

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

of the circumstances of the past that have made it so difficult, I think, for our countries to communicate.

Already, we've seen majorities of the American people and the Cuban people respond positively to this change. And I truly believe that as more exchanges take place, more commerce and interactions resume between the United States and Cuba, that the deep connections between the Cuban people and the American people will reflect itself in a more positive and constructive relationship between our governments.

Now, obviously, there are still going to be deep and significant differences between our two governments. We will continue to try to lift up concerns around democracy and human rights. And as we heard from President Castro's passionate speech this morning, they will lift up concerns about U.S. policy as well. But I think what we have both concluded is that we can disagree with a spirit of respect and civility and that, over time, it is possible for us to turn the page and develop a new relationship between our two countries.

And some of our immediate tasks include normalizing diplomatic relations and ultimately opening an Embassy in Havana and Cuba being able to open an Embassy in Washington, DC, so that our diplomats are able to interact on a more regular basis.

So I want to thank President Castro for the spirit of openness and courtesy that he has shown during our interactions. And I think that if we can build on this spirit of mutual respect and candidness, that over time, we will see not just a transformation in the relationship between our two countries, but a positive impact throughout the hemisphere and the world.

And President Castro earlier today spoke about the significant hardships that the people of Cuba have undergone over many decades. I can say with all sincerity that the essence of my policy is to do whatever I can to make sure that the people of Cuba are able to prosper and live in freedom and security and enjoy a connection with the world where their incredible talents and ingenuity and hard work can thrive.

*President Castro. Muchas gracias.*

*President Obama. Thank you.*

*President Castro. Well, Mr. President, friends from the press, we have been making long speeches and listening to many long speeches too—[laughter]—so I do not want to abuse the time of President Obama or your time.*

I think that what President Obama has just said, it's practically the same as we feel about these topics, including human rights, freedom of the press. We have said on previous occasions to some American friends that we are willing to discuss every issue between the United States and Cuba. We are willing to discuss about those issues that I have mentioned and about many others, as these reforms, both in Cuba, but also in the United States.

I think that everything can be on the table. I think that we can do it, as President Obama has just said, with respect for the ideas of the other. We could be persuaded of some things; of others, we might not be persuaded. But when I say that I agree with everything that the President has just said, I include that we have agreed to disagree. No one should entertain illusions. It is true that we have many differences. Our countries have a long and complicated history behind them, but we are willing to make progress in the way the President has described.

We can develop a friendship between our two peoples. We shall continue advancing in the meetings which are taking place in order to reestablish relations between our countries. We shall open our Embassies. We shall visit each other, have exchanges, people to people. And now all that matters is what close neighbors can do; we are close neighbors, and there are many things that we can have.

So we are willing to discuss everything, but we need to be patient, very patient. Some things we will agree on; others we will disagree. The pace of life at the present moment in the world, it's very fast. We might disagree on something today on which we could agree tomorrow. And we hope that our closest assistants—part of them are here with us

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today—we hope that they will follow the instructions of both Presidents.

Thank you so much.

*[At this point, President Obama and President Castro shook hands.]*

*President Castro. Muchas gracias.*

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil in Panama City *April 11, 2015*

*President Obama.* Well, it is wonderful to be able to meet once again with my good friend, President Rousseff, and her delegation.

*[At this point, an interpreter began to translate for President Rousseff. President Rousseff spoke in English as follows.]*

*President Rousseff.* I understand. *[Laughter]*

*President Obama.* She doesn't need a translator. *[Laughter]*

Brazil is obviously not only one of the most important countries in the hemisphere, but is a global leader on a whole range of issues. And so I'm looking forward to this meeting where we can discuss furthering the cooperation that we already have on a whole range of issues, including climate change, energy, educational exchanges, and science and technology.

I'm also very pleased that President Rousseff is going to be able to visit Washington at the end of June, on June 30, where we'll be able not only to deepen our discussions, but also put forward some very concrete plans for mutual cooperation in these areas.

So let me just say, once again, thank you to President Rousseff for her leadership and her friendship. And I'm looking forward to a very productive meeting.

*President Rousseff.* I would also like to say that, to me, it is of course very important that we, the U.S. and Brazil, be able to ensure continuity of our relations. Brazil and the U.S.

*President Obama.* Thank you.  
Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:46 p.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. President Castro spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

have had a very longstanding track record in our bilateral relations and, I think, a very solid one.

We have before us a wide array of different topics in the areas that can serve as subjects for further cooperation, not only between the two countries, but also throughout Latin America and the world at large. May I quote just one example of an area for fruitful cooperation, such as climate change, which is not only a pressing need, but also a much-needed area for joint initiatives in the world at large? Brazil has experienced a very harsh drought. The U.S., in turn, has experienced a very rigorous winter. So the climate change agenda is an illustration, a clear-cut example of where we can cooperate jointly.

Science and technology, education, as well as all manners pertaining to economic growth are just examples of what we can do together to improve and boost the quality of our production activity, which is key for Brazil and which I think will help us elevate our relations to a higher threshold than it is currently today.

I am very much pleased to learn about the upcoming visit on July the 30th in the United States and do look forward to that occasion.

*President Obama.* Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:15 p.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. President Rousseff spoke in Portuguese, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.