

region to realize your dreams, because we believe that—we believe in the dignity of every person. And we want people to realize their God-given potential. You have proven that if just given a chance, you and hundreds of others can succeed, and that's what we want.

Secondly, free trade is important for a lot of people. It's important for our country.

Mariano Canu. It's a gateway for us.

The President. It's a gateway. It creates jobs in America just like it creates jobs here.

And so we thank you for your wonderful hospitality. We loved being with your families.

Mariano Canu. And we thank you, too, all so much for all the support you've given us, from USAID, from the Guatemalan Government, from the President. We're very, very grateful.

The President. Thank you, sir. *Gracias. Que Dios les bendiga.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:43 a.m. Participating in the tour was Mariano Canu, cofounder, *Labradores Mayas*, who spoke in Spanish and had his remarks translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony in Guatemala City, Guatemala March 12, 2007

President Oscar Berger Perdomo of Guatemala. Dear friends, welcome all. On behalf of my Government and on behalf of the people of Guatemala, I am pleased to welcome President George W. Bush, his wife, and his distinguished delegation in our country.

We celebrate that President Bush decided to include Guatemala in his tour throughout Latin America. We welcome you with affection in this multiethnic and plurilingual country, where—[inaudible]—cultures live together, with strong features of modernity, and where, after a lengthy and painful conflict that divided us during 40 years, we are, with determination, following the path of reconciliation, in search for building a plural, democratic, tolerant, and participatory society.

Our historic relationship with the United States of America, at times troubled, date far back. We are pleased to confirm that in recent decades this relationship matured and is today characterized by a further

interaction that are respectful and broad in scope.

We share values, including, of course, representative democracy and social justice. We also share interests that grew last year with the entry into force of the free trade agreement between the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic on the one hand, and the United States of America on the other hand.

And we would be remiss if we do not recall that at present it is estimated that approximately 10 percent of our population live in the United States of America, upon the integration of the labor markets of both nations.

As is the case in every mature relationship, once in a while differences of opinion arise, for example, with regard to the issue of migrants, in particularly those who have been deported without clear justification. But as is also the case in every mature relationship, what brings us together exceeds by far those differences. We value that relationship, and we shall make effort

in order to enhance and extend it, as we shall make effort to address the differences that we find between us with a constructive spirit.

We shall take advantage of our conversations today, that will take place within a framework of cordiality and openness, to address topics of mutual interest—fighting poverty, respect for human rights, and a frontal fight against organized crime, as well as Central America’s economic integration. We shall also review the strengths and weaknesses of our own evolution since the signature of our peace accord.

I finish by reiterating our recognition to President Bush for his persistence in having been able to put forth the free trade agreement, and also for his initiative to promote an integrated migratory reform, that we would trust will culminate with your approval, Mr. President. These two initiatives will certainly contribute to bring our two nations even closer together.

Once again, President Bush; First Lady, Madam Laura Bush; and members of your delegation: Welcome to Guatemala.

President Bush. Senor Presidente, gracias por su bienvenidos a este pais, pais bella. I thank you and the First Lady for treating Laura and me with such grand hospitality. This is my first official visit to Guatemala, and we thank the people of this country for their magnificent hospitality.

I’m honored to stand in the historic courtyard where the 1996 peace accords were signed. The accords mark the end of 36 years of internal conflict and the beginning of a more hopeful future for Guatemala.

Guatemala is a proud country with a rich culture. This morning, Laura and I toured the highlands where the ancient Mayans built a great civilization many centuries ago. This beautiful land is now the home of Central America’s largest democracy. You

have built a diverse and vibrant nation, and the people of the United States admire your determination and your resilience.

Our two countries share many values. We both believe good governments must be accountable to the people they serve and subject to the rule of law. We both believe free enterprise and hard work help lead to prosperity, and we both believe our nations have a responsibility to spread opportunity and advance the cause of social justice.

The United States and Guatemala are partners in this important work. We’re working together to improve access to education and health care to give Guatemalans a safe and legal path to jobs in the United States and to lift millions of people out of poverty by expanding trade. The ties between our two countries have never been stronger or more important.

Mr. President, Laura and I appreciate the invitation to visit your country. We appreciate the time we spent with you and your very accomplished wife. You’re a man of vision and courage. You understand that real leadership requires making tough choices that serve your nation well in the long term.

I appreciate your unwavering commitment to your people, Mr. President, and I look forward to working with you to build a better future for both our countries.

Muchas gracias, mi amigo.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. on the Patio de la Paz at the National Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Wendy Widmann de Berger, wife of President Berger. President Berger 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.

The President's News Conference With President Oscar Berger Perdomo of Guatemala in Guatemala City

March 12, 2007

President Berger. Distinguished members of the media, welcome, and thank you for honoring us with your presence. A very fruitful, interesting, and productive day with President Bush. Today's visit to the Department of Chimaltenango, Iximche, the contact that we were able to have with our people, the cultural legacy that we were able to witness together, and that the special meaning that it is together closer to the Guatemalan people, and hear from them of their history with President Bush and Mrs. Bush, has been very important today.

After that very interesting visit, we met with teams of Presidents Bush and Berger, and evidently, on the table were extremely important topics, particularly as regards Guatemala. And we were able to discuss security and our efforts to fight drug trafficking. In that sense, President Bush expressed his full support for—expressed his support, also, for the Maya Jaguar plan that is already in operation, and has told us that he is going to make a regional proposal to fight drug trafficking, regionally, where he is inviting Mexico and the Central American countries to join the United States in that fight. Part of this strategy seeks to train the security bodies that are in charge of fighting drug trafficking and the intelligence that is going to surround these teams, and then be able to identify these sources in a permanent strategy—and I insist, regional strategy—which I think is key: We should no longer work in isolation; we should work jointly, that is, the countries that face this very serious problem.

Likewise, we talked about the Millennium Challenge Account. And Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told us that Guatemala continues to be among the countries that could be elected. In the coming 2 months, we are going to receive a response.

We expect that it might be favorable for Guatemala.

Today President Bush, who is participating in this productive effort, we were able to see how these Guatemalan workers produce the best vegetables in the world and have been able to enter a very important market, particularly the Central American market, the effort of whose integration President Bush is also aware of.

Of course, President Bush's visit brings us closer to the most important and largest economic power and the largest market in the world, with many possibilities, through CAFTA, where we can have—give better access to the U.S. market to Guatemalan produce, where we highlighted snow peas and berries, chili peppers and tomatoes. We had a limitation, and there was—as of a couple of months, we are exporting significant amounts of Guatemalan produce. So we also mentioned support by U.S. Customs to control Guatemalan port and customs services. This gives us a better rating and makes it possible for us to exercise a more efficient trade effort.

We've mentioned to President Bush, and we've invited the United States to become the partner of the Central American Economic Integration Bank—CABEI—one that he favored. And he is well aware of the fact that this bank and its resources are used to build infrastructure, to promote investment, and to give support to governments as well.

I believe that everyone will probably be waiting to hear from the—about the topic of migrants. This is a topic that we discussed at greater length with President Bush during the trip this morning and during this afternoon's meeting. It is a concern for President Bush; it is a concern for the Guatemalans and the 13 million illegal