

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

A CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT  
JUAN ORLANDO HERNÁNDEZ OF HONDURAS  
AN ALAN AND JANE BATKIN INTERNATIONAL LEADERS FORUM

Washington, D.C.  
Monday, September 28, 2015

REMARKS AND DISCUSSION CONDUCTED IN SPANISH

ENGLISH-TRANSLATION TRANSCRIPT

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Introductory Remarks:**

MARTIN S. INDYK  
Executive Vice President  
The Brookings Institution

**Moderator:**

HAROLD TRINKUNAS  
Senior Fellow and Director, Latin American Initiative  
The Brookings Institution

**Keynote Address:**

H.E. JUAN ORLANDO HERNÁNDEZ  
President of Honduras

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK [IN ENGLISH]: Welcome to Brookings. I am Martin Indyk. I'm the executive vice president of Brookings, and I'm very happy to have the opportunity today to welcome Juan Orlando Hernández, the president of Honduras, to the Brookings Institution.

President Hernández was elected president in the fall of 2013, but before becoming president of Honduras, he served as president of the National Congress for four years, and as congressman for the Department of Lempira. He is also the general secretary of the National Party of Honduras. Prior to becoming president, he served as a member of the legislative committees for competitiveness, telecommunications, budget and follow up reform in the Honduran Congress, and as a secretary of the National Congress from 2002 until 2006.

He is a lawyer by training, has a master's in public administration specializing in legislative administration from the State University of New York, Albany, and he leads Honduras at a particularly challenging time for his country. The United States and Honduras are deeply linked by shared economic and security interests.

The United States and Honduras are both members of the Central American Free Trade area, which has boosted trade significantly to the point where the Central Americans, the Dominican Republic represents the third largest U.S. export market in Latin American. And there's a long history of U.S. Honduran cooperation on regional and international security issues, particularly the challenge of combating illicit drug trafficking.

In that context, the United States and Honduras face a shared challenge that has become particularly acute, as drug consumption in the United States has been linked to drug trafficking in Honduras, and that vicious cycle has contributed to corruption, impunity and insecurity. These are some of the issues that President Hernández is going to speak to today. We'll have an opportunity to discuss with him.

Harold Trinkunas, the head of our Latin America initiative in the foreign policy program at Brookings will be conducting that conversation with President Hernández. These are issues which he has campaigned on, and together with his fellow Central American presidents, is beginning to address. And in that context, the organization of American States has just agreed on, with President Hernández, a

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mission to support Honduras in the fight against corruption and impunity, something I expect that he will also address today.

We are very happy to welcome you, sir, to this forum. We are very aware of the challenges that your country faces and the role that the United States can play in addressing them, and in that context, we are keen to hear from you. Ladies and gentleman, please welcome President Hernández of Honduras. (Applause)

PRESIDENT HERNÁNDEZ [TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH]: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm most grateful to the Brookings Institution for this wonderful opportunity to be able to share with you what we are doing in Honduras, how we are seeing things, and where we want to go.

Some time ago, when I was speaker of the Honduran Congress, I had an opportunity to invite a former ambassador funder that's here in Washington to Walt Disney, and I asked that -- or to Disney World, and I asked that we get together apart from our families, so as to ask that he could begin to think about how we could begin to take an important step in the history of Honduras and the United States, which is the extradition of Hondurans, which was not permitted at that time. And this was considered as a first step in fighting the corruption and impunity brought about by organized crime and drug trafficking.

Amending the Constitution in Honduras requires two legislative years. Fortunately, we were able to do it without any major visible consequences, but in any event, that was one of a number of legal rules that we have had to implement in this fight against drug trafficking, which has led to so many deaths on the part of us Hondurans.

Now, with all due respect, I would like to tell you something that I said on the day of my inauguration, and that is, that for the United States, the problem of drug consumption today, now that you have removed the issue of violence in drug trafficking, and now you're only dealing with this in light of a health problem, which always has an impact.

But for us Central Americans, the people in Mesoamerica, if I broaden it out so as to include not only Central America, but also, Mexico and Colombia. For us, it's a matter of life or death. Eighty-six deaths per 100,000 population is the figure that we reached a few years back, and unfortunately, we were said to be the most violent country on the face of the earth.

But behind that figure are wrenching stories of families; mothers who cry for the loss of their children, and a social decomposition, a breakdown of our institutions, as well. So, the challenge wasn't so simple. Nonetheless, today I can tell you that we have made important strides. A compatriot of yours, or many of yours, those of you from the United States, who serves at a high level, said to me six months back, I didn't think that in effect, you had made a decision to do so. Now that we have seen it, we want to work closely with you.

A great deal remains to be done. But from that struggle, we have learned that we cannot do this alone, because the problem is transnational in nature. Therefore, it requires a regional approach. In addition, we need the expertise, the scientific and technical aspect that other countries have developed. And that is valid for us in the proposal that we have received today from the Organization of American States in fighting impunity and corruption.

Now, the day of my inauguration, I also said that to save the country, we needed to take on the problem of impunity and corruption in all of its different aspects, and the next day, we were the first country in the world to sign an agreement with Transparency International. In order for good administrative practices and practices of working together with civil society, reviewing how the different tasks of the public administration are being carried out in five major areas of government, and it was possible to improve these and improve upon them, drawing on Transparency International's experience areas, such as education, health, security, taxation and also, procurement for building infrastructure.

Honduras today is part of the cost initiative, which Transparency International is also promoting. So that day, we told the people of Honduras, things have to change, of course. It's several decades in which we've been living with this system in which the foundations of democracy have been shaken. But it's never too late.

I would hope that with the proposal made by the OAS today, which has resulted from the OAS consulting various sectors as part of an ongoing dialogue, we hope that we can improve upon this proposal. I in particular, would like to thank Secretary Almagro, and I would like to publicly state for the first time that in addition to the proposal that we have received from the OAS, it seems to me that in the structure of this plan for fighting corruption and impunity, it's fundamental that we have a system that protects judges, prosecutors, and judicial officers who work on these cases, because we already learned

from the experience in fighting drug trafficking.

A judge in a given part of Honduras had to sit in a case in which one of these criminal were coming, and the hearing was about to happen. And the son was not showing up at home. But then, he showed up just five minutes before the hearing began. So, we need to work on this line, as well. We believe that it's fundamental that in this new arrangement for fighting corruption and impunity, we have a series of rules, good practices, which we have found from different parts of the world that have yielded results, so that the private sector not generate corruption.

Because in order for there to be a corrupt person in the public sector, normally, there's someone from outside of the public sector who comes and proposes something which is unlawful or indecent. I also think that this arrangement should also include something which we've already sent to the National Congress, and that is an initiative to regulate political party financing. And at this time, it is being debated in Congress.

Today, I would also like to discuss climate change with you. I have found it surprising to learn from a member of the U.S. Congress that there are people who argue vehemently that climate change does not exist. And I asked him to repeat this two or three times, to make sure I was understanding clearly what he was telling me. And he said yes, that is so -- so much so that that point of view is represented in the U.S. Congress.

And so, I said, well, work needs to be done to explain what we're going through, what we're experiencing, and I'd like to begin today, with you. Honduras, according to the index or the impact of climate change, that is to say, in terms of natural disasters, has been the country hardest hit internationally in the last 15 years, according to a particular index.

Now, in 1998, Honduras suffered such a devastating hurricane that we lost a huge sum of resources, but we also lost the most valuable thing, which is the lives of thousands and thousands of Hondurans. And before that hurricane, we had a period of very extreme draught. The last 14 years in Honduras, it rains less and less each year, but with a particularity, which is that the draughts are getting longer, and then all of the sudden rain falls, but not when the traditional crops are in need of rain, and they dry up.

We now have 146 municipalities of 298 total that are severely impacted by draught;

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250,000 families are being impacted by this draught for the second consecutive year. Then, we have the other side of the impact of climate change for Honduras, which is that all of the sudden, the rain comes all at once and it causes great destruction, and that has also caused us very serious problems.

Now, speaking of sea water, there is a community that was known as -- it was known as, because no one lives there anymore -- it was known as Puntea. And it was in the Gulf of Fonseca on the Pacific side. I visited it three years in a row, trying to convince them to move, because at nighttime, certain part of the year, the tide rises.

Well, this year, they finally became convinced that they had to leave, because they had a very frightful experience, which is that the sea practically swept them away. Well, the same experience is happening in many islands of the Caribbean, and it is so sad that Honduras is one of the countries hardest hit by a phenomenon that has been caused as the result, as I see it, primarily by other countries and not by us, and we are the hardest hit.

Therefore, it seems to me, that just as in approaching the fight against organized crime, drug trafficking and this struggle to take on climate change, I think the same logic applies to both, which is the responsibility -- the principle of shared, yet differentiated responsibility.

First, we're all responsible, but the responsibility is different, in the case of those who are producing the drugs, those who are consuming the drugs and those of us whose lives are exposed, because drugs are transiting through our countries. Likewise, that should be a responsibility of all to take on climate change, but it's differed for those who have caused this and those of us who are suffering the consequences. But we all have to be responsible.

I'm very hopeful about what we have discussed at the United Nations the last three days, and I would hope that in Paris, we're able to reach specific commitments with a matrix that makes it possible for us to measure the effects over time. Recall that you, too, have had here, I was told, in Massachusetts by one member of Congress, snowstorms that you'd never had before, probably. And so, it's an issue that has to do with all of us. Some are in the north. Others are in the south. Some are a whiter complexion or darker complexion, taller or shorter. We all have to share that responsibility.

Now, linked to -- in one way or another, to both the issues of the effects of violence and the effects of climate change, both of these phenomena cause migration. And I am among those who

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believe that every human being has the right to migrate, but also, as a mere citizen, as a public servant, it pains me greatly when a Honduran citizen doesn't want to live in his or her own country, and wants to come here or wants to go to Spain.

And I know that many of the people in the United States might be made uncomfortable by our people coming up here. When the crisis occurred having to do with unaccompanied minors last June, I thought it was like a slap in the face for all of us, but in particular, a slap in the face for humankind, because putting one's self in the position of a child and their parent, well, they would aspire to live together, as it should be, no matter where they are.

Yet, at the same time, I was thinking well, if they're leaving Central America, it's because of the lack of opportunity. It's because of the problem of violence. So, why don't we work in Central America for people to want to stay in Central America and to be able to have the opportunity to realize their life, like any human being would wish to do.

And so, we propose the -- from Honduras, the Alliance for Prosperity Plan, together with Guatemala and El Salvador. President Obama took it up. He designated Vice President Biden. He put a line in the budget to finance it, so as to be able to put in place a plan in which we would work together. It would include economic development, strengthening the institutions, bringing justice closer to the people and social development opportunities, and other aspects.

Now today, I am convinced that many members of Congress, including senators are viewing the plan favorably. And I would summarize it as follows: If Central America or Mesoamerica continues in turmoil, continues to be hit by violence, have shortage of opportunities, that is a tremendous risk for the people of the United States.

Now, if to the contrary, the leaders in Washington understand that a prosperous Central America, that a Central America at peace with opportunities is a good investment for the people of the United States, and I recognize that it's a good investment for us, as well. It is a win-win situation for all. Based on our budget, we already have under way, execution of 80 percent of the content of the Alliance for Prosperity Plan.

And I was just telling them, it's not that we are swimming in money. We need money. But for us, it would be enough for the U.S. Congress to include a budget line item that would say Alliance

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for Prosperity. I don't want to be exaggerated, but by putting in one dollar -- well, that sends a message that one accepts the concept of shared, yet differentiated responsibility, and that we will work together.

I come with great hope from the United Nations, because we made the proposal of the Alliance for Prosperity there. Spain came forward to say that it will support it. The European Union, likewise. Switzerland, as well, with great expectations, and I would hope that the United States will join the effort.

We have Colombia, which is already working with us; Mexico, as well. They also want to be partners in this Alliance for Prosperity. Believe me, this is a win-win situation for the northern triangle of Central America and for the United States, and I know that eventually, for the entire Central American region, as well, because the approach has to be regional.

If we are succeeding in bringing down the indices of violence in the country, but El Salvador doesn't achieve that, but rather becomes more serious, then eventually, the worst needs situation could come back to Honduras. And as President Santos and in due course, President Uribe had told me, if in Central America drug trafficking becomes established, as it did in Colombia, then it might come back to Colombia. So, we all have to work on this together.

Now, I am under prohibition to campaign here in Honduras -- here in the United States, because it is not my country, but please, do tell your Congress to vote for the Alliance for Prosperity. Believe me, it is good for you. It is good for Central America, and in any event, this is a campaign in favor of the United States, because I am convinced that it will be good for the United States, so, it will be good for Honduras and Central America, as well. So, I am asking for your vote, if you would be so kind. That will impact on and supplement the next budget.

Now, I would also like to share with you that we have a very clear and strong structure which we have just presented at the United Nations, at the General Assembly, and also, at a meeting with Oxford University. And the Prime Minister -- we were with the Prime Minister of Bhutan at Oxford, and also, President Solis of Costa Rica, and we were discussing why it is necessary to gauge poverty in a multi-dimensional manner.

I think this is going to lift us out of great ignorance. Honduras already began working with a platform called Vida Mejor, A Better Life, in order to address part of the people of Honduras who are,



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what I would call the forgotten people, the excluded people, the poor. But before, they had a dirt floor. I know that nobody could imagine that here in the United States, but there are people on this planet who still live with a dirt floor in their home.

And when the rainy season comes, water comes in and it brings disease. And in the dry season, any number of insects and animals also live there and contaminate the human beings. That is not living in dignified conditions. We're investing in a major way, working with these families, so they can at least have a concrete floor. So, give them dignity, in addition to covering their health needs.

Water filters. There are people who have had no ceiling or roof. People who live on the periphery of the cities where I've gone, and I've asked, do you have a toilet. And they say no, I don't. And one is ashamed to ask, well, why not. And they say, well, sometimes I have to ask my neighbor.

Well, it can't be so at this stage. So, we're saying that Vida Mejor, A Better Life, has a toilet, bathroom or a shower, as well as family gardens -- a vegetable and fruit garden, so as to be able to feed one's own family and sell a bit. Also, this program includes a component of education -- family education through the woman, although the woman might not necessarily be the head of the husband. But the majority of households are women headed households, though it's painful to say so, because the men are not there.

So, even if the wife has a husband, we work with the wife, the mother, because maternal instinct leads a mother to do more than anyone else for her own family. So, I was talking with a group of males, and they said, why not work with us. And I told them, what happens when there's a hurricane, or there's a major storm? What does the hen do with the chicks? She spreads out the wings and spreads them, whereas the roosters run out, abandoning the children.

And there are some where the cock will also protect the young, in addition to the hens. So, this has helped them understand why women should have more self esteem, have greater training in terms of raising the family, how to prevent conflict within the family, how to transmit to the children how they can eat best. So, that's one aspect.

Then, financial inclusion. We have unfortunately, as the impact of a very rigid, formal financial system which does not address the most excluded -- the hardest fighting poorest sectors, but also, as a result of organized crime, the markets in Honduras -- well, some people will buy oranges to sell

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during the day, and if they receive a loan of \$1 in the morning, they need to pay \$1.20 the same afternoon.

So, if you lend that person -- now this person, if you lend them a dollar, is going to pay one penny a month. With the Banco Solidario program, which is giving hope and opportunities to a number of people who -- a large number of people who otherwise, would have none. So, we're also working on financial inclusion in this regard.

Also, Honduras has -- they just passed a social protection framework law for, unfortunately, we had -- well, about 5 percent of the population had access to some level of social protection. Today, with this law and two others that are on the way, and the reforms that we're undertaking, we are seeking to have universal coverage.

Obviously, business persons need to pay a greater contribution for the workers -- the state, likewise. And of course, the workers will pay into it, as well. Contributions or payments paying in goes on in a gradual way, and once I was president elect and before I became president, I asked Social Security Institute to become involved. And that has resulted in research and information that has made it possible to completely restructure, but at the same time, prosecute cases, which at other times in Honduras, probably never would have been prosecuted.

In addition, it has made it possible for us to raise awareness that this should be handled in a different way, and that this belongs to us all. We have also undertaken a major reform in drug procurement. Before, unfortunately, that operated more or less in the style of organized crime. But we have also obtained support from the United Nations through UNOPS, through Transparency International, through the churches in Honduras, and now, the drug procurement system has become transparent to a significant degree.

It has been substantially improved. We're now working on the logistical aspect to make sure that people get drugs, once they get to the hospital. And there are civil society overseers, reviewers at each hospital who are working to refine this process.

We have increased three-fold the budget for drug procurement, because at the end of the day, the raison d'être of the public system is to help address those who have no other way to cover these needs. Do we have a long way to go? Yes, we still have a long way to go. Are we headed down the

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right path? Yes, we are, down the right path, with all of the ups and downs that some Hondurans might agree with us; others might not, and that is part and parcel of democracy. But Honduras -- you cannot wait anymore, and we have to go forward.

And finally, because I am also more interested in hearing your questions and your comments, let me tell you that we are always going to be neighbors with the United States. We're in the neighborhood. And when you look to the south, before you see the south, there is a piece of the Americas known as Central America. And we are closer than South America.

I'm not saying to neglect the relations with South American countries. I am just wanting to say that we are neighbors, and we are always going to be there. And my father told me, son, you must always get along with your neighbors, because at times of need and at times of happiness, they will be there. So, we have gone through hard times, also good times, and the idea is that we will always be together.

So, I thank you for coming, but I'll be especially thankful to hear your comments and your doubts so that we can give our opinion in that regard. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. TRINKUNAS: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for being with us at Brookings today. We will now begin a moderated Q&A session, but before beginning, I would like to take moderator's privilege to put a couple of questions to you.

You were discussing the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle. You announced that plan together with the presidents of Guatemala and El Salvador the year before last, and of course, things have changed in Guatemala and in El Salvador. President Sanchez-Ceren. How do you see -- where do you see things going with the changes in the group that had initially accompanied you and which is now changing?

PRESIDENT HERNÁNDEZ: Well, I think that we are in the same situation, or even more determined to give impetus to it. We were in New York with the new vice president of Guatemala. The current president was unable to be there because of a small accident, but I felt the same determination, and likewise with President Sanchez-Ceren, so much so that we had this meeting to be able to draw new partners into the Alliance for Prosperity, and asked for them to accompany us. So, I feel very optimistic about it.

MR. TRINKUNAS: And speaking of the mission to support the fight against corruption and impunity that was presented this morning at the OAS, I also saw that you spoke with Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in New York in the last few days about establishing a permanent office of the UN for monitoring the human rights situation.

What type of support do you expect, or what do you need from the international community -- what support do you see coming from those parts of the international community?

PRESIDENT HERNÁNDEZ: Well, technical support, scientific support, academic support is fundamental. Lessons learned. Now, in the case of the United Nations, since I came in as president, I asked the United Nations to establish an office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, because I knew that this struggle against drug trafficking and impunity had its risks.

And what better than having the presence of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights not only to help to construct a culture and to promote human rights, but also, in the event of some incident, to be able to technically -- to have in-depth knowledge of what has happened. I also feel that the United Nations can help us give impetus to the dialogue. Now, in this first stage, it will be accompanied by the OAS mission, but the idea is also for us to be able to discuss other types of issues further on.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Thank you. Well, we have about 15 minutes for questions. I would ask you to please raise your hand. When you ask the question, please identify yourself. I'm speaking in Spanish, but I'm trying to keep people from having to take the ear set off too often.

MR. BIVANCO: Jose Miguel Bivanco, Human Rights Watch. Mr. President, it's a pleasure to be here with you at this meeting. I think that the announcements that you have made, both concerning human rights and in respect to fighting corruption and impunity are very important.

Now, one aspect that is guaranteed the success of the sea (sic) siege in Guatemala is that it's been able to operate independently -- independence which I think is practically more important or as important as the scientific or technical capacity for investigation is especially important when organized crime has succeeded in penetrating the state institutions. And that is, perhaps, the key characteristic that would guarantee the effectiveness of such a model.

Now, what do you say about the criticisms that have come up regarding the agreement and the mechanism that is to be implemented as proposed by the OAS; that is to say that the model

being promoted in Honduras is not exactly the same as the sea siege in Guatemala, and in particular, that it would have less independence when it comes to operating with the independence that it would need, when it comes to investigating and punishing corruption and impunity, which unfortunately, have beset Honduras.

PRESIDENT HERNÁNDEZ: I would say that they're two entirely different things. Where they do coincide is that for us, it is very important that there be independence -- independence of judges and prosecutors who will depend exclusively on the OAS team for doing their work. And as they said, and quite rightly so, the message needs to be clear that they're not going to take the place of the Hondurans.

Why is that important? Because otherwise, it would be intervention, just in a different form. And for us, well, my country may be small and beset by many difficulties, but there is something which is very important, which is dignity. Many also criticized the initial approach to fighting drug trafficking, and said it wasn't going to make any progress. But over time, they've realized that yes, we have made progress, and I would like to acknowledge here at first, that we did it alone.

But then, in the Office of the Attorney General, we have been accompanied by U.S. prosecutors, Colombian prosecutors, and other kinds of experts. So, it can be done, and the other enriching aspect is that unlike the Guatemalan case, where there's work to support and supervise the public ministry or the process (Inaudible) authority, here, such outside and independent support is sought with the judges and prosecutors.

And the OAS has now proposed an observatory, where academia and civil society would participate in monitoring the fight against impunity and corruption. In particular, I believe that this whole structure should also include the new political party financing regulation. And I also think that a number of rules are needed, which are now proven good practices in several countries, to make it compulsory for the private sector to observe and to the law, and to not cause problems, and also, protection for judges and prosecutors.

We're optimistic, because there are some of us Hondurans who want to do things the right way, and this is the most dignified approach. And with the international support and supervision of -- the judges and prosecutors -- we'll give strong backing to the judges and prosecutors who have wanted to

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do things right, and who have exposed their families' lives and their own lives in confronting these problems, which it's not easy for just anyone to do that.

One might speak, but when it comes to actually making a decision, not just anyone will do so. And it is time to lift them up, as well, and at the same time, to continue vetting through certification, those who are not willing to do so, or who have compromised for any reason.

TRINKUNAS: Yes, please wait for the microphone to ask him a question.

SPEAKER: Within the plan, the Alliance for Prosperity, are there reforms for protecting the LGBT community? According to the organization cited by the (Inaudible) Commission on Human Rights, they are victims of discrimination, assassinations, abuses that require them to travel to countries such as the United States.

And my second question is, what is your answer to the allegations by some organizations to the effect that indigenous, (Inaudible) usurped by your government in the name of economic development?

PRESIDENT HERNÁNDEZ: Yes. In reforming the whole justice system, this concept is included. Honduras has just adopted a law for the protection of human rights defenders, journalists and other groups, such as the LGBT group, who have been more subject to abuse, and four of these cases are being heard, even though not all the structure created by the National Congress has been implemented.

That's why it is important, as I was just saying, that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights be present in Honduras. The other thing is that in terms of lands, today, we are working more than ever to strengthen programs to support indigenous an effort to (Inaudible) peoples. They are precisely part of this dialogue.

The OAS has been engaged with them, as have we. And a short time ago, the Inter American Court of Human Rights met in Honduras, and it went to review one of these cases. And this was in the community. I believe it was in the city of Tela, as a message that we are not going to allow these things to go on. We have to protect their rights.

MR. SANCHEZ: Good afternoon. My name is Christian Sanchez. I am a business person in the construction sector in this area. I emigrated 18 years ago due to the illness that besets

Honduras, and that still effects us, which is the indigestion that we're sick of as Honduran citizens.

Well, all of these people emigrate. As a taxpayer in this country -- I've been in this country for 18 years, I ask myself how you and your delegation can come here and ask for cooperation in this country, when it is known that your party, the National party and the Liberal party, obviously, for decades, have distributed among yourselves what this country has given you.

So, my question is this: With what dignity do you come here to ask us to contribute to you, when it is known that corruption is found, especially in the two traditional political parties, the National party and the Liberal party, and you're all a network of families related to one another?

PRESIDENT HERNÁNDEZ: Christian, I would coin the phrase that Honduras is changing. And I'm not going to answer for what's happened in the past, but I will answer today. Well, the Minister of Finance -- I asked him, how are we going to finance these projects? You know we have to finance them. And he said, President, it's simple. Today, those who lend money to us, for example, the European Investment Bank is now lending to Honduras. Before, it did not make loans to Honduras.

And today, we can choose which bank to turn to, because they have more trust in us. The level of tax collect has increased 22 percent in -- our tax revenues have increased 22 percent in just two years. What before was known as the millennium account, which was an arrangement established with the United States, because Honduras had an opportunity to improve in certain indices, and this funded very interesting projects.

Well today, that same arrangement is what we're using for all public works. Yesterday, I was looking at the woman who is the president of Transparency International, who signed the first agreement with the country of any country in the world. And she said we're going forward. And she said, "President, I congratulate you, because this is a major commitment, what you're signing here."

And in light of what one of your officials just said here, in the private sector, we've also had serious problems. But today, I see more and more people coming and trusting in the country. Many thought that there was going to be no struggle against the untouchables in the drug trafficking business, who have their contacts here, who distribute drugs here on their behalf.

Well, they're now being put in prison in Honduras, and here, as well. So, within a short time, my aspiration is for you to share with me the observation that Honduras is changing, and we're

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headed down the right path. In the meantime, I respect your discomfort, which has always been my own in the face of these things.

MS. LOPEZ-AGUILAR: Thank you, Mr. President, for being here today. My name is Fernanda Lopez-Aguilar, and I represent the (Inaudible) Honduras Movement and the (foreign language). And my question is more to the point of Alliance for Prosperity and the conditions being placed currently by the Senate and Congress on the monies that are going to be sent to the Northern Triangle.

So, as you may know by now, I imagine, the House of Representatives is looking to create more conditions through which they might be able to suspend aid. And they're looking into the possibility of creating conditions that include you know, improving upon the human rights situation, which is pretty dire right now. And they're not going to go ahead and give the money to Honduras or to the Northern Triangle, unless these conditions are met.

And I know this, because I'm lobbying for it. So, I guess my question to you is, why has the International Commission Against Impunity and Corruption, which 20 weeks -- which we have been clamoring now for like 20 weeks in Honduras -- why has that not resonated with the current regime? And yeah, on behalf of civil society, the Honduran civil society and the (Inaudible) movement, why have we been protesting for 20 weeks for this international commission, which has proven to be very effective, to no avail, to the point where now I have to be in D.C. to articulate my concerns to the congressmen and woman.

PRESIDENT HERNÁNDEZ: Thank you, Fernanda. We launched, as you know, and we just repeated this at the OAS, a dialogue without conditions and a broad dialogue, so that everyone could participate. Some decided to participate in the first stage, others -- or all of the different sectors who wanted to participate, participated when John Delio, OAS facilitator came, and he heard, together with his staff, different points of view.

And finally, they forwarded the proposal, which today, they just made official. And I said it when Secretary Almagro came, and also, the facilitator, John Delio, when they came -- I said to them, we're going to respect what emerges from that proposal. And in effect, that is what we are doing.

I believe that there is something fundamentally important in all of this, which is that we not only have the support of independent jurists and prosecutors, which is so fundamental in this struggle,



but also, that the Honduran institutions became stronger and stronger, even more robust and effective.

Because otherwise, what will happen? The foreigner comes, does his or her work, leaves the country, and we end up with a serious problem of lack of established institutions. I repeat, if there's any reason -- if for some reason or another, the United States cannot put in the resources that President Obama has indicated, \$1 billion, well, \$1 would be enough.

We are building a new system, and we believe that for example, European cooperation, which is extremely diligent in looking into all of these details, like Transparency International, while it's trusting in the proposal -- Switzerland -- or Sweden, rather, Colombia, which has undergone such a difficult situation, perhaps similar or worse than our own, also.

So, of course, our aspiration is for the United States to do so, as well. But if it doesn't, other countries will, so long as it's in the framework of institutional strengthening, having independent, effective institutions that are robust and that respect, which is so important, despite the asymmetries.

Because, I repeat, my country may be humble and small, but something that I would like each of us to have is dignity. And that can be built over time. And that is what it's about. We have clear examples. For example, in the case of the dry corridor, (foreign names) -- going through the central part of the country to the western region, all of that is the area that has been most impacted by lack of rainfall. That is why it's called the dry corridor.

And in my administration, we have signed what is called the Alliance for the Dry Corridor. And it's striking to see how, using AID, World Bank, European Union resources, as well as funds from Canada, and we, who are the main investor as the government, we're bringing about extraordinary transformation in people's lives, where people are not just producing for family consumption, but also, to sell, as well.

And soon, in Central America, we're going to become one of the biggest food producers. And before, we were one of the most dependent of the Central American countries. But, with people who are in the field who we're monitoring and we're working together. And here, I also understand that there may well be political and ideological positions which are election related, and you have to understand that that's the way it is. That's how it is in democracy, be it in the United States, in Honduras, in any part of the world. That part of the essence of democracy. We always have to look at one another with respect,

as should be the case as among human beings.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Well, I think we've reached the end of the time, Mr. President. Thank you very much for being with us. We're most grateful. I would ask everyone in the public to please remain seated while the presidential delegation steps out. I would be most grateful.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

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Expires: November 30, 2016