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**Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jay Carney, Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs
Daniel Restrepo and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

MR. CARNEY: And there's plenty of opportunity in the Americas. These are growing economies. These are dynamic societies. These are countries that are on the rise in many respects. And again, it's very much in the United States' interest, in the hemisphere's interest, for us to signal that we're committed to the region and that we not, again, **cede [see], again, our own hemisphere which is incredibly important to us in terms of, again, not taking advantage of the potential of those relationships.

10:06 A.M. EDT

MR. CARNEY: Good morning. Today, following on the off-camera, on the record gaggle we did yesterday, we are doing the same thing today to discuss another portion or the other aspect of this trip the President is taking to Latin America. To brief you today I have on my right Dan Restrepo, who is the Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere at the National Security Council; on my left, Ben Rhodes, the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications. And I will turn it over to them.

I will, again, as yesterday -- I'll be briefing in just a few short hours, so if we could keep questions this morning to these gentlemen on the topic of the trip. And then we can -- I'll be taking your questions in just a few hours. Thank you.

MR. RHODES: Thanks, Jay. I'll just start by going through the schedule for the trip, then turn it over to Dan for some introductory comments, and we'll take some

questions.

We start in Brasilia. We arrive Saturday morning. I'd just echo what Mike Froman said yesterday, which is that there is an enormous economic potential to the relationship that is a core part of what we're doing here. Brazil is a vastly growing export partner to the United States, a vastly growing emerging market, so as a part of the President's continued effort to deepen our ties with emerging markets around the world, Brazil is a critical partner and critical stop on this trip.

We will begin after an arrival ceremony Saturday morning with a bilateral meeting with President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil. This is obviously -- she's in the first several months of her presidency. She has been very positive about the type of relationship that she wants to pursue with the United States. So we see an enormous convergence of interest between Brazil and the United States and an enormous moment of opportunity here between a new President, again, who's demonstrated an interest in working closely with the United States on shared interests. So the two Presidents will have the opportunity to discuss a range of those issues. And we can get into that a little bit today.

After the bilateral meeting, the two Presidents will have a press conference. Then the President will drop by and attend a portion of a CEO Forum meeting. This is a standing U.S.-Brazil CEO Forum. I think Mike may have talked a little bit about it yesterday. Dan can as well. Following that meeting, there will an official lunch hosted by President Dilma. Following the lunch, the President will deliver remarks at the business summit that is being hosted throughout the day.

There will be a series of sessions without the President, and then he will address the summit towards its conclusion in the afternoon. Again, that will be an opportunity for him to describe the economic potential of the relationship, the growing export relationship that we have with Brazil, and areas of cooperation that we can pursue in sectors like energy and infrastructure where we've, again, had an emerging relationship with the Brazilians. That concludes the portion of the day on Saturday.

Sunday, we'll be in Rio. In Rio the -- I should add, actually, the First Lady's component of the schedule, too. So I'll just do that as we're moving forward. The First Lady is traveling with the President. In addition to joining him at some of these official events, she'll also be doing a series of solo events on the trip. So those of you who

have traveled with us in the past know that she's extraordinarily popular overseas and is a huge asset to the United States in terms of her ability to reach out to the peoples of these countries.

On this trip, she'll continue her efforts to engage young people around the world, particularly from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds, and she'll continue to carry her message of encouraging young people to excel academically, to serve their communities, and to take an active role in building stronger ties between their countries and the United States.

In Brasilia, on Saturday, the First Lady will attend a cultural performance with young Brazilians, many from disadvantaged backgrounds who have participated in U.S.-sponsored exchanges and leadership development programs. So that will be her independent event in Brasilia. This follows on, in January 2010, when the First Lady met with more than 30 Brazilian youth who are participating in the State Department's Youth Ambassadorship Program here at the White House. So that's her independent event on Saturday.

On Sunday, in Rio, the President will start the day by visiting the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio, which I think is the familiar image that many of us have when we think of the city of Rio. Following that, he'll deliver a speech. This will be a speech really directed at the Brazilian people. Just as we have a set of shared interests that he'll be discussing on Saturday, we also have a set of deeply shared values with the Brazilians. They are a democracy; they are a diverse country; they are a country that has pursued social inclusion -- so many of the values that we hold dear as Americans are shared by Brazilians, and so the President will be able to speak to that.

As a core component of the kind of relationship we're building with Brazil, again, we believe that it's a relationship guided by shared interests, a rapidly emerging power on the global stage, and we believe we can have a particularly close relationship with Brazil because of the shared values that we have. So his speech will focus on that.

There may be additional events on that Sunday, but that's what we have locked in today.

Following his time in Rio, we'll move on to Santiago, Chile. Again, Dan can speak a little bit about this, but Chile is obviously a very close and longstanding partner of the

United States. It's a country that we have a free trade agreement with. It's a country we participate with in a range of key interests for us. They've been, for instance, a critical partner on nuclear security -- one of the President's key initiatives -- and through the APEC -- Asia-Pacific forum that the President, as you know, has spent a lot of time seeking to reengage and shape. They're a partner of ours in the Trans-Pacific Partnership within APEC, the trade framework that we're pursuing. So Chile is a country that, again, we will have the opportunity to advance a number of bilateral issues with on this trip.

After an arrival ceremony, the two Presidents will have a bilateral meeting. After the bilateral meeting they'll have a press conference. Following that press conference, the President will give a speech in Santiago. This speech will be essentially the speech where he lays out the administration's approach on Latin America.

And I do want to underscore that this trip really, if you look at the President's first term -- we obviously attended the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad-Tobago in 2009; intend to do so next year. But this is really the signal trip in terms of his Latin America policy in the first term. And there's great interest, of course, in the region in the type of leadership that the American -- that the United States is pursuing. So the President will have an opportunity in this speech to speak to the whole region and to lay out what we're doing in a number of key areas, such as energy cooperation, citizen security, economic growth and development, and democracy and human rights.

I'd also add that Chile and Brazil are two countries that, again, have pursued in the past successful transitions from more authoritarian governments to democracy. So given current events, some of us who've spoken to you about models of transitions that have succeeded in the past as it relates to countries like Egypt and Tunisia have cited, for instance, Chile, a country that went from a military government very successfully to a democratic government and that has thrived in the years since. So he'll have a chance to speak to our shared values as well.

After that speech, he has an official dinner that's being hosted by President Pinera. And then that concludes the program in Santiago.

The following day, March 22nd, we will move on to El Salvador. This is an important stop as well. When you look at the trip that we're taking, we're going to Brazil, a key partner in the region and the global stage -- of course, a Portuguese-

speaking nation. We're going to Chile, a key partner in the region as well, and of course a Spanish-speaking nation. We believe that Central America, of course, is a very important sub-region of the Americas and one that the United States has a longstanding relationship with, as well as substantial -- obviously Central American immigrant populations as well. So we felt it was important to include a stop in Central America.

And we've developed a good working relationship with El Salvador. They're one of the partners within our development and growth policy, and they're a country that we cooperate with on a range of issues related to economic growth and security, as well. So the President will meet with President Funes of El Salvador, and he'll have a bilateral meeting, followed by a press conference. So I'd just note for your planning purposes, we'll be having three press conference with each of the leaders. So there will be that opportunity.

Then that night the President will have an official dinner with President Funes. Then the last day, Wednesday before we come back, the President will have an opportunity to tour the National Cathedral in San Salvador and, at the National Cathedral, to pay respects at the tomb of Father Oscar Romero, who, of course, is a hero to many people in the Americas. Then following that he will have a chance to tour -- to visit some Mayan ruins before returning to the United States.

Let me just fill out the First Lady's schedule before turning it over to Dan.

In Santiago, the First Lady will join the Chilean First Lady for a tour of the -- Dan can do this better than me, but the Museo Interactivo Mirador that will -- she will tour this museum. It will include performances for the two First Ladies by Chilean young people.

Following this visit the First Lady will deliver remarks to students at a local school. It's a school that was built in 2010, and it will be graduating its first class of high-school-age students this year. She will be able to speak personally in these remarks about her own upbringing and her pursuit of education and the importance of education, and she will share the view of the administration that education is key to a strong economy, and preparing young people is of course the key to how our countries will succeed going forward.

Many of the graduates in this class I just highlighted will be the first in their family to pursue higher education, so she'll underscore the importance of their achievement. And the school also participates in what is a Chilean equivalent of the Teach for America program, which was established by young Chileans who attended graduate school in the United States and learned about Teach for America. So it fits with her service message as well.

And I'd add education is an area where, in the President's own speech in Santiago, he'll be able to discuss how the United States can deepen our educational ties and exchanges with Latin American nations.

And then finally, in San Salvador, the First Lady will meet with young people from Superate, an education and skills development program for disadvantaged young people -- so, again, continuing a theme of her engagement throughout the trip, of engaging young people with a message of education and service.

So, with that, I'll turn it over to Dan.

MR. RESTREPO: Thanks, Ben. To just give a bit of a quick overview in addition to what Ben has laid out -- from the earliest days of the administration the President has been engaged in creating a new relationship with the countries throughout the Americas. Less than a hundred days into the administration he went to the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, where he met with all of the leaders in the Western Hemisphere. There he laid out a vision of working as equal partners based on mutual respect and shared values, and committed himself and the administration to getting to work on the challenges of today.

This trip gives us an opportunity to highlight the work that has been done and will continue to be done with a very important set of global-regional partners and leaders -- with Brazil, Chile, and El Salvador. Each of these leaders that the President is visiting are ones that he has met with in the past -- President Rousseff before she was President, both in the context of the Brazil-U.S. CEO Forum, when they were here last year, and also in her role as chief of staff to President Lula in Copenhagen, among other places, the President had an opportunity, and at the last G20 as President-elect, had an opportunity to begin a conversation with her and discussions with her as to how we can deepen and broaden our relationship across a whole set of issues in the bilateral, in the regional and the global context.

President Pinera also is someone the President has met with in connection with the Nuclear Security Summit held last year here in town. Chile will be picking up the regional ball on that issue by holding a follow-up seminar for countries in Latin America in April as a formal follow-up to the Nuclear Security Summit, providing -- and the two Presidents will have an opportunity to discuss that issue, discuss cooperation on disaster response -- something that Chile, because of its geographic location and history, is well versed in. And obviously they, too, last year had a significant earthquake and tsunami, about 13 months ago.

And President Funes, who visited the President here last March, is another leader who is very much pragmatically focused on solving the challenges facing his population today; challenges that are very common in the Americas -- particularly Central America -- of finding ways to enhance sustainable economic growth and to address the challenges of citizen security caused by transnational criminal organizations.

This gives the President -- again, it gives the President the opportunity to underscore working in partnership with these countries -- with the region writ large, a region that he has been personally and the administration has been engaged in at the highest levels throughout his presidency, in terms of the interactions he had bilaterally with leaders here in Washington, the G20 members that he visits with on the margins of the G20 -- be they from Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, APEC members, as Ben mentioned, also from the region to include Peru, Chile and Mexico.

So it's an opportunity to continue pushing that work forward, highlighting the importance of the region, and also highlighting the restoration of American influence and appeal in the Americas, and the effect that that has had in diminishing the space for those who try to make a living politically on an anti-American sentiment. That space has been reduced significantly over the course of the last couple of years, and this trip provides an opportunity to continue that; to show that the U.S. and President Obama are engaged in helping address the basic challenges facing people in the Americas today and is willing, ready, and able to engage constructively with the leaders in the region who are similarly positioned to focus on the challenges of today and not outmoded ideological arguments or outmoded ideological debates.

So with that, I think we should just turn it over to questions.

MR. CARNEY: So we'll do this as I did yesterday. I'll call on some folks. Ben.

Q Thanks. Two quick questions. My first is to follow up on the last point you were making, Dan, about the chance to highlight the diminished space there for some of these outdated arguments. Can you elaborate on kind of what you mean by that and what you think the President would like to highlight? And Ben, also -- or actually, for either of you -- should we think about this as a trip where there will be concrete deliverables in addition to the themes you want to highlight?

MR. RHODES: I'll say a couple words and then turn to Dan. I think on your second question, it's both, in that it is a relationship-building trip with key partners. And again, I think that sometimes people overlook, when they kind of look at the scope of challenges in foreign policy, that there is really no region in the world that we're more deeply engaged in than the Americas in many respects, given the overlap of populations, given the depth of the economic relationship, given that this is in our neighborhood, and, again, given the very deep ties between the United States and these countries in terms of building democracy and security.

So this is -- there's an overarching message that these relationships are critically important to having a hemisphere that works effectively on shared challenges -- that is enhancing economic growth, which is critical to us, of course, because as these economies develop, they're turning into substantial export markets for us as well -- and, frankly, to address global challenges. Brazil is on the U.N. Security Council. They're a country we cooperate with in many global forums like the G20 and others. Chile is a member of APEC. So I think in the first instance, advancing these relationships will allow us to better deal with both the hemispheric challenges we have and get better cooperation on the international stage.

At each stop there are a series of concrete steps and agreements that will be reached on the types of issues that we pursue in the Americas -- issues related to energy, issues related to economic growth and security. I think in many respects, though, it's in the continuum of our relations, given that these are countries we already have deep ties with. So they're not transformative agreements and deliverables. Rather they are a part of the ongoing effort to build deeper relationships.

In particular, I think Mike Froman highlighted yesterday, in Brazil, we look at Brazil and see an enormous potential for economic growth and a deepening economic

cooperation. And so a lot of what we're going to be focused on is what are the steps that need to be taken to unlock that potential. There's been great growth; there's been a doubling of exports in the last five years. But when we look at the convergence of interests we have on energy, on infrastructure, in other areas, part of what we want to be doing is opening doors for U.S. businesses to expand that type of cooperation.

So I think that will be a focus, for instance, at that business summit. And then, again, in the region, I think that the deliverables speak to the ongoing building of relationships -- things like, as Dan said, Chile was a key partner in nuclear security in the region, playing a leadership role, for instance, hosting the follow-on summit, but we'll be able to address a range of the issues we cooperate on.

On your second question -- and Dan should weigh in on both if he likes, of course - - but I think what's happened is, if you remember several years ago, leaders of the region, like President Chavez and others, were able to stoke and capitalize on anti-American sentiment to pursue their own agendas. I think it speaks to the fact that they no longer have nearly as much space to do that just in the amount of time you guys have spent probably paying attention to what they say.

Because the fact of the matter is, if you look at any metric in the region, President Obama is a hugely popular leader. He's a leader who has driven up by any public opinion polling that you might review the opinion of the United States and the opinion of U.S. leadership in the world. And that's important both because it makes it easier for countries to cooperate with us and to be our partner on issues that we care about. But it's also important because it shifts the dynamic in the region whereby we're not stuck in the same debate about something that happened decades ago or kind of Cold War mentalities around the nature of U.S. leadership. It's instead a forward-looking relationship between the United States and the region.

So again, I think we have vastly diminished that space. I think the opinion of U.S. leadership is up across the region. This type of trip only advances that. And again, it serves to, again, take a lot of the wind out of the sails of those who would want to capitalize on anti-American sentiment and make it more difficult for governments in the region to cooperate with us.

MR. RESTREPO: Yes, to add to that -- going back to the Summit of the Americas, where the President made very clear that he wanted to engage on the challenges of

today to help make people's lives better, the part the U.S. can play in that, and recognizing that other countries and other societies and other governments need to step up as part of that process.

I think what you're seeing increasingly throughout the region -- and you see it in the three leaders we're visiting -- are leaders who are being responsive to exactly that desire from their own populations; that they want leaders and leadership that is focused on the challenges of today and pragmatically working those challenges.

And I think one of the major reasons behind the numbers that Ben was just talking about that the President enjoys throughout the Americas is a recognition that the President is aligned with that same interest of looking how can, together, in partnership, the countries of the Americas solve the challenges that people face in their daily lives, understanding that it is not something that the U.S. will come and do for, or do to, countries in the region, but something that we will be an active partner in doing.

And that approach is actually addressing the challenges people live and making a difference in people's lives. And that's what ultimately diminishes the space available to those who are largely focused on rhetoric and trying to stoke anti-Americanism and anti-elitism, which becomes harder and harder with each passing day.

Q Two questions, both about Brazil, to both gentlemen. In the first place, can you talk a little bit more about the speech the President will deliver there, and specifically if he's going to nod to the Brazilian aspiration to get permanent representation on the U.N. Security Council? And secondly, while he's in Brazil, do you expect the President to make common cause with Brazilians over the issue of Chinese currency, which they've also complained about as being artificially too low?

MR. RESTREPO: I believe Mike Froman spoke to the second question yesterday and I'm not going to add to that. I'm going to let Mike's answer stand.

With regard to the speech, I'll turn to Ben in a moment. With regard to the question of the United Nations, obviously the President and President Rousseff will undoubtedly discuss the United Nations, the United Nations reform, the role that Brazil is playing today on the U.N. Security Council. And they will also undoubtedly discuss this in a broader context of an embrace of global architecture that reflects global realities. For

example, and as Mike noted yesterday, the prominence of the G20 as the preeminent global economic forum has given Brazil a very important seat at the table on global economic issues. Brazil has also played a role in IMF reform, where Brazil has become the tenth largest shareholder, having been a recipient not that long ago from the IMF.

So I think the conversation that they will have will be a broad conversation on the importance of ensuring effective institutions for advancing peace and security in the world, and undoubtedly the U.N. will come up in that discussion. And again, given the events of today, undoubtedly Brazil's role on the U.N. Security Council and how the U.S. and Brazil are working together in New York will be part of that conversation.

MR. RHODES: I'd just add that I think in terms of the speech, part of the message is that we very much welcome Brazil playing a substantially larger role on the global stage. This has been something that you've seen as a thread through a lot of our foreign policy, which is that we have the anchor of our engagement with the world, which is our traditional allies, our European and NATO allies, our Asian allies.

At the same time, we want to cast a wider net in terms of the partnerships we're building with emerging powers in the world, like a Brazil. At the same time, we want to reshape the international architecture to better reflect that reality, and demonstrate, again, that we are welcoming to a nation like Brazil to pursue a greater role on the world stage, particularly a nation like Brazil that shares a set of values with us.

So I think that will be part of the broader message he delivers. And the specific question of the U.N. Security Council reform I'm sure will come up in the context of the two leaders in their discussions. I don't want to get ahead of their discussions.

Q -- and Brazil's aspirations for permanent representation?

MR. RHODES: I think he'll be looking to discuss ways in which Brazil can, again, be better represented on the world stage. We've already taken a number of steps in that regard that Dan mentioned with the G20 and the IMF. And there's an ongoing discussion around Security Council reform, and we'll be discussing their ambitions in that context.

Q Dan, you were talking about how the President's visit will be one to highlight what the U.S. can do with these countries and for these countries. But there's a

different dynamic in the region -- Brazil, seventh largest economy in the world; Chile, very successful country; Latin America grew while the U.S. was and still is coming out of a recession. So how do you see the President's wiggle room in the region with that message? And how will that help counter Chavez at a moment when even if he's making as much noise as he usually does, a lot of people don't seem to be paying attention?

And second, in Chile, the speech to Latin America, will there be any mention of the free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama?

MR. RESTREPO: On your first question, that very dynamic that the Americas is a vibrant area that has very much arrived on the global stage is part of how the partnership process works, and it's part and parcel of what we've been talking about of working shared challenges in a flexible way.

For example, at the Summit of the Americas, the President laid out the proposal for the Energy and Climate Partnership of Americas. And it wasn't a traditional U.S. "we have the solution to the problem and you all are going to sign up to our way of doing it," but rather it was a proposal to "we have a set of countries facing a common challenge or a common set of challenges with different capabilities, different capacities; let us come together in different combinations to work those problems."

And we have done exactly that. And the three countries that we're visiting have been very important players in ECPA, in the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas -- Brazil obviously a world leader on biofuels and clean energy; Chile a world leader on solar energy; El Salvador has a huge geothermal energy potential and a significant mix of its energy matrix is geothermal. And those three countries and many others in the region have been coming together to work on energy efficiency, on biofuels, on solar, on the adaptation necessary to deal with the effects of climate change in the region.

I think throughout this trip you're going to see additional steps along that continuum of cooperation through the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas as demonstrative of this notion that you have a region that is a willing and capable partner -- or full of willing and capable partners -- to work on these kinds of issues, and the United States, understanding that we live in the Americas, we are part of the Americas, and need to work together to address these challenges.

With regard to the Panama and Colombia FTAs, obviously, as the President made very clear in the State of the Union, these are important agreements. We are committed to working on outstanding issues with the governments of Panama and Colombia, and hope to do so in a successful fashion that stays true to our interests and values. That's where we're focused with regard to those agreements. And that process that the President set out, that Ambassador Kirk has discussed in public, that process continues to unfold, and we're committed to working on these outstanding issues with our partners to ensure that basic labor rights are protected and the interests of American workers are, as well.

MR. CARNEY: Peter.

Q What's the status now of the U.S.-Chilean talks on nuclear energy? And to what extent has the situation in Japan rewritten the script on that issue, especially in Brazil and in Chile?

MR. RESTREPO: In both places -- in Brazil, as Ben noted, one of the issues -- and as Mike talked about yesterday -- one of the issues that will undoubtedly be part of the conversation between the Presidents is a strategic energy partnership, of how we work better together on a whole range of energy issues. And undoubtedly the issue of civilian nuclear energy will come up in the context of that discussion in Brazil, always mindful of safety and security issues.

With Chile, as I mentioned before, they are a regional leader in leading the follow-up to the Nuclear Security Summit that was held here last year. We have been in discussions with Chile as it looks at its future to ensure that we are cooperating in a fashion -- or willingness to cooperate in a fashion that takes into account building greater capacity on safety and security issues related to its civilian uses. That is a discussion that is ongoing and it is a discussion that will undoubtedly be part of the talks between President Obama and President Pinera next week.

Q And then the second part of my question, to what extent has the situation in Japan altered the script, if you will, on this issue at each stop, since it was going to be going into this a big deal?

MR. RHODES: Well, I'd just say a couple things. I think that we're obviously mindful of the security concerns in Japan. And, frankly, no country -- or few countries

are better attuned to understanding the intersection of the types of security and safety concerns, I should say, that come from earthquakes and related events than Chile, which has experienced it itself. So I think -- we have broad energy relationships with both of these countries. Nuclear is one aspect of those energy relationships. So it's certainly a part of our agenda with the two countries in the context of those energy relationships. And safety is always a part of the types of conversations we have with other countries on these issues.

So again, I think that will be part of the context for those discussions, and it's one of a longstanding and growing energy relationship. I would also add, as Dan alluded to, that Chile -- with regard to Japan -- is a nation with disaster relief experience, recent experience with a massive earthquake and tsunami, so I'm sure that Japan will come up in that context, as well.

In fact, in the Nuclear Security Summit here, Chile shipped its HEU out in the context of their earthquake. If you remember it was a somewhat extraordinary story of how they fulfilled their commitment associated with our Nuclear Security Summit of shipping their HEU out in the context of that earthquake. So safety is something that we've always been very focused on -- as well as nuclear security -- with the Chileans.

Q One other quick thing. Is the President going to see the Chilean coal miners while he's there?

MR. RHODES: We have not -- there's no particular event planned around that right now.

MR. CARNEY: Laura.

Q I have three quick questions. One is has President Obama ever been to any of these countries in his life, not just as President? You mentioned the democratic reform in Chile and South America as sort of a model for the Middle East. Will the President make that comparison explicitly? And finally, is this trip at all an effort to counteract China's growing influence in the region, or do you hope it will accomplish that?

MR. RHODES: I think, first, we can double-check it -- I don't think he's been to any of these countries, as far as I know. And I know he's looked forward to visiting the region, so I think this is the first time that he's visited these three countries. We'll let

you know if that has to be corrected, but I think that's the answer.

Second, yes, I think he will make the comparison. Again, I think part of what the President said when the first stage of the Egyptian transition was completed -- again, it being the first stage, when President Mubarak left -- is that what we've seen over the course of the last several decades is democratic transitions taking place in very different parts of the world.

So you had a democratic wave, if you will, in Latin America in the '70s and '80s. You had democratic development in Southeast Asia and in Asia. You've had, of course, the dramatic democratic transitions in Eastern Europe.

And part of the point here is that despite the difficulties associated with transitioning from a more authoritarian government to a democratic one, the world can look back and see many different models of successful transitions. You see, of course, in other parts of the world, a country like Indonesia or the Philippines that was able to successfully transition from a more military-backed government to a more democratic one.

But, again, Chile demonstrated very successfully that despite the difficulties and despite the extraordinary challenges, it is possible for a country to undergo a transition that not only leads to a more democratic country but a more successful one -- one that enjoys greater economic growth, better relations with the world and the international community.

And Brazil of course has a similar story. And President Rousseff herself represents, in many respects, the success of that transition. So I think it is something that he'll be speaking about.

On your third question, I think what I'd point out is, look, we understand that obviously China has a broad set of relationships around the world, as do we. We don't believe that it needs to be a kind of zero-sum competition in the Americas. So I'd put that aside in that respect. But I'd also say that we believe that it's imperative that the United States not disengage from these regions. There's a cost to disengagement. This has been a message I think we've delivered on why we've been so focused on Asia, for instance, and it's certainly true of Latin America, that when we disengage, our ability to advance partnerships that serve our interest suffers.

And there's plenty of opportunity in the Americas. These are growing economies. These are dynamic societies. These are countries that are on the rise in many respects. And again, it's very much in the United States' interest, in the hemisphere's interest, for us to signal that we're committed to the region and that we not, again, **cede [see], again, our own hemisphere which is incredibly important to us in terms of, again, not taking advantage of the potential of those relationships.

And the last part of that is that we also believe that we have -- and we said this, for instance, when we were in India -- we share values with these countries. And the fact that these are democracies allows us to pursue a deeper relationship than we would be able to pursue with countries that aren't democracies. Our exchanges and our engagement extends from governments to business to people-to-people. And again, having a foundation of countries with whom you share not just interest and values I think allows for greater potential in the type of relationships that we're going to be able to build.

Q In El Salvador, is the President going to talk about immigration? There's something like 1.5 million El Salvadoran immigrants in the U.S. He's called on Congress to overhaul the immigration system. Will he move the ball forward on that?

MR. RESTREPO: As you know, there's a strong connection between the El Salvadoran population in the United States. That is something that, as the President noted when President Funes was here last year, is something that has benefited both countries. And undoubtedly the issue of immigration and immigration policies will come up.

The President has made very clear his commitment to comprehensive immigration reform here, his desire and his outreach to both parties, to Republicans and Democrats alike, here to move the ball forward. In discussing this with President Funes I'm sure he'll reiterate that desire.

And another important thing that President Funes underscored when he was here and has done so on a number of occasions, as other leaders have, as well, the importance of sustainable economic growth in countries like El Salvador and addressing citizen security issues in countries like El Salvador so that the Salvadoran people can live out their dreams in El Salvador. That is important for El Salvador and would obviously have impacts on the immigration dynamic into the United States.

So that basket of issues will be part of the discussion between the two Presidents, where President Obama will underscore his commitment to moving forward to fix our broken system and his outreach to Republicans and Democrats alike in Congress to join him in addressing this important challenge that we face together.

MR. CARNEY: Yes, sir, in the striped tie.

Q Thank you.

MR. CARNEY: This is the last one, guys. We're going to have to wrap it up.

Q Will the nuclear cooperation agreement be signed or not in Chile? Because yesterday the briefing didn't make it very clear. And also whether there will be new funds for the Central America Security plan announced there. Thank you.

MR. RESTREPO: On Chile, I think we've answered. The issue of cooperation on safety and security -- nuclear safety and security is part of the bilateral dialogue between the United States and Chile. It will be part of the dialogue between the two Presidents next week in Santiago.

With regard to citizen security, we have made -- this President has made an enormous investment in a series of security partnerships in the Americas through the Merida Initiative with Mexico; through the Central America Regional Security Initiative -- CARSI-- in Central America; launching the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative -- CBSI -- at the Summit of the Americas with the countries of the Caribbean; continuing our cooperation with Colombia through CSDI -- the Colombia Strategic Development Initiative.

Those will be part of the President's message and how we work together with an increasing number of capable partners in the region to advance citizen security together -- again, not simply the U.S., the U.S. taking its responsibility, doing our part, but bringing others to the table to see how we can work on the issues of citizen security, particularly as they pertain to Central America, will be part of the President's discussion in all of this stops, not just his stop in San Salvador.

MR. CARNEY: Thank you all very much. Appreciate your time. We'll see you here in a few hours.

END

10:50 A.M. EDT

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