

My message to the people in our neighborhood is that we care about the human condition and that we believe the human condition can be improved in a variety of ways—one, investment. And so the question is, how can we have constructive dialog with our neighbors as to how to spread the benefits of investment?

I also am reminding people that the United States taxpayer is most generous when it comes to bilateral aid. Since I've been the President, we've doubled the amount of annual bilateral aid to Latin America from \$800 million a year to \$1.6 billion a year. And most of the money is aimed at social justice programs, programs like education and health care.

I also know full well that—and I saw this firsthand yesterday in Sao Paulo—that many American NGOs and faith-based groups and individuals express their concern about the plight of the poor through programs and activities all aimed at giving people a chance. Yesterday in Sao Paulo, we went to a pretty wealthy neighborhood, but it was surrounded by a *favela*. And there we found in the midst of hopelessness, there was a little center of love. And some of the program money had been raised as a result of concerts in the United States, where citizens, average citizens contribute to make sure this program remain viable.

And so the trip is a statement of desire to work together with people in our neighborhood. I've been to Central and South America a lot since I've been the President, because I fully understand a prosperous and peaceful neighborhood is in the interest of the United States of America.

I would call our diplomacy quiet and effective diplomacy—diplomacy all aimed at helping people, aimed at elevating the human condition, aimed at expressing the great compassion of the American people.

And, Mr. President, I appreciate you giving me a chance to come and visit with you, have a dialog about how we can advance our interests and the interests of our neighborhood.

**President Vazquez.** Concerning your question, the strategy for international insertion of Uruguay is quite well defined and quite clear. We are in favor of an open inte-

gration process; we are strongly in favor of the regional process. We are where we are and we don't want to leave this place. And the trade we have and the cultural, historical relationships that we have with our brethren countries in the region are very solid, very strong. But we don't want a close integration process, but an open integration process.

This MERCOSUR should be able to integrate to other blocks or other countries of the world, and also each of the members of this process—for example, Uruguay—might be able to exercise its sovereign right of developing bilateral relations with other integration processes or other countries. It is in this sense that we are working, and it is in this sense that we are holding with the President of the United States.

Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:53 a.m. in the Visitors Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Minister of Development, Industry, and Trade Luiz Fernando Furlan of Brazil. President Vazquez referred to U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay Frank E. Baxter; Uruguay's Ambassador to the U.S. Carlos Gianelli Derois; and King Juan Carlos II of Spain. A reporter referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela. President Vazquez spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

### **Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted By President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia in Bogota, Colombia March 11, 2007**

Mr. President, thank you very much. I appreciate your hospitality. I am amazed by the beauty of your country. I've never been here to the beautiful capital city of your country, but Laura and I were struck by two things: the beauty of the landscape and the warmth of the people.

We bring greetings from the United States to the people of your country. We have been friends, and we shall remain friends. We value your democracy. I appreciate your strong leadership. We come during a period where your country has come through very difficult times, and now there's a brighter day

ahead. And my message to the people of your country is, we want to help every individual realize their God-given potential.

I'd like to propose a toast to the people of this country, to the leadership of this country. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. at Casa de Narino. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Uribe. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **The President's News Conference With President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia in Bogota**

*March 11, 2007*

**President Uribe.** Mr. President of the United States of America, George W. Bush; distinguished members of the delegation; friends from the Government; distinguished journalists who have come from other countries and from Colombia: I would like to welcome again in the warmest fashion possible. I would like to welcome his delegation as well.

During the working lunch we have just had, at the end, I was able to read some beautiful paragraphs from Bolivar, the Liberator: one in the Charter of Angostura, where he actually was talking about the creation of the American Nation around—or on the basis of freedom, tolerance, and of having a general law that would respond to common interest through individual wills. The Liberator also mentioned a very nice paragraph during the Constitution Assembly in Bolivia on the legacy of President George Washington.

I was saying that the relations between the Colombian people and the American people are sound. We have mutual understanding on democratic values since the birth of our two states. This visit is a reason for being proud. We will trust even more our relations and the Colombian process, and we would like to thank you very warmly, President Bush.

You have come to Colombia at a time of unrest because of the peace process that is

taking place. You have come at a time of revelations that really have motivated a public debate. But they are taking place because of one reason, and that reason is that our policy on democratic security has tried to defeat terrorism in the guerrillas, in the paramilitaries, because our democratic security policy wants to reestablish democratic institutions fully in Colombia. And these revelations are taking place because our law on justice and peace requires and demands truth—truth so that the country will know the dimension of the tragedy we have gone through, truth to prepare us for a future free of the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, and the drug traffickers.

The law on justice and peace that is being enforced has been discussed in Congress throughout its approval process, and it has been discussed during its implementation, and has three elements that makes it different from former legislation in Colombia and in the world.

Number one, justice. There will be no amnesty for crimes against humanity. This law requires reparations to take place, and there is no other single country in the world other than Colombia that might say that in order to have shorter sentences within a law of peace, the perpetrators are required to hand in their assets, so as to repair the victims. And that has never happened anywhere else in the world.

There are two countries in Latin America that tried to compensate for the problems of the victims under dictatorships but with money coming from the budget. Here we will strive to give them all the assets that the perpetrators have. It is truth, justice, and reparations, and these are the three key elements of our legislation.

This country has an independent justice system, Mr. President, which makes our democracy different. The decision of my administration in this process of institutional recovery is total support for justice so that Colombia may finally overcome the time of terrorism.

I would like to go back in history. For 30 years, the Marxist guerillas actually hit Colombia, and they proposed a social revolution, and they produced even more poverty. They proposed more democracy, and they were assassinating and murdering the mayors