

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Porfirio Lobo Sosa of Honduras**  
*October 5, 2011*

*President Obama.* Well, it's a pleasure to welcome President Lobo to the White House, and this gives us an opportunity to reaffirm the friendship between the American and the Honduran people. Not only has Honduras been a traditionally close partner with the United States, but the people-to-people relationship is profound, particularly given the Honduran-American population that has contributed so much to the growth of our country.

Today also begins a new chapter in the relationship between our two countries. Two years ago, we saw a coup in Honduras that threatened to move the country away from democracy, and in part because of pressure from the international community, but also because of the strong commitment to democracy and leadership by President Lobo, what we've been seeing is a restoration of democratic practices and a commitment to reconciliation that gives us great hope.

And President Lobo's leadership is responsible not only for helping to restore constitutional order and democracy and a commitment to fair and free elections, but it's also allowed Honduras once again to rejoin the Organization of American States, and for Hondurans—the Honduran relationship with its neighbors to be restored to a normal place.

Of course, much work remains to be done. And I'm looking forward to a excellent conversation with President Lobo about how we can be helpful in ensuring that human rights are observed in Honduras. We will discuss ways in which our two countries can work effectively together to deal with the security situation that exists not only in Honduras, but through Central America, and how we can cooperate effectively in preventing the countries of Central America from being corrupted and overrun by the transnational drug trade. And we also will have discussions about how we can continue to strengthen development in Honduras and the region so that people have opportunity, we will see economic growth, see economic development, and expand trade and further interactions between our two countries.

So Mr. President, I welcome you. I'm looking forward to a good conversation that will help to strengthen the relationship between our two countries. And, again, we are very appreciative of the leadership you've shown during what's been a very difficult time.

*President Lobo.* Thank you so much, Mr. President. It is indeed a very high honor for me to be here in the White House today. I want to state very emphatically that this is a great opportunity to celebrate the friendship between our peoples. It's also an occasion in which we are reaffirming the permanent gratitude that we have for your friendship, for the permanent assistance we have received from the United States, and very especially because at a time of great crisis you were there to help, and you were there to help us restore the family that is our nation.

I began my administration bringing together all the forces that make up Honduran society. And what I have tried to establish is unity and reconciliation in my country.

We are on the road, as you said, Mr. President, to a number of things. We have returned to the Organization of American States, and in fact, I was able to visit that organization yesterday. It was a very warm visit. It was a wonderful occasion.

We have reaffirmed our democratic vocation. We have reaffirmed the road to democracy that we are on and that we will continue on. We will be opening even more spaces for our people to be able to express themselves. We have already created spaces within our representative democracy, but we will continue to do that so that there is evermore direct participation from our people in all levels of society. That is a road we've started on, and we will continue down that path.

The enormous challenge we face is that of crime and drug trafficking. But we have good friends, like you, who have helped us in the past, who continue to help us. And your words today, Mr. President, are a reaffirmation of that good friendship and that good support that we receive from you, and we hope we will have that in the future.

I also want to say to you again today that we will continue to respect human rights and do everything we can to build on what we have already done in that area. We know that there are some areas in which we have weaknesses we need to work on: The investigation of such crimes is one of those. But we hope to be able to get help from the United States on that so that we can overcome the hurdles we have in this respect, and we are able to find those people who are guilty of violations of human rights.

So we are on the road to reconciliation. Next year, our political parties will be holding their primaries. And in 2013, we will be holding our general election, and so we will be complying with our Constitution for a man or woman to be elected President every 4 years.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Lobo spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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