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Readout of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's Visit to Colombia



Washington, DC — On the sixth day of his first multicountry trip to Latin America and the Caribbean, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Colombia. He arrived in Bogotá this afternoon, where he met with President Juan Manuel Santos, Minister of Foreign Affairs María Ángela Holguín and U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Kevin Whitaker.

Topping the agenda were Colombian Peace Agreement implementation, U.S. support for Colombia's accession to the OECD, advancing the bilateral economic partnership and shared responsibility in the fight against drugs. Following their meeting, President Santos and Secretary Tillerson participated in a joint press availability.

President Santos stated:

"We just had a very productive meeting with the Secretary of State of the United States, Rex Tillerson. ... Colombia - you have been able to see it firsthand - is making progress in the construction of peace. This is a complex process - a process

that takes time - and, although we have enormous challenges ahead, the fruits are being seen.

"... Throughout this process we have had the firm and determined support of the United States, a bipartisan, effective and unwavering support. That is why we deeply appreciate the support of the administration of President Trump at this crucial stage in our history as a nation.

"In this meeting with Secretary Tillerson we reviewed the various topics of our rich binational agenda, and we also talked about the work we have been doing on issues of interest to both countries.

"... Commercial ties between our countries are becoming stronger. Since the entry into force of the free trade agreement, U.S. investment in Colombia has exceeded \$2.3 trillion. More than 230 companies from the United States are investing today in our country. And we are happy to see that every day there are more Colombian products arriving in the United States market.

"As of November last year, Colombia exported \$3.73 billion in non-mining-energy goods to the United States. ... The private sector plays a key role in promoting trade and investment, and that is why we value the role of the U.S.-Colombia Business Council, which brings together 40 of the most important business leaders of the two countries.

"On the other hand, spaces such as the High Level Dialogue have left important results in terms of cooperation on key issues such as energy, education, rural development, science and technology.

"Colombia is beginning to take advantage of its full potential. We have a long way to go, but we have very important progress on crucial issues such as the fight against poverty, the development of infrastructure and the growth of our economy.

"We want to continue advancing along the path of development, and a very important element of that process is our entry into the OECD. We thank Secretary Tillerson for his support in completing our accession process.

"Colombia and the United States share the values of democracy and freedoms that our parents left us from their respective homelands, as well as the interest of consolidating an increasingly prosperous and increasingly secure region.

"We have a broad and diverse agenda, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and the administration of President Trump to further deepen our great relationship - a relationship that is more than friends and partners rather than allies and partners."

Regarding the global fight against drugs, President Santos said the problem is "an issue on which, we agree with you, Secretary Tillerson, our countries have a shared responsibility. There is no supply without demand, or demand without supply." The President noted that as part of the "frank and open" dialogue, he discussed the actions Colombia has undertaken and the results achieved to date through the aggressive,

comprehensive counternarcotics strategy Colombia began implementing last year and in coordination with the United States.

Secretary Tillerson's visit comes after Vice President Pence's visit in August and President Santos's meeting with President Trump at the White House last May.

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