

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson**

**For Immediate Release
2013/1435**

November 18, 2013

REMARKS

**Secretary of State John Kerry
On U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere**

**November 18, 2013
Organization of American States
Washington, D.C.**

SECRETARY KERRY: Mr. Secretary-General, thank you very, very much. Thank you for a wonderful welcome on this absolutely beautiful, luscious, seductive fall day, as pretty as it gets, and one that's quickly prompting all of us to ask why we're at work today. I'm privileged to be here. I want to thank the Inter-American Dialogue. Thank you, Michael Shifter, and thank you, Ambassador Deborah-Mae Lovell for the invitation to be here. I want to thank the Organization of American States for inviting me to speak here this morning. And it's always wonderful to be in this remarkable, beautiful, historic building.

A few minutes ago, we were down below in the atrium and Secretary-General Insulza took me over to see the peace tree that President Taft planted more than 100 years ago. It's a remarkable tree, and it's a testimony to the deep roots of the OAS, which is the quintessential multilateral entity of the Americas and has its origins obviously dating back to even before that peace tree was planted. The – I was tempted to tell a story about William Howard Taft who – and a famous introduction that he made – but I'm going to spare you that particular story – (laughter) – but it's a very funny one, and worth at some point sharing with you. I'm delighted to be in the company of former Trade Representative Carla Hills. Great to be here with you. And I'm particularly proud to be here with our Assistant Secretary Roberta Jacobson, who does such an outstanding job with respect to all of the Western Hemisphere, has come – just come back from China on a dialogue in China regarding the Western Hemisphere and Latin America particularly.

Since I became Secretary of State, I've had the privilege of speaking in some beautiful rooms like this in about, what, 30 countries all over the world. But I cannot tell you how nice it is to speak in one where I get to drive for two minutes instead of fly 12 hours. It makes a difference.

The fact is that this is a very important moment for all of the American states. Fifty years ago, President Kennedy spoke about the promise of the Western Hemisphere, and in what would become, sadly, his final address on foreign policy. President Kennedy expressed his hope for a hemisphere of nations, each confident in the strength of its own independence, devoted to the liberty of its citizens. If he could only see where we are today. In the half century since he spoke, more and more countries are coming closer and closer to realizing his vision and all of our hopes.

When people speak of the Western Hemisphere, they often talk about transformations that have taken place, but the truth is one of the biggest transformations has happened right here in the United States of America. In the early days of our republic, the United States made a choice about its relationship with Latin America. President James Monroe, who was also a former Secretary of State, declared that the United States would unilaterally, and as a matter of fact, act as the protector of the region. The doctrine that bears his name asserted our authority to step in and oppose the influence of European powers in Latin America. And throughout our nation's history, successive presidents have reinforced that doctrine and made a similar choice.

Today, however, we have made a different choice. The era of the Monroe Doctrine is over. (Applause.) The relationship – that's worth applauding. That's not a bad thing. (Applause.) The relationship that we seek and that we have worked hard to foster is not about a United States declaration about how and when it will intervene in the affairs of other American states. It's about all of our countries viewing one another as equals, sharing responsibilities, cooperating on security issues, and adhering not to doctrine, but to the decisions that we make as partners to advance the values and the interests that we share.

As the old proverb says, *La union hace la fuerza*. The union – in unity, there is strength. Through our shared commitment to democracy, we collectively present a vivid example to the world that diversity is strength, that inclusion works, that justice can reject impunity, and that the rights of individuals must be protected against government overreach and abuse. We also prove that peace is possible. You don't need force to have *fuerza*. The vision that we share for our countries is actually within our grasp, but we have to ask ourselves some tough and important questions in order to secure our goal.

First and foremost, will we together promote and protect the democracy, security, and peace that all the people of the Americas deserve? Second, will we seize the chance to advance prosperity throughout the Western Hemisphere and educate the young people who will drive the economies of the future? And third, will we together meet a responsibility that requires more strength, and thus more unity than ever before, and thereby effectively address the threat posed by climate change?

Now, how we answer these questions will determine whether or not we can actually become the hemisphere of nations that President Kennedy envisioned, each country existing side-by-side, confident, strong, and independent and free. The first question is actually answered by the broad protection of democratic values that have become the rule and not the exception within the Western Hemisphere. In a few short decades, democratic representation has, for the most part, displaced the repression of dictators. But the real challenge of the 21st century in the Americas will be how we use our democratic governments to deliver development, overcome poverty, and improve social inclusion.

Last summer, I traveled to Brasilia, and as I was leaving my meeting with the Foreign Minister, I was greeted by a group of protestors. Now, I don't speak Portuguese – my wife does, I don't – but I did understand the four-letter words that they yelled because they were in English. (Laughter.) And as jarring as it can be sometimes, that moment was actually the picture of a healthy democracy.

And today, it is our shared democratic values that have enabled us to weather challenges like the understandable concerns around the surveillance disclosures, concerns that prompt us all to figure out how we're going to get through and build a stronger foundation for the future based on our common democratic values and beliefs.

Successful democracies depend on all citizens having a voice and on respecting those voices, and all governments having the courage and the capacity to listen to those voices. We can be immensely proud, I think, of this hemisphere's democratic trajectory and of the institutions that we built in order to hold ourselves to the future and to be accountable. That is the difference, and to hold ourselves to the OAS Charter.

And we also express our concern when democratic institutions are weakened, as we've seen in Venezuela recently. In March of this year, the United States joined with many of you right here in this very room, as a matter of fact, to affirm the independence and the mandate of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

We have also joined together to support the OAS electoral observation missions throughout the hemisphere, including the one for the election in Honduras next week. All of us here have an opportunity to help assure that this election is transparent, inclusive, peaceful, and fair, and that the process is one that the Honduran people could actually rely on in order to express their will. We – all of us – must do everything that we can to support the OAS efforts to provide assistance and impartially observe the elections. There is no better expression of our strength and unity than following through on that effort.

We also know well that the critical ingredient of a successful democracy is how we provide for our security at home for all of our citizens. Safe streets, safe neighborhoods, safe communities, really do depend on upholding the rule of law.

In June, I went to Guatemala and I met with Attorney General Paz y Paz. She has made extraordinary progress in combating corruption and organized crime, protecting women from violence, and prosecuting human rights violations.

In August, I traveled to Bogota and I saw a remarkable demonstration of Colombia's sacrifice and progress in the fight against illegal drugs and violence, a fight which has actually made it possible for President Santos's courageous effort to achieve sustainable and just peace.

I think it is undeniable what our unity of purpose is. Step by step, making our democracies stronger and our people more secure – in Guatemala, in Colombia, and throughout the Americas. And for the most part, I think you'll agree with me the Western Hemisphere is unified in its commitment to pursuing successful democracies in the way that I describe.

But one exception, of course, remains: Cuba. Since President Obama took office, the Administration has started to search for a new beginning with Cuba. As he said just last week, when it comes to our relationship with Cuba, we have to be creative, we have to be thoughtful, and we have to continue to update our policies.

Our governments are finding some cooperation on common interests at this point in time. Each year, hundreds of thousands of Americans visit Havana, and hundreds of millions of dollars in trade and remittances flow from the United States to Cuba. We are committed to this human interchange, and in the United States we believe that our people are actually our best ambassadors. They are ambassadors of our ideals, of our values, of our beliefs.

And while we also welcome some of the changes that are taking place in Cuba which allow more Cubans to be able to travel freely and work for themselves, these changes should absolutely not blind us to the authoritarian reality of life for ordinary Cubans. In a hemisphere where citizens everywhere have a right to be able to choose their leaders, Cubans uniquely do not. In a hemisphere where people can criticize their leaders without fear of arrest or violence, Cubans still cannot. And if more does not change soon, it is clear that the 21st century will continue, unfortunately, to leave the Cuban people behind.

We look forward to the day – and we hope it will come soon – when the Cuban Government embraces a broader political reform agenda that will enable its people to freely determine their own future. The entire hemisphere – all of us – share an interest in ensuring that Cubans enjoy the rights protected by our Inter-American Democratic Charter, and we expect to stand united in this aspiration. Because in every country, including the United States, each day that we don't press forward on behalf of personal freedoms and representative government, we risk sliding backwards. And none of us can accept that.

Even as we celebrate the democratic values that have spread throughout Latin America, we must also acknowledge where those values are being challenged. After all, timely elections matter little if they are not really free and fair with all political parties competing on a level playing field. A separation of powers is of little comfort if independent institutions are not able to hold the powerful to account. And laws that guarantee freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion are of little consequence if they are not enforced. Democracy is not a final destination; it is an endless journey. And every day, all of us must renew our decision to actually move it forward. And we are no less immune to that reality here in the United States than anywhere else; in fact, in recent days, perhaps even more susceptible to it.

We've also – all of us – got important decisions to make about how we bring about shared economic prosperity – the prosperity to which we all aspire. To start with, educational opportunity, above all, must be a priority. It is only with widely available, high-quality education that our workforce, the workforce of the hemisphere, will be equipped for the jobs of the future. Education, as we all know, opens up other doors as well. As former Senator J. William Fulbright said: "Having people who understand your thought is much greater security than another submarine." That's the idea behind the State Department's Fulbright exchanges. And it is the idea behind President Obama's 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative, which is aimed at increasing the flow of exchange students in both directions here in the Western Hemisphere.

But my friends, education, as we know, is only the first step. We must also press even harder to help create jobs and economic opportunity for our young people for the day after graduation comes and goes. Our hemisphere is already, as the Secretary General mentioned in his introductory comments, a thriving market of nearly a billion people. Over the past decade, the economies of Latin America and

the Caribbean grew at a rate of 4 percent a year. The United States is proud to play a role in this. Just last week, we announced more than \$98 million in private financing for 4,000 small- and medium-sized businesses throughout the hemisphere in order to encourage this energy and create it and keep it moving.

And the kind of growth that the region is experiencing fueled by sound economic policies, innovative social programs, and increased international trade and investment – that growth has dramatically improved the lives of all of our citizens. In the past decade alone as trade has grown between the United States and Latin America – nearly tripled – more than 73 million people, as the Secretary General mentioned, have been lifted out of poverty. Think about that. That’s more people than live in Canada and Argentina combined. It’s an extraordinary story, and it’s a story of success. It’s a story of policies that are working but need to be grown, not moved away from. Imagine what is possible if we continue to open up trade and investment in our children’s futures.

When I was a senator, I was very proud and pleased to vote to ratify both the Colombia and the Panama Trade Promotion Agreements, which President Obama signed into law. And we’re already seeing the growth that these agreements made possible. During the first year of the U.S.-Colombia FTA, nearly 800 Colombian companies of all sizes entered the U.S. market for the very first time. These new exporters sold their goods and services in more than 20 different American states. And today, Vice President Biden is traveling to Panama to visit the canal expansion project that will continue to spark increased trade throughout the region.

Under President Obama’s leadership, we’ve also helped expand the region’s participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, taking it beyond Chile and Peru to include Canada and Mexico. And we have redoubled our commitment to NAFTA, the greatest single step toward shared prosperity in this hemisphere, which I am pleased to say also I voted for at a time when I think people remember it was very contentious and very difficult. But all of us know – can’t rest on those agreements alone. That’s not enough. We know we can do more. And if we do more, the Western Hemisphere will continue to be a leader in the global markets for decades to come.

One of the opportunities that is staring at us that I just mentioned a moment ago about these many opportunities – one of those opportunities is a \$6 trillion market and has 4 billion users. I’m talking about the new energy market – biggest market in human history. The market that created such extraordinary wealth in the 1990s where in America, in the United States, every single quintile of American income earner, from the bottom right through to the top – everybody saw their incomes go up. And we all know it was a time when we balanced the budget three years in a row. It was a time of extraordinary growth.

The market that drove that growth was a \$1 trillion market with 1 billion users – the high-tech computer, home computer model. That was the market – technology. The energy market is six times that market. And the 4 billion users today will grow to 6 billion, ultimately 9 billion between now and 2050. It will help us to answer the third and final question that I mentioned – whether or not we will leave to our children and grandchildren a planet that is healthy, clean, and sustainable. Actually, this is not so much a question as it really is a compelling challenge, the challenge of a generation, maybe even the challenge of a century, maybe even the challenge of life itself on the planet if you digest adequately all that science is telling us today.

More than two decades ago, I visited Brazil as part of the U.S. delegation to the Rio Summit. This was the first time that the global community came together united to try to address climate change. It was also the trip where I got to know an amazing Portuguese-speaking woman named Teresa, who three years later would become my wife. So I like Rio. It's a good place. (Laughter.)

But Teresa and I still talk about a young 12-year-old girl from Vancouver named Severn Suzuki, who took the stage at that summit in order to, as she put it, quote, "fight for her future." Twenty-one years later, I still remember what she said about climate change, as follows: "I'm only a child," she told us, "yet I know we are all in this together and should act as one single world towards one single goal." Severn understood something that a lot of folks today need to grasp, something still missing from our political debate, like the saying goes that I said a moment ago, *La union hace la fuerza* – we need that more than ever now with respect to this challenge of climate change. Decades later, we have a lot to learn from that young woman.

The Americas have become the new center of our global energy map. Our hemisphere supplies now one-fourth of the world's crude oil and nearly one-fourth of its coal. We support over a third of global electricity. And what that means is that we have the ability and the great responsibility to influence the way that the entire world is powered. To do this, it will require each of our nations to make some very fundamental policy choices. We need to embrace the energy future over the energy of the past.

And I am well aware – I've been through these battles in the United States Senate – I know how tough it is. I know how many different industries and how many powerful interests there are to push back. But we, people, all of us have a responsibility to push back against them. Climate change is real. It is happening. And if we don't take significant action as partners, it will continue to threaten not only our environment and our communities, but as our friends from the Caribbean and other island nations know, it will threaten potentially our entire way of life, certainly theirs.

The challenge of climate change will cost us far more for its negative impact than the investment that we need to make today in order to meet the challenge. Every economic model shows that, and yet we shy away. Our economies have yet to factor in the monetary costs of doing nothing or doing too little. The devastating effects that droughts can have on farmers' harvests; the hefty price tag that comes with rebuilding communities after every catastrophe, after every hurricane or tropical storm tears through them and leaves a trail of destruction in their wake; the extraordinary cost of fires that didn't burn as ferociously and as frequently as they do today because of the increased dryness; the increasing signs of loss of water for the Himalayas as the glaciers shrink; and therefore, as the great rivers of China and other countries on one side and India on the other are threatened as billions of people see their food and food security affected.

These are real challenges, and they're not somewhere in the future. We're already seeing them now. For all of these reasons, combating climate change is an urgent priority for President Obama and myself, and we know that we are one of the largest contributors to the problem. There are about 20 nations that contribute over 90 percent of the problem. That's why President Obama unveiled a new Climate Action Plan to drive more aggressive domestic policy on climate change than ever

before. And the good news is the agenda that he's put together is one specifically designed to be able to be done by administrative order so you don't have to wait for Congress to act.

Many other nations in the Western Hemisphere are also working hard to do their part as well. And I'm proud to say that as part of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas, the United States has collaborated with more than two dozen countries, Latin America, and the Caribbean in order to support effective programs to address the reality of this grave threat. But if we take advantage, my friends, this is not a threat where there is not a solution. We have a solution, a number of them staring us in the face. We just don't make the political decision because of these forces that push back.

We know what the alternatives are. We know the advantage of the enormous breakthroughs that are happening in clean energy. And if we share expertise and deploy new technologies throughout the region, if we connect the electrical grids throughout the Americas, then we can share and sell power to each other at different points of time in different ways with a more vibrant marketplace. If we harness the power of the wind in Mexico and the biomass in Brazil, the sunshine in Chile and Peru, the natural gas in the United States and Argentina, then the enormous benefits for local economies, public health, and of course climate change mitigation could reach every corner of the Americas and beyond.

This is what a new inter-American partnership is really all about. The Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho, one of the most widely read authors in the world, wrote "When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change." So the question for all of us is: Will we have the courage to make the tough choices and the willingness to change? Fifty years from today, on the hundredth anniversary of President Kennedy's call to the region, will the hemisphere of nations that he dreamed about become a reality?

Many years ago, the United States dictated a policy that defined the hemisphere for many years after. We've moved past that era. And today, we must go even further. All of the things that we've talked about today – the future of our democracies, the strength of our democracies, the development of those democracies, the inclusion of all of our people in a system with accountability and without impunity for the defections, our shared prosperity and all that brings us, the education of our children, the future of our planet, our response to climate change – all of these things do not depend on the next administration or the next generation. They depend on us now.

And the question is: will we work as equal partners in order to achieve our goals? It will require courage and a willingness to change. But above all, it will require a higher and deeper level of cooperation between us, all of us together, as equal partners in this hemisphere. That is the way we will make the difference, and that is the way we will live up to our responsibility.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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