

problems of children who can't read or don't have enough to eat. It's not going to make our countries more productive or more competitive in a global economy.

So I just want to make very clear that when we speak out on something like human rights, it's not because we think we are perfect, but it is because we think the ideal of not jailing people if they disagree with you is the right ideal.

Perhaps President Correa has more confidence than I do in distinguishing between bad press and good press. There are a whole bunch of press that I think is bad, mainly because it criticizes me, but they continue to speak out in the United States because I don't have confidence in a system in which one person is making that determination. I think that if we believe in democracy it means that everybody has the chance to speak out and offer their opinions and stand up for what they believe is right and express their conscience and pray as they would and organize and assemble as they believe is appropriate, as long as they're not operating violently.

So we will continue to speak out on those issues, not because we're interested in meddling, but because we know from our own history. It's precisely because we're imperfect

that we believe it's appropriate for us to stand up. When Dr. King was in jail, people outside the United States spoke up on his behalf. And I would be betraying our history if I did not do the same.

The cold war has been over for a long time. And I'm not interested in having battles that, frankly, started before I was born. What I am interested in is solving problems, working with you. That's what the United States is interested in doing. That's why we've invested so much in our bilateral relationships, and that's why I will continue to invest in creating the kind of spirit of equal partnership and mutual interest and mutual respect upon which I believe progress can advance.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:30 a.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama; President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile; President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba; President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil; and President Rafael Correa Delgado of Ecuador. He also referred to the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM); and the Central American Integration System (SICA).

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia in Panama City *April 11, 2015*

President Obama. It is a great pleasure to once again see my good friend, President Santos, and his delegation. We've had two occasions now to visit Colombia, and I so appreciated the hospitality as well as the people there. And more importantly, the cooperation between our countries, the friendship between our countries has been producing significant results, not just for the United States and Colombia through things like our trade agreement, but also regionally, through the joint participation in a number of issues and challenges that we face.

I want to congratulate President Santos on his extraordinary efforts to bring about an end

to a conflict that has plagued Colombia for too long. The United States is very proud to support that effort. I've deployed an Envoy, Bernie Aronson, with deep experience in the region, to be supportive of President Santos's efforts.

As you've heard I think from many in the plenary, this is an issue that many people care deeply about. It entails some risks. It's hard. But President Santos, I believe, is doing the right thing. And we want to be as helpful as we can in that process.

I also want to congratulate Colombia on what it's been able to achieve economically, as well as with respect to security. The United

States, I think, played an important role in that process through Plan Colombia. Although, ultimately, the progress is due to the strength and commitment and determination of the Colombian people.

So I look forward to hearing more about your plans going forward, and I appreciate all the efforts of your delegation. And I send my best wishes to the people of Colombia. Thank you again for the wonderful visits that I've been able to have. Okay?

President Santos. Thank you very much, President Obama. It's a great pleasure to see you again.

The relations between the U.S. and Colombia, I think, are at the best level ever. We are proud to be considered your strategic partners. And we have been working on many issues. Before, we concentrated on only human rights, violence, terrorism, drugs. But today we have a very, very rich agenda of education, of cooperation in technology, sports—you name it, it's there. It's a very, very rich agenda, and we are very enthusiastic about moving on all those issues and very grateful for the support you have given us in the peace process.

You've understood since the very beginning, you were one of the first people that—to be informed of, our intentions, and you've been there supporting us since the very beginning. It's for, and for the Colombian people, extremely, extremely important. And the appointment of a Special Envoy has a special sig-

nificance because that means we—[*inaudible*]*—*the whole process and to the hemisphere.

So we hope we continue to have that support. This, in a way, is the cherry on the cake. The efforts that we have been doing jointly, Plan Colombia, is a great effort that is very successful. And if we finish that peace agreement and strengthen our democracy, we will be sort of rounded out in the best way possible.

And I want to congratulate you again for your courage for taking the step to normalize relations with Cuba. And you have seen in this summit, it's the most important event. This will have very positive repercussions in the relations between North America and Latin America and the Caribbean. And everybody south of the Rio Grande has appreciated this tremendous step and is very enthusiastic about what this is going to mean for the future of our relations.

So I hope that we can continue to work together the way we have been working. And I look forward to our conversations after the press and the public leave.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process Bernard W. Aronson.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba in Panama City

April 11, 2015

President Obama. This is obviously a historic meeting. The history between the United States and Cuba is obviously complicated, and over the years, a lot of mistrust has developed. But during the course of the last several months, there have been contacts between the U.S. and the Cuban Government. And in December, as a consequence of some of the groundwork that had been laid, both myself and President Castro announced a significant

change in policy and the relationship between our two governments.

I think that after 50 years of a policy that had not changed on the part of the United States, it was my belief that it was time to try something new: that it was important for us to engage more directly with the Cuban Government and the Cuban people. And as a consequence, I think we are now in a position to move on a path towards the future and leave behind some