

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENTS OF EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND HONDURAS, AND THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The presidents of El Salvador, Salvador Sanchez Cerén; Guatemala, Jimmy Morales; and Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernandez; and the Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, met at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, D.C. on September 23, 2016 to follow up on progress in addressing regional migration, security, governance, and economic challenges within the framework of the Northern Triangle governments' Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity and the United States Strategy for Engagement in Central America, with the goal of reducing incentives that drive irregular migration. The leaders also participated in a dialogue with the private sector and a broader audience of stakeholders on Central America, to discuss innovative activities in the areas of infrastructure, logistics, and energy.

The governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and the United States reaffirmed their commitments enshrined in the Blair House Communique on February 24, 2016. One such example has been the establishment of consultative groups in each country to provide oversight of the Plan, with participation of the public and private sectors, and of civil society. The dialogue between the leaders was based on the commitments established during the January 14, February 24, and May 3, 2016 meetings that defined specific objectives with regard to security, governance, and prosperity in the region, including efforts to promote safe, legal, and orderly migration that include public messaging campaigns to combat irregular migration and provide comprehensive assistance to returned migrants.

In their remarks, the Northern Triangle presidents highlighted the progress each government has made, and emphasized the actions undertaken at a regional level, such as the trade and customs integration process, the establishment of a Regional Plan for Combatting Organized Crime, the creation of a Tri-national Force addressing organized crime, and the integration of investigations and information systems related to gangs, with efforts coordinated by public prosecutors.

Additionally, they highlighted progress and accomplishments at the national level:

In El Salvador, in the wake of the government's efforts to improve security, homicides have dropped approximately 50 percent since the beginning of the year. El Salvador has also aggressively targeted the financial networks of transnational criminal organizations. Operation Jaque resulted in the July arrest of 78 individuals and the seizure of real estate properties, 178 vehicles, and over 600 bank accounts. In addition, the government has established public-private dialogues on economic growth, security, and education. These discussions have helped develop specific proposals such as the Plan Safe El Salvador and the approval of reforms to promote private investment. Currently, the President is leading a dialogue on taxation with the main political parties. In the fight against corruption, the Secretariat of Transparency and Anti-Corruption presented more than 150 cases of alleged corruption in public administration to the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General's Office has received support from the Executive, including additional funding to hire more assistant prosecutors.

Guatemala has significantly increased tax collection through judicial and administrative measures, and has adopted new methods to combat tax evasion and contraband. The government continues to fight corruption and strengthen the Public Prosecutor's office. In the area of security, as a result of the strengthening and modernization of the National Civilian Police, there has been a decrease in the homicide rate, continued efforts to dismantle criminal organizations, and a record number of drug seizures. The government recently presented an urban development policy to promote job creation and improve standards of living. To strengthen coordination and alignment actions of the Plan, the government's Consultative Body agreed to implement a pilot plan in three municipalities.

In Honduras, notable achievements include the implementation of the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (known by its Spanish

acronym MACCIH) and a sustained increase in tax revenue, projected to be 17.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product in 2016. In addition, there has been unprecedented progress by the Special Commission for the Clean-Up and Transformation of the National Police, which has removed 40 percent of Honduran police officers and referred information on their cases to the judicial system. Honduras also continues with capacity building of the National Police and the dismantling of human trafficking and smuggling organizations, as well as ongoing efforts against extortion. The government, together with the private sector, launched the Honduras 20/20 program to strengthen the priority productive sectors of the national economy, fostering job creation for its citizens. The ongoing implementation of the Better Life program combats poverty throughout the country.

The leaders expressed their appreciation to Luis Alberto Moreno, President of the Inter-American Development Bank, for his support to the Alliance for Prosperity Plan from its inception. They also expressed their appreciation to the Foreign Ministers of Mexico, Colombia, and Chile for their participation in the meeting.

The three presidents also recognized the efforts by the United States Congress to allocate resources for the Strategy. They also recognized Vice President Biden for his commitment to the Plan on behalf of the Obama Administration.

Finally, the four leaders agreed to the establishment of the United States-Northern Triangle High Level Dialogue that will further the efforts to promote a secure, stable, and prosperous Central America.