

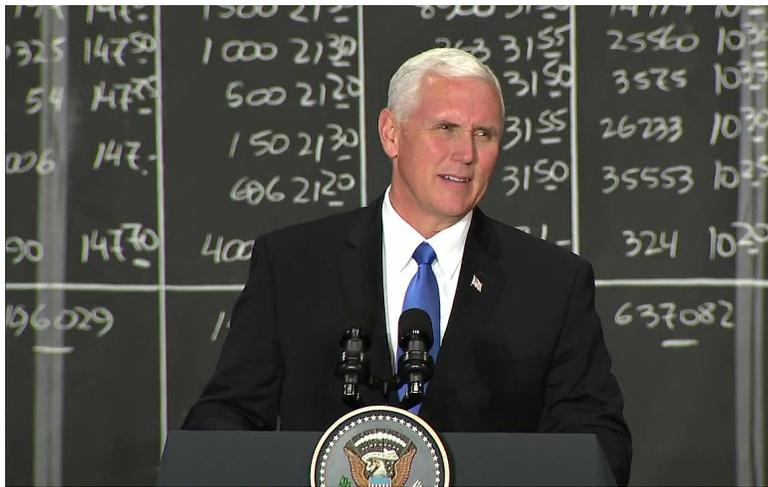


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Mike Pence

Address to Argentine and Latin American Business Community

delivered 15 August 2017, Buenos Aires, Argentina



[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

Thank you, Chargé Cooney, Minister Faurie, Hector Orlando, elected officials, distinguished leaders in the business community, and honored guests. It is my great honor -- and a great honor to my wife and I -- to be here today at the Buenos Aires Stock Exchange. Thank you for such a warm welcome, for both of us.

In fact, with that rousing round of applause, would you mind welcoming my wife of 32 years, the Second Lady of the United States of America? My wife Karen will be joining your First Lady later today, and she's already been enjoying the extraordinary experience of healthcare for children here in Buenos Aires, earlier today.

This is a historic moment of progress in Argentina and in freedom-loving countries across Latin America. And I'm grateful that each of you would take time to be with us today. And I bring greetings from the leader of the free world, the President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump.



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The President personally sent me here as the first member of our Administration to visit South America, as a sign of our commitment to Latin America.

Our Western Hemisphere is a key priority for our Administration. Our values are the same, our interests are intertwined, and our futures are forever linked. And today, together, we have a historic opportunity for progress, from South America to Central America, all across North America, and I'm here to speak about that today.

Over the course of this week, I'm visiting many of the United States' strongest allies and partners in South and Central America, including Colombia, Argentina, Chile, and Panama. And as I've already seen, the Americas are filled with diverse cultures, distinctive traditions, unique identities beyond number. But we are, all of us, bound by geography, by history, and we are bound together by the enduring aspiration for freedom.

Freedom is more than just the heritage of the people of my country. It is the birthright and the legacy of all the peoples of this new world. We descend from the same pioneer spirit that moved our forebears to leave their families and homes and sail across the sea, all for the chance to build new lives in this new world.

Our similar struggles for independence weave our different threads together in the same tapestry of freedom. In the long annals of liberty, names like San Martín, Martí, and Bolívar stand with Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln -- great leaders in the cause of freedom.

It was more than 240 years ago that the founders of the United States pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor to advance their God-given right to liberty. And it was only a few decades later that the forefathers of this country banded together to claim their inalienable right to freedom.

My nation's Declaration of Independence was followed only 40 years later, almost to the day, by Argentina's Acta de Independencia. And today, allow me to congratulate the Argentinian people as you, last year, celebrated 200 years of independence.

Ever since that day, the people of this nation, and this hemisphere, have strived for freedom and seized the chance to chart their own future. And that future is what I came here today to discuss.



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As President Trump has said, the United States of America seeks, in his words, a future "in our hemisphere...where the people of each country can live out their [own] dreams" -- a future of freedom, security, and prosperity for us all. The United States has always cared deeply about the progress of our neighbors across the Americas.

Under President Donald Trump, the United States will always put the security and prosperity of America first. But as I hope my presence here today demonstrates, America first does not mean America alone. A secure Latin America means a more secure United States of America. A prosperous Latin America means a more prosperous United States of America. And the advance of freedom and democracy in Latin America benefits the cause of freedom everywhere. Because when free peoples stand together, there's nothing we can't accomplish.

And today, the winds of progress are at our back. From Mexico to Argentina, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and in essentially every nation in between, the leaders of this region are taking historic action to improve the lives of their citizens and realize the hopes and dreams of generations past and present.

And under President Trump, the United States is proud to work with you -- shoulder-to-shoulder and hand-in-hand -- for the benefit of our people, of this region, and the benefit of the world.

The tasks before us today are perhaps summarized in three ways:

First, we must build on the bold steps taken by leaders across this region to open new pathways to prosperity for all of our citizens and a greater opportunity for commerce.

Second, we must continue to strengthen our collective security, by confronting those who threaten our people and our very way of life.

And finally, we must jealously protect the time-honored values that unite us, and stand together to reject all who would discard freedom and democracy for tyranny and dictatorship.

But everything begins with prosperity. Economic growth is the essential ingredient for success in the United States, as well as Latin America. As President Trump often says, "It's all about growth."



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A growing economy raises living standards of living and allows anyone who wants to strive and climb the ladder of success. A growing economy inspires innovators and entrepreneurs to move a society forward. A growing economy strengthens communities and gives families a reason to put down roots that over time will blossom and bear fruit for generations to come. And a growing economy empowers those in poverty to lift themselves upward toward prosperity.

Under the leadership of President Donald Trump, the American economy is growing again. Under this President's leadership, we've been rolling back excessive regulation, unleashing American energy, and laying the groundwork for historic tax relief -- all of which has renewed American confidence, higher than it's been in decades. It spurred the creation of more than one million new jobs this year alone, and seen the wealth of Americans on our stock market rise by trillions of dollars.

Under President Donald Trump, the American economy is back. And our trade is booming. Last year, the United States' two-way trade within the Western Hemisphere totaled \$1.6 trillion, and the United States is the largest trading partner for nearly two-thirds of the hemisphere. In fact, we trade twice as much with the countries of North, Central, and South America as we do with China, and we export more to our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere than we do to all of Asia combined.

Our flourishing trade relationship is the result of many factors, but one of the most important is the large number of U.S. free-trade agreements that facilitate commerce across this region.

The United States has free trade agreements with 12 countries in the Americas, and they've enhanced our commercial ties with the region, integrated our economies, and aligned our standards and regulatory practices in ways that have created growth.

But, as President Trump often says, every deal can be improved. And under his leadership, the United States is reviewing our existing trade agreements and negotiating new bilateral trade agreements to ensure a level playing field for the American people.

President Trump has made it clear: In his words, "We will uphold our values, we will defend our workers, and we will protect the innovations, creations, and inventions that power our magnificent country."



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The United States wants more trade with Latin America and with the wider world. But under President Donald Trump, we'll not only have free trade, but we'll have fair trade.

To this end, yesterday President Trump directed the U.S. Trade Representative to determine whether to investigate China regarding the theft of American intellectual property. And that investigation has already begun. And just tomorrow, the United States will join with Canada and Mexico to formally begin the process of modernizing the North American Free Trade Agreement for the 21st Century.

But for commerce to expand, the United States needs to share our tradition of entrepreneurship, innovation, and transparency with Latin America -- because we know, when Latin America embraces economic reforms, Latin America succeeds, and so does the United States. And Latin America is succeeding, because the citizens of Latin America are choosing the same path that has made America prosperous.

Never before in the history of our hemisphere have we seen such a concerted effort to enact the market-based reforms that open up opportunity, unleash prosperity, and empower the region's citizens to chart their own futures.

Simply look here in Argentina. President Macri's leadership has brought a bold reform agenda to Argentina -- an agenda that is transforming Argentina's economy at home and restoring its reputation around the world.

As President Trump said to President Macri in their meeting in Washington, D.C., the United States of America applauds the political and economic reforms that President Macri and his government have brought here to Argentina.

Over the past 18 months, President Macri has taken important steps to break down barriers to growth, eased currency controls, reentered global capital markets, cut import and export tariffs, modernized labor rules, and invested in much-needed infrastructure.

And today, President Macri and I continued discussions on expanding agricultural trade between the United States and Argentina. And I can tell you, we are very close to completing an agreement that will benefit American pork producers and Argentinian consumers to strengthen the trade relationship between both our countries.



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The truth is, Argentina has reemerged as a leading example of the productive and positive future that Latin America is building for itself. Furthermore, under President Macri's leadership, Argentina is once again a leader on the global stage.

Later this year, Argentina will host the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, and next year Argentina will assume the G-20's presidency.

In a very real sense, when it comes to Latin America, the model of Argentina is the future. But, fortunately, Argentina is not alone in pursuing pro-growth reforms across this region. The good news is that similar efforts are underway across Latin America, and the people of the region are choosing the path of progress and economic reform.

In Colombia, where I was yesterday, the government is leveraging peace to bring economic opportunity to the areas that have lacked it for decades.

In Brazil, structural reforms to the labor, fiscal, and pension systems are building a more open, integrated, and competitive economy.

And when I met with leaders of the Northern Triangle nations of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador in June, at the inaugural Conference on Prosperity and Security, those leaders all committed to improve the economic climate through historic regulatory and tax reforms.

Latin America is on the move. And as all these nations continue to break down barriers, root out corruption, and unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of their citizens, the progress will be a win-win for the United States of America and all our neighbors in Latin America.

The truth is, U.S. businesses, like many of those gathered here, are already responding to these actions with renewed confidence and investment, supporting jobs in the United States and across Latin America.

Here in Argentina, Viacom recently acquired the major broadcaster, Telefe -- one of the first major deals inked under President Macri's leadership. In the *Vaca Muerta* unconventional gas field, American companies, like Exxon and Chevron, are working together with their Argentinian counterparts to unleash affordable and abundant energy that will drive a growing economy.



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And beyond Argentina, U.S. companies are investing in Latin America like never before. Cargill recently announced major investments in Colombia, where it now employs some 5,000 people. In Panama, Caterpillar helped cut the new channel for the Panama Canal -- that great artery of commerce, so central to the prosperity of our hemisphere and the world.

Such investments, in a multitude of industries, will only grow as Argentina and Latin America continue to enact competitive, growth-oriented reforms. And this will further strengthen the economies of all of our nations, and it will strengthen the commerce and the significant trade relationships that we already enjoy.

Our Administration welcomes these economic reforms and we welcome the economic progress of Latin America. But we must never forget that security is the foundation of our prosperity, and here, too, the United States will not waver in our efforts to ensure the safety and security of the American people and the Western Hemisphere as a whole.

From North Korea to Iran, the threats to our global security are numerous and growing. And no threat is more widespread than that of global terrorism.

Argentina is no stranger to this enemy. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the bombing at the Israeli Embassy, which was followed two years later by the AMIA bombing -- the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of Argentina.

These two attacks claimed the lives of 114 innocents. And earlier today, it was my great honor to visit a memorial to these victims in the Metropolitan [Cathedral], and breathe a prayer and read a verse in their memory.

The threat of terror still looms across our hemisphere, and we will stand together to confront it and protect our people from it.

And so, too, must we stand together to confront the most immediate threat to Latin America's security and prosperity -- the menace of transnational crime.

The human cost of crime is incalculable in destroyed lives and in violence, but the economic cost is well-known. By some estimates, transnational crime now consumes up to 3 percent of the gross domestic product of South America and the Caribbean. In some Central American countries, the damage is more than double.



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The cancer of crime and corruption will continue to stifle Latin America's progress so long as it exists. So every nation must redouble our efforts to end the scourge of corruption and transnational crime. And the United States of America will continue to partner with our neighbors in the region to achieve it.

The newly launched Argentina-United States Dialogue on Illicit Finance and Cyber Policy Working Group is helping us achieve this goal. And the United States is proud to assist President Macri in his campaign to crack down on drug trafficking and strengthen border controls.

The United States will also continue to work with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay to improve our intelligence-sharing cooperation to disrupt security threats.

And to the north, in Colombia, the Caribbean, and Central America, the United States is continuing to coordinate with our partners to staunch the flow of illegal drugs, dismantle trafficking networks, and remove the cocaine fields that are the source of so much misery in our country and in countries across this region.

Latin America has come so far in prosperity and security -- because today you share with the United States, in so many ways, in so many places, a renewed commitment to freedom, to democracy, and to the rule of law. These values are the foundation of a brighter future that we all seek, and so they will always be the foundation.

But while so much of Latin America has traveled the road to economic freedom and growth, in Venezuela, sadly, we're seeing tragedy. We're seeing the tragedy of tyranny play out before our eyes in our own hemisphere.

As President Trump has said, "The [Venezuelan] people are suffering and they are dying."

They're experiencing grinding poverty; families can't find the food and medicine they need to survive; innocent children are literally perishing every day from starvation and deprivation.

Just yesterday, my wife and I spent time with refugees of this crisis in a small church in Cartagena. We prayed with these families that are fleeing violence, and poverty, and starvation.



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We spoke to a grandmother who, just last week, reclaimed her grandchildren from Venezuela. And with tears in her eyes, she told us of how children would have to rise at four in the morning in Venezuela to get a ticket, and then wait all day to use that ticket in the afternoon to buy one piece of bread. It's extraordinary to think, in a nation that should well be one of the wealthiest nations in Latin America, to hear of such deprivation and poverty. It just broke our hearts.

Today, the once-free people of Venezuela are being forced to endure that fate by the brutality of the Maduro regime. No free people has ever chosen to walk the path from prosperity to poverty. No free people has ever chosen to turn what was once, and should still be, one of South America's richest nations into one of its poorest and most corrupt.

The Maduro regime has ignored and undermined their National Assembly. They've stifled the voices of a free press and the people alike. They've imprisoned countless political opponents. And more than 130 brave Venezuelans have died in a desperate fight to restore their freedom.

Venezuela is sliding into dictatorship. And as President Donald Trump has said, the United States will not stand by as Venezuela crumbles. We will continue to stand with free nations across our hemisphere until democracy is restored for the Venezuelan people.

A failed state knows no boundaries. A failed state in Venezuela will drive more illegal drug trafficking with its murderous criminal consequences radiating outward across Latin America and into the United States. A failed state in Venezuela will drive more illegal migration, compromising our borders, and damaging our economies. And ultimately, a failed state in Venezuela will endanger the security, prosperity, and wellbeing of all of us who call the Western Hemisphere home.

President Trump and I are grateful. We're grateful for Argentina's leadership in condemning the Maduro regime. We applaud the measures President Macri has taken to track down corrupt Venezuelan officials.

We're also grateful that Argentina voted with Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay to suspend Venezuela from *Mercosur* until democracy is restored.



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And we gratefully recognize Argentina for joining 11 other countries to sign the Lima Declaration just last week -- sending a powerful message that the free peoples of the Americas will stand with the Venezuelan people and we will stand up to their oppressors.

President Trump and the United States calls on all of our neighbors across Latin America to do more. And you all can be assured: The United States of America will continue to bring the full measure of American economic and diplomatic power to bear until democracy is restored in Venezuela.

As President Trump said just a few days ago, "We have many options for Venezuela." But the President also remains confident that, working with all of our allies across Latin America and across the wider world, that we can achieve a peaceable solution restoring democracy and ending the crisis facing the people of Venezuela. But it will take all of us to do it.

And be assured: What we do to see democracy restored in Venezuela, we will do together. The United States of America has already issued three rounds of targeted sanctions, including new sanctions just last week, against Maduro and his inner circle. We will continue to act until the Maduro regime restores democracy, holds free and fair elections, releases all of its political prisoners, and ends the repression of the Venezuelan people.

We do this because it's right. The Venezuelan people deserve democracy. We do this because, as President Trump has said, a "stable and peaceful Venezuela is in the best interest of our entire hemisphere."

We all live in the same neighborhood. We succeed when our neighbors succeed. We struggle when our neighbors struggle. And so we will continue to act, together, to support the people of Venezuela in their fight for freedom.

And today, I say with confidence: The Venezuelan people will be free once more, for here in the new world, freedom always wins.

As Argentina knows, freedom is a precious gift that demands constant protection, steady vigilance. And today, as in ages past, the United States will be unwavering in our resolve to uphold freedom in this hemisphere.



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Freedom has always been and will always be the source of our strength, the summit of the national life of our country, the countries across this region. And it's the very heart of who we are. And as freedom continues its advance across this hemisphere, President Trump and I know it will bring us to new heights of security and prosperity for all our people, and new heights of accomplishment that will continue to be the marvel of the world.

We stand here today at the dawn of a new era in the new world, and the people of this hemisphere have a choice to make. It's the same choice that has faced us every day since two centuries and more ago of this nation's birth, and more than that, of my nation's birth. It's a choice that always demands our action and always commands our future.

And so I say to our neighbors and friends across this hemisphere: Let us here, in the Western Hemisphere, always choose freedom. Let us always choose democracy. Let us always stand with those who stand with these timeless values.

Choose the path that America has taken throughout our history. Choose the path that Argentina is now taking with renewed vigor once again. It's bringing this country and other Latin American countries to all new heights.



We need only remember the words of San Martín, whose mausoleum I had the privilege of visiting earlier today. As the great hero of liberty in this land tells us, "Let us be free -- for the rest matters not."



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My friends, the future of freedom beckons us all. And with confidence in the good people of the United States, of Argentina, and freedom-loving people all across Latin America, with firm reliance on the deep wellspring of faith in almighty God, with such a rich tradition in all the nations across this new world -- I know we will meet that glorious future of freedom together, as partners and as friends.

Thank you.

May God bless you.

May God bless all of Latin America.

And may God bless the United States of America.