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Asunción, Paraguay

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REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY FRANCISCO ÁLVAREZ DE SOTO,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PANAMA,  
MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE SUMMIT  
IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)



Remarks by His Excellency Francisco Álvarez de Soto  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama  
Ministerial Meeting of the Summit  
Implementation Review Group (SIRG)  
Asunción, Paraguay  
June 5, 2014

Mr. Secretary General,  
Mr. Executive Secretary of the Summits Secretariat,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of my delegation, and on my own behalf, I offer you a most cordial greeting as I chair the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) for the first time.

I want to reiterate our satisfaction at the opportunity Panama has been given to host the Seventh Summit of the Americas next year. This will allow us to continue seeking mechanisms to bring about unity and efficacy in resolving the challenges that face our countries in the American Hemisphere.

I am glad to be here with you today and want to take this chance to address some aspects of the topics that will shape the activities we expect to conduct throughout the Panama Summit, in 2015.

First I will say we find the last weeks of April a propitious time to hold this encounter, if the agendas of the heads of state will allow.

For this Seventh Summit, we are working on content that will call attention to the member countries' interest in meeting global changes and challenges in a positive way.

Given the essential role government plays in society, the Government of Panama believes all government institutions should comply with the parameters and standards of social responsibility. The state should be a set of institutions close to the citizen that, in addition to offering services, can address important common needs. Examples are cultural and academic campaigns to promote health maintenance and initiatives to lessen the environmental impact of the institution's activities--all of this in strategic alliances with the private sector.

So the central theme the Government of Panama proposes for the Seventh Summit of the Americas, without prejudice to any additions or amendments the new officers may wish to make, is "corporate social responsibility."

Citizen participation in public affairs is extremely important in our age. To improve public administration, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the average citizen's active role in public affairs should be promoted not only by civil society but also by the state.

Corporate social responsibility has four basic elements that are also essential to the modern state: (1) responsibility and transparency; (2) attention to society's demands; (3) innovation and

continual improvement in performance; and (4) respect for the environment and the concerns of society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Panama proposes that we base our deliberations at the preparatory meetings on these elements, to enrich the ideas put forth here and generate achievable mandates with tangible results for our population.

There is another question we have been examining since last year's meeting of this Group. Because we believe that America means all the countries of our Hemisphere, we join with those who call for Cuba's invitation to the 2015 Summit of the Americas, in Panama. These events are meant to bring the member countries closer together for a continually strengthened region. We urge you to continue the dialogue on having all the peoples of the Americas represented at the Panama Summit.

On another subject, I will report briefly on my country's progress in fulfilling the mandates issued at the Cartagena Summit.

Panama has been working to implement social policies in pursuance of these mandates and the millennium goals, which seek to reduce poverty and promote social and economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Measures taken by the national government have given Panama a dynamic role on the world stage, helping to lessen poverty, lower the unemployment rate, and greatly improve infrastructure. And priority has been attached to the participation of public and private sectors as engines of growth.

We will continue to join efforts to fulfill infrastructure project mandates at the national, subregional, and regional levels, because they contribute to sustainable development, social inclusion, and trade growth for our countries.

Evidence of this can be found in the recent exchange of notes with the sister nations of Colombia and Costa Rica, formalizing the cooperation agreement for the management, administration, supervision, and execution of the project to study, design, and build the binational bridge over the River Sixaola.

In addition, under the Mesoamerica project, Panama and Costa Rica have taken an important step to facilitate intraregional trade by implementing a pilot plan for an adjacent customs facility, modernizing the Paso Canoas border crossing and facilitating the flow of merchandise, thereby lowering production costs.

We know all of this will contribute to increased connectivity among our countries and between our region and the rest of the world.

With the implementation of economic policies, the country has considerably lowered unemployment, generating improved access to social security and a better standard of living for our countries' workers.

Complementing this effort is a program to foster small and medium-sized enterprises, so that Panamanians now receiving state aid will be able tomorrow to conduct independent economic development projects to stimulate food production, guaranteeing availability to all at low cost.

In the social arena, Panama has implemented policies to overcome inequality and combat poverty, extreme poverty, hunger, inequity, and social exclusion. And we are proud to say we are succeeding.

Intensive health-sector investment programs have been carried out, with infrastructure-building, equipment with cutting-edge technology, and improvement of administrative processes, allowing rapid access to basic services.

Panama is firm in its commitment to build the regional logistics center for humanitarian assistance in Panama, as a contribution to Latin American disaster response policy. From this center, it will be possible to dispatch aid contingents to any place in the Americas in under 24 hours. This will be a tangible contribution to humanitarian assistance in the Hemisphere.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The work of improving living conditions for our population is arduous and necessary—a shared responsibility to fulfill the commitments undertaken and thus create economic, social, and democratic growth in our region.

In closing, I want to express our appreciation to the Summits Secretariat, from which we have received the fullest support, and to say once again that we hope the Seventh Summit of the Americas will reflect our contributions, efforts, and commitment, so that together we may align the objectives of a region that seeks to position itself at the highest standard of shared development.

Let us not allow the Seventh Summit of the Americas to be seen as just one more Summit. Let us make it a turning point in promoting an America that is more equal and socially inclusive, so that tomorrow we can say we contributed effectively to that change for the benefit of our peoples.

Thank you very much.