

in the forum, and I would like to invite him to answer your question.

President Arzu. Thank you. What we have stressed and tried to demonstrate is that the region of Central America is prepared, is ready. It's no longer time for us to be reaching out our hands to ask for support, although we are grateful for the support we have received. But instead, we have a desire for a more longstanding, a more permanent relationship of partnership, and more than that, we want a free trade agreement. This is our aspiration.

We need to follow certain parameters, which are requirements, with Congress for example; also with public opinion, the press—[inaudible]—in communication. But what we mostly want to tell the American union is that we are ready. In Central America, we are ready to compete. We are ready to receive investment. We are ready to generate production. And we are ready to diversify the results and the profits that we attract among the large mass of impoverished people in our region in order to begin shrinking the very profound socioeconomic gap that we still have. So we want to go beyond that and I think we can do it.

Thank you.

President Figueres. Thank you. this concludes the press conference.

NOTE: The President's 144th news conference began at 1:20 p.m. at the National Theater. President Jose Figueres of Costa Rica spoke in Spanish and English, and his Spanish remarks were translated by an interpreter. President Armando Calderon of El Salvador and President Alvaro Arzu of Guatemala spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this news conference.

Declaration of San Jose

May 8, 1997

We, the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, the United States of America, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and the Prime Minister of Belize, meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica on May 8, 1997, hereby reaffirm the remarkable democratic transformation in Central America. Central America is now a region of peace,

liberty and democracy, profoundly committed to a process of integration, in which a spirit of harmony, cooperation, pluralism and respect for human rights prevails. This spirit marks an unprecedented era of stability in Central America's history.

We hold the conviction that the resources and potential of Central America and the Dominican Republic can now be focussed so as to ensure that our peoples are able to develop to their full potential within the framework of just and democratic societies. We are determined to march toward the future in a partnership based on friendship, understanding and ever stronger cooperation. This meeting marks the inauguration of a new stage in our relations, based on mutual respect and reciprocity which will give our nations greater advantages with which to successfully meet the challenges of the next millennium.

We recognize that there are great challenges that we must jointly assume and that there are many opportunities which favor the creation of a great region of shared prosperity among Central America, the Dominican Republic and the United States, as well as the creation of a visionary and creative association among our nations.

Inspired by the principles and goals of the Summit of the Americas and guided by the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development, we recognize as the cornerstones of this renewed relationship the promotion of prosperity through the strengthening of democracy and good governance; dialogue on immigration and illegal migrant trafficking; economic integration and free trade; the continued development of just and equitable societies that provide opportunities for all people; and the development of responsible environmental policies as an integral element of sustainable development; all of which must be undertaken within a framework of mutual cooperation.

Strengthening of Democracy and Good Governance

We reaffirm our profound conviction that only democratically elected governments can guarantee the full existence of the rule of law, an indispensable prerequisite for the preservation of peace and harmony.

We reaffirm our belief in the dignity of our people and our commitment to the rule of law. We maintain that crime is one of the principal threats to the democracy, public security and social stability of our countries. For this reason, we will redouble our efforts to combat crime and improve security for our people. Consistent with our constitutional provisions and recognizing the independence of our legislative and judicial branches, we are committed to the modernization of extradition treaties and their vigorous application to help ensure that criminals are brought to justice where the effect of their crime is felt most severely.

We resolve to intensify our national efforts and to increase bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation to combat drug consumption, drug trafficking, money laundering and illegal drug activity in all its manifestations. We reaffirm our commitment to fight corruption through mutual cooperation and the strengthening of oversight institutions and we agree to seek ratification of the Organization of American States' Interamerican Convention Against Corruption. We instruct our Ministers responsible for public security and law enforcement, and other appropriate authorities, to work together to develop a plan of action this year to combat these threats to the welfare of our people.

The Presidents of the United States and the Dominican Republic, and the Prime Minister of Belize express their support for the progress achieved by the Central American Presidents in redefining regional security within a framework of the rule of law, the enhancement of democratic institutions by strengthening civilian authority, the limiting of the role of the armed forces and public security forces to their constitutional mandates, and the fostering of a culture of peace, dialogue, understanding and tolerance based on common democratic values. The strong commitment to these principles serves as an important example to other parts of the world seeking transparency and mutual confidence in their relations.

Dialogue on Immigration and Illegal Migrant Trafficking

We are aware of the serious impact of new immigration provisions on groups that come

from the region and who live and have roots in the United States. We therefore undertake to maintain an open, ongoing dialogue at the highest levels to find humane and adequate solutions to address the complexities of the immigration situation, and to ensure that each person's case is evaluated individually and fairly, taking into account his or her valuable contribution to the host country.

Having expressed their concerns to the President of the United States, the Presidents of Central America, the Dominican Republic and the Prime Minister of Belize welcome the United States Government's initiation of consultations with its Congress on the scope, implementation and consequences of the recent immigration legislation approved by the United States, and are confident that the dignity and human rights of the individuals it may affect will be fully respected.

We believe trafficking in migrants is an affront to human dignity and we are committed to increase cooperation to combat this degrading practice.

Promotion of Prosperity through Economic Integration, Free Trade and Investment

At the Summit of the Americas, we decided to move toward a hemisphere united through free trade by the year 2005. We reiterate our resolve to take all necessary actions to make this "spirit of Miami" a reality. With this in mind, we call for the commencement of negotiations at the Santiago Summit of the Americas that will lead to the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). We reiterate our intention to work cooperatively throughout these negotiations.

The Presidents of Central America, the Dominican Republic and the Prime Minister of Belize welcome the decision of the Government of the United States to support the expeditious passage of a bill which enhances the benefits granted under the Caribbean Basin Initiative. We recognize that unilateral concessions have been of great importance in the initial phases of the process of economic liberalization. We now believe that it is necessary to move toward a commercial relationship which offers all parties mutually beneficial conditions.

We are convinced that to promote and maintain democratic stability and to contribute to our joint prosperity it is necessary to have sound and dynamic economies. With this in mind and recognizing the advances that Central America has made in economic liberalization, we have resolved to deepen our economic and commercial relations. We will work jointly and expeditiously, consistent with the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements and the FTAA process, to identify specific steps, including bilateral, multi-lateral and regional reciprocal trade agreements, that will intensify the economic relationships among our nations. To achieve these common trade objectives, we instruct our Ministers of Trade to constitute themselves as a Trade and Investment Council with a mandate to make specific recommendations. In support of these goals, our governments will continue efforts to conclude bilateral investment treaties and intellectual property rights agreements. In addition, under the aegis of the WTO, we will seek to liberalize our telecommunications, information technology and financial services sectors.

The signing of Open Skies Agreements between the United States and Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua during our meeting in San Jose is a significant manifestation of this commitment and these agreements will serve to enhance our commercial relations and tourism among our people and productive sectors. In this regard, it is necessary to undertake additional actions that will strengthen and broaden technical cooperation in aviation matters.

We underscore the importance of free market economies and private sector initiatives as a source of prosperity for our people and we reaffirm our goal of promoting business events and other complementary activities that expand trade and investment relations between the private sectors of our countries.

We recognize that there are important challenges in this process that we must face to maintain suitable conditions for our economic and social growth, taking into account the particular circumstances of each country. Among these challenges are the need to maintain open markets for trade and invest-

ment, to ensure the participation of all our people in the benefits of economic growth, and to maintain a stable macroeconomy and financial system. Within the framework of a market economy, the use of debt can supplement scarce domestic savings and support high rates of investment and growth. With this in mind, we declare our intention to utilize more fully modalities that allow for better management of debt burdens and the cost of external debt.

Continued Development of Just and Equitable Societies that Provide Opportunities for All People

We express our determination to continue making necessary social investments in order to improve the quality of life in our countries. We are convinced that the training of our labor forces, combined with access to health, education and basic housing services improves the well-being of our societies, while at the same time increasing the productivity and competitiveness of our economies. We are committed to share ideas, human resources and programs within mutually agreed guidelines to promote development and democracy.

We underscore the importance of placing greater emphasis on the full participation of women in all political, social and economic spheres of development, especially in areas such as access to credit, community organization, and in the commercial sector and decision-making bodies.

We reaffirm our commitment to human rights as stipulated in the Universal Declaration and to international and interamerican human rights instruments, to which we are parties, respectively. In particular, we recognize the importance of economic, social and cultural rights, and within these we underscore the rights of workers, and reaffirm our commitment to ensure compliance with the Constitution and Conventions of the International Labor Organization, as respectively ratified by our governments. We welcome the input of the labor sector in the hemispheric economic integration process.

We recognize the efforts by interested parties such as employers and workers organizations to work together to promote respect for workers rights and enhance working con-

ditions. We have asked our Labor Ministers to meet to exchange ideas with interested parties on this issue.

The Presidents of Central America and the Dominican Republic and the Prime Minister of Belize note with interest the recent announcement by the President of the United States of the Apparel Industry Partnership.

We agree that micro-, small- and medium-sized businesses are important for the social development of our countries. These entrepreneurial undertakings make it possible for a wide range of social sectors to expand productively and make a decisive contribution to the democratization of capital and the equitable distribution of wealth. We will broaden our efforts to promote such businesses and to increase their capabilities. We also request that the Interamerican Development Bank, the World Bank and other institutions and donors continue and strengthen their support of these activities.

The Development of Responsible Environmental Policies as an Integral Element of Sustainable Development

We renew our commitment to the promotion of the environmental principles and objectives of the Alliance for Sustainable Development, which inspired the signing of the Joint Central American-United States Declaration (CONCAUSA) and influenced the Conference on Sustainable Development in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Within this framework, we recognize the goals we have reached, the support we have received and are in agreement on the need to expand cooperation to new areas of action.

We recognize the leadership of Central America in the protection of the environment and the preservation of biodiversity, in particular, the recovery and beneficial use of ancestral knowledge from our indigenous cultures, as well as innovative use of public-private sector joint ventures. In this context, we will renew our efforts to protect endangered species and make sustainable use of flora and fauna.

We note actions already underway in Central America in the area of climate change, especially those which include the participation of our private sectors and will grant credit for Joint Implementation projects and other initiatives to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In this regard, we urge the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to make a determined effort to address these issues during the Third Conference.

In this spirit, we resolve to support the promotion of investment in environmental projects such as ecotourism, the development of renewable energy sources, recycling, the transfer of clean technologies on terms mutually agreed by all parties, and trade in organic products, among others. In particular, we highlight the importance of our joint efforts in the sustainable generation and use of energy in projects which, by combining our efforts with those of other nations, allow for taking greater advantage of our resources while at the same time fostering regional integration.

Follow-Up Mechanisms

In order to strengthen our relations as friends, neighbors and partners and to ensure an increasing and effective level of communication, coordination and follow-up among our governments, we have resolved to establish a consultative mechanism which will include periodic meetings at the highest level; an actual meeting of our Foreign Ministers, who will meet next during the October 1997 regular session of the United Nations General Assembly; a ministerial-level Trade and Investment Council, which will hold its inaugural session in Washington, D.C.; and an ongoing dialogue on immigration issues at the highest level.

In addition, our Ministers responsible for public security and law enforcement and our Ministers of Labor will convene meetings in their respective areas this year.

Jose Maria Figueres Olsen President Republic of Costa Rica	Armando Calderón Sol President Republic of El Salvador
William J. Clinton President The United States of America	Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen President Republic of Guatemala
Carlos Roberto Reina Idiaquez President Republic of Honduras	Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo President Republic of Nicaragua
Leonel Fernández Reyna President Dominican Republic	Manuel Esquivel Prime Minister Belize

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on Juvenile Crime Legislation

May 8, 1997

Today, the House of Representatives missed an important opportunity to fight and prevent the scourge of juvenile crime. I oppose passage of H.R. 3, the Juvenile Crime Control Act, because it fails to provide a comprehensive plan to crack down on youth and gang violence.

As I began my second term as President, I made juvenile crime and gangs my top law enforcement priority over the next 4 years. I called on every police officer, prosecutor, and parent in America to work together to keep our young people safe and to keep young criminals off our streets.

America's Anti-Gang and Youth Violence strategy must declare war on gangs; target funding for additional local prosecutors to pursue, prosecute, and punish gang members; extend the Brady law so violent teen criminals will never have the right to purchase a gun; require Federal dealers to sell a child safety lock with every gun, to protect our kids from using guns to hurt each other or themselves; and target resources to keep schools open late, on weekends, and in the summer, to keep young people off the street and out of trouble.

The legislation passed in the House today fails to provide any of these necessary measures to give law enforcement, prosecutors, and parents the tools they need to combat gangs and youth violence in their communities.

Four years ago, we made a commitment to take our streets back from crime and violence. We had a comprehensive plan of 100,000 new community police officers on the street, tough new penalties on the books, and steps to keep guns out of the hands of criminals with the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill.

Our plan is working. Last year, violent crime came down for the 5th year in a row. And for the first time in 7 years, the rate of young people arrested for violent crime and murder has gone down. But we cannot waste this opportunity to bring down violent juvenile crime even further. I will continue to work with Congress to ensure passage of legislation that will give our children the safest and most secure future possible.

Proclamation 7001—Jewish Heritage Week, 1997

May 8, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The American Jewish community, with its rich and diverse culture, has served as a continuous source of ethical and moral values for our great Nation since its founding. The principles of Jewish heritage—family, community, faith, and service—parallel the ideals that inspired our country's founders and that anchor our modern democracy.

Members of the Jewish faith have long added to America's cultural life a legacy of law and human compassion, a struggle for freedom and fairness, and a love of learning and the arts. Drawing from their proud heritage, Jewish citizens have made vital contributions to every sector of society, as scientists and soldiers, judges and teachers, artists, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists.

Jewish traditions lend special meaning to the spring season. The recent celebration of Passover commemorates the exodus of Jew-