

Oct. 13 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997

Angel Burelli Rivas; Minister of Energy and Mines
Erwin Jose Arrieta; and Minister of State and Na-
tional Commission Against Illicit Drug Use Presi-
dent Dr. Carlos Tablante.

Declaration of the Presidents of the United States of America and of the Republic of Venezuela

October 13, 1997

Meeting in the city of Caracas, we, William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, and Rafael Caldera, President of the Republic of Venezuela, have had a fruitful dialogue about developments in our bilateral relations and the shared perspective and objectives of both countries in the hemisphere and in the world.

We reaffirm that our reciprocal relations are inspired by the highest ideals of liberty and democracy, and we express our satisfaction for the existence of that form of government in almost all the countries that make up our hemisphere.

This meeting has also permitted us to agree on the necessity of promoting at the international level respect for and guarantee of human rights, cooperation in the struggle against corruption and terrorism, and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In short, we reaffirm the long history of shared friendship and cooperation between Venezuela and the United States of America and we express our willingness to expand and deepen the ties in all areas of common interest.

We reaffirm the commitment to continue working toward the creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas by the year 2005, and in this sense give our support to the comprehensive negotiations which to this end will begin during the 1998 Summit of Santiago, Chile, on all the subjects related to this theme listed in the Miami Declaration. We reaffirm the commitment made in the Declaration of Miami that concrete progress toward the attainment of this objective will be made by the end of this century.

We recognize the importance of the expansion of commerce and bilateral investment to improve the standard of living of the people of our countries and for this reason reaffirm our political will to sign a high-standards Bilateral Investment Treaty which meets the interests of both parties and satisfactorily resolves those

issues over which agreement has not yet been reached. We recognize the progress reached in the negotiations which we have conducted, and have instructed our representatives to aim to conclude this treaty as quickly as possible. Furthermore, we express our willingness to reinitiate talks on a basis that leads to the signing of a treaty to avoid double taxation.

As an expression of our close bilateral association in the field of energy, we note with great satisfaction the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Cooperation that extends ties in petroleum matters to new areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, development of natural gas, and integration of energy resources that will promote still more reciprocal investment in the energy sector.

In view of the importance of the strengthening of the process of hemispheric cooperation and integration in the area of energy, we support the initiative of the Government of Venezuela to convene a hemispheric meeting of ministers of energy in January 1998 as an important step prior to the Hemispheric Summit of Santiago de Chile.

Given the active cooperation of our two countries in the struggle against narcotics trafficking and related crimes, we welcome the signing of the "Strategic Alliance Against Drugs" as the expression that our governments continue to give the highest priority to combat this scourge together and without quarter. Thus we reaffirm the desire to initiate negotiations as soon as possible to sign a new comprehensive maritime cooperation agreement for the struggle against drugs. We note with approval that the United States of America continues to cooperate with Venezuela in counternarcotics activities through the provision of equipment, training teams and other useful measures.

We salute the initiative adopted by both governments to sign a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty as well as a Customs Cooperation Agreement that will facilitate our combating more effectively crimes of corruption, money laundering, and in the customs area.

Finally, we confirm our political will to maintain and deepen the ties of friendship and reciprocal assistance that we have maintained at all times and express the conviction that our respective peoples will continue to benefit from

those gifts conferred by our proximity and our common destiny.

For the United States of America

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON

For the Republic of Venezuela

RAFAEL CALDERA

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

Remarks to the Citizens of Venezuela in Caracas

October 13, 1997

Mr. President, let me begin by thanking you for your warm introduction and your invitation to speak at this sacred place. I am deeply honored to be the first foreign leader ever to address the people of Venezuela at the Tomb of Simon Bolivar.

To the people of this city, I thank you for the extraordinary welcome you have given to Hillary and me and to our entire delegation. *Todo esta chevere en Caracas. Todo esta chevere en Venezuela.*

Let me welcome especially all the young people who have come here today and say a special word of appreciation to the National Youth Orchestra, which played our national anthems and my favorite march so magnificently. It is the young and their future that I wish to speak on this day.

It is especially fitting that we meet here at the Panteon Nacional, for the liberator belongs not only to Venezuela and the other nations of the Andes; Bolivar belongs to all the Americas. He stands alongside Washington and San Martin and the pantheon of liberty's heroes. He was the first to imagine a hemisphere of democracies, united by shared goals and common values. His example stirred the hearts of men and women throughout our region. Indeed, today, we in the United States can still mark the frontier of our Nation in the 1820's by finding our towns, our counties, our villages named Bolivar in the States of Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

When the liberator died, his vision of freedom and peace in the Americas seemed an impos-

sibility. How I wish he were here today to see his spiritual heirs here in Venezuela and throughout the Americas turning his dream into a reality.

Our hemisphere is growing closer every day. Driven by shared values and common purposes, we have put the age-old dream of a democratic and prosperous family of the Americas within our reach. In the last decade, every nation in the Americas but one has embraced democracy, giving its people a vibrant free press, free elections, and the rule of law. Decades of coups and bloody civil wars have given way to the peaceful transition of power. Stifling command economies have been replaced by free markets, giving innovation and more jobs and higher incomes. We are joined in the search for social justice within market economies. And we are all working to leave our children a planet as healthy and bountiful as the one we inherited.

I come here today to salute the people of Venezuela for the extraordinary part you are playing in this quiet revolution of the Americas, and especially to salute President Caldera for a lifetime of leadership for liberty. You, Mr. President, have carried the torch that Bolivar lit for more than half a century, and we are all in your debt.

Other nations in our hemisphere have been drawn to the path you have blazed. For Venezuela is a world center of energy: oh, yes, petroleum, but also energy for peace and freedom; energy for democracy and prosperity; and I might add, energy for world-class baseball players.