models for a peaceful transition that at some point may be adopted by other countries in the region.

If on the other hand, they spill into chaos, in part because they've got a million Lebanese—or a million Libyans who are pouring into these countries, and their borders become less secure, and there's a breakdown of order, that could have spillover effects in the entire region.

So not only do we have a humanitarian interest, but we also have a very practical interest in making sure that the changes that are sweeping through that region are occurring in a peaceful nonviolent fashion.

And when we can have some impact on that with a relatively modest contribution as part of a broader international effort, then I absolutely believe that the costs are outweighed by the benefits, and that is what drove my decision.

And that's why I think that we need to make sure that we see this through effectively.

*President Funes.* We are just going to make reference to a prior question from—this is, Mr. President—with your permission, President Obama, and also to address any other doubt of the media that they may have.

I just want to go back to the matter of El Salvador and the remarks made by—[inaudible]—regarding the importance of these announcements made by President Obama with regards to projects that may be financed through the BRIDGE Initiative and the Partnership for Growth.

We need to place things in context. What's fundamental in my opinion in this Partnership for Growth is that the different visions at the foundation of this initiative that is driven by the Government of President Obama. It's not the traditional way of looking at the region from the perspective of the donor that looks at the receiver as that, as a mere receiver or beneficiary of the same. And I said this to President Obama: I cannot go to the United States or any other country of the world to knock on the doors of the multilateral banking system or the doors of the USAID or any other cooperation agency of the United States in order to ask for either more credits or more nonreversible cooperation funds without making a domestic effort that has not taken place in the past and that we cannot delay much further.

We need to also give our contribution in this partnership and leave our differences in that the financial aid capacity that we have. But just to include the country of El Salvador in this it's a message to the international investors that we can trust El Salvador. The Government of El Salvador is now working on a series of projects that will be presented to the intergovernment teams in this next April so that in June we can have a better idea of which of these programs or these projects are going to be financed. And we have an initiative in the port region, especially in the extension of the Comalapa airport, which I explained to President Obama in our bilateral meeting that we just had, but also in the transportation public system and also in renewable energy projects. So that once we have

these projects prepared and already submitted to the intergovernment teams, we hope that in June we will have taken a decision on this regard, but from a different perspective.

No longer will it be a country that receives aid as a donor or receiver from a donor country without us doing our own efforts. And what does this effort consist of? And I already mentioned this to President Obama that we need to have a fiscal agreement that will send more funds to the Internal Revenue so that we can reactivate the economy, but also to fight against poverty and social exclusion.

This is an effort that we need to carry out. We cannot—no longer be one of the countries with the lowest tax returns, only surpassed by Guatemala. We need to be able to increase this revenue and close with about 17 percent of the GDP. It's still low compared to other countries of the region, not to mention the United States, but it's what we need to do as a nation.

But what's important in this is that we can send a message to the investors that we can invest in El Salvador, be them foreign and national investors, and that the type of partnership that we are taking about and that we are creating with the United States by initiative of the U.S. Government will then imply a joint cooperation where not only the United States will contribute with resources, but also El Salvador will. And we'll have a set of institutional and political reforms that will have transparent management of these funds.

So this is why in the following days we will send to the Legislative Assembly our public-private association that will be driven by the BRIDGE project and the Partnership for Growth. And we will continue sending all the initiatives that are necessary to create the institutional environment that will make it possible for us to have this economic predictability and also for this trust to take place with the investors.

Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, everyone.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3 p.m. at the National Palace. In his remarks, the President referred to Vanda Pignato, wife

of President Funes; Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya. President Funes referred to President Sebastian Pinera Echenique of Chile; and former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. He also

referred to the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) and the Building Remittance Investment for Development Growth and Entrepreneurship (BRIDGE) Initiative. President Funes, a moderator, and two reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

## Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena of El Salvador in San Salvador

March 22, 2011

*Buenas noches.* President Funes, First Lady, former Presidents Cristiani and Saca, distinguished guests, on behalf of Michelle and our daughters, thank you for the wonderful hospitality that's been shown to us here in San Salvador.

As many of you know, this has been my first trip through Latin America as President, and this is our final night. We are closer to home. I mean this in more than just a geographical sense. El Salvador is one of those places where the bonds between the United States and Latin America are strongest.

Just about every Salvadoran has a loved one or a friend in the United States—husbands and sons, mothers and daughters—working hard, sacrificing every day. They strengthen my country, and they mean so much to El Salvador. They're very much in our thoughts tonight.

In my speech in Santiago yesterday, I said that Latin America is not the stereotype of a region in perpetual conflict or trapped in an endless cycle of poverty. I repeat that tonight because many look at a country like El Salvador and only see the struggles. I'm proud to work with President Funes, a courageous leader, to meet those challenges together as partners.

But I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the side of this nation that is too often overlooked, which is just as real and just as important. It's the El Salvador that endures, even when the earth shakes and the floodwaters rise, because Salvadorans are people who persevere.

It's the El Salvador that has struggled for justice and human rights. And along with President Funes, I was honored to visit the cathe-

dral this evening and pay my respects to Archbishop Romero, who remains an inspiration to people all around the world. And I see the current archbishop here. We're very grateful for the wonderful tour that you offered.

It's the El Salvador that not only forged historic accords, but has sustained them for nearly two decades, proving, in the words of your national anthem, that "happiness is found in peace."

And it's the El Salvador that gets up every day and goes to work—students, merchants, farmers, young entrepreneurs, businesspeople—who remind us that building a just and prosperous future cannot be the work of government alone; it must be the responsibility of all—of all—who love their countries.

Of peace enjoyed in perfect happiness  
El Salvador always nobly dreamed,  
To achieve this has been Her eternal  
struggle,  
To keep it, Her greatest glory.

With these words, I'd like to propose a toast, if I can get a glass. [*Laughter*] To President Funes and the First Lady, for their outstanding hospitality and friendship, and to the peace and happiness that we seek: for our peoples, for the region, and for the world. May we not only achieve our dreams, may we keep them for this and for generations yet to come.

*Salud.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:25 p.m. at the National Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Vanda Pignato, wife of President Funes; former