

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

March 6, 2007

## **Advancing The Cause Of Social Justice In The Western Hemisphere**

Today, President Bush Discussed The Administration's Efforts To Advance The Cause Of Social Justice In The Western Hemisphere. From March 8-14, President and Mrs. Bush will travel to Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico. These countries are part of a region that has taken great strides toward freedom and prosperity – raising up new democracies and bringing stability to their fiscal policies. Yet despite these advances, tens of millions in the Western Hemisphere remain stuck in poverty. The working poor of Latin America need change, and the United States is committed to helping their governments provide it.

**The President Is Committed To Helping Democracies In The Western Hemisphere:**

- Build government institutions that are fair, effective, and free of corruption;
- Meet basic needs like education, healthcare, and housing; and
- Maintain economies that make it possible for workers to provide for their families and rise in society.

### **New Initiatives For The Western Hemisphere**

**The President Announced He Will Send The USNS Comfort – A Navy Medical Ship – To Latin America And The Caribbean.** The Comfort will make port calls in Belize, Guatemala, Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname. Its doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals expect to treat 85,000 patients – and conduct up to 1,500 surgeries. The Comfort will also partner with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on a new initiative to provide oral care to the region's poor.

- **At The Same Time, Military Medical Teams Will Operate To Help Bring Treatment And Care To Other Communities.** This year, the Department of Defense and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps will partner to provide medical care through 62 Medical Readiness Training Exercises in 14 countries in the Western Hemisphere.
- **The President Also Announced A Healthcare Professional Training Center In Panama That Will Serve All Of Central America.** This Center will teach students how to be good nurses, technicians, and health care workers.

**The President Announced A New Partnership For Latin American Youth To Help Thousands More Young People Improve Their English And Have The Opportunity To Study In The United States.** This three-year, \$75 million initiative includes English language training; home-

country and U.S.-based study; helping students apply for and win scholarships; and skills development to improve students' ability to gain employment.

**The President Directed Secretary Of State Condoleezza Rice And Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson To Develop A New Initiative That Will Help U.S. And Local Banks Improve Their Ability To Extend Good Loans To Small Businesses.** Increasing access to capital throughout Latin America and the Caribbean will help its entrepreneurs create new jobs and opportunity for their fellow citizens.

**The United States Is Launching A New Effort To Help Build A Market For Affordable Housing.** Through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the U.S. has provided more than \$100 million to help underwrite mortgages to working families in Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and the countries of Central America. The U.S. will now provide an additional \$385 million to expand these programs and help put the dream of home ownership within reach of thousands more people.

**The Administration Will Convene A White House Conference On The Western Hemisphere.** This conference will bring together representatives from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, and volunteer associations to discuss more effective ways to deliver aid and build the institutions of civic society.

#### **Building Government Institutions That Are Fair, Effective, And Free Of Corruption**

**Millennium Challenge Accounts Are Providing Financial Assistance To Developing Nations That Govern Justly, Invest In Their People, And Encourage Economic Freedom.**

- President Bush worked with Congress to create the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in February 2004.
- Compact agreements between the MCC and El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua – plus a threshold agreement in Paraguay – amount to almost \$900 million in aid for these countries.
- Bolivia is eligible for compact assistance, and Peru and Guyana have been invited to participate in the MCC threshold program.
- The President's FY08 budget requests \$3 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation to continue reducing poverty around the world.

**We Are Working With Our Partners In Latin America And The Caribbean To Ensure Governments Serve All Citizens Impartially.**

- In Colombia, American foreign aid is helping train judges, prosecutors, and public defenders.
- In Villarrica, Paraguay, we funded a project setting up a website to make local government transactions public.
- In El Salvador, the United States opened an international law enforcement academy to help train law enforcement agents to combat drug lords, terrorists, criminal gangs, and human traffickers. These efforts are supported by private programs run by U.S. law schools, professional associations, and volunteer organizations.

#### **Providing Funding For Education And Health Care In Latin America And The Caribbean**

Since 2004, The U.S. Has Provided More Than \$150 Million For Education Programs In Latin America And The Caribbean. U.S.-funded education programs include:

- **Centers Of Excellence For Teacher Training (CETT) Initiative:** In 2001, President Bush announced the CETT initiative to strengthen literacy instruction across the region. Since 2002, CETT has trained nearly 15,000 teachers, and it plans to train 3,330 more in 2007. By 2009, CETT will have trained 20,000 teachers in the region, and will have improved the literacy skills of 650,000 poor and disadvantaged students.
- **The U.S. Department Of State Hemisphere-Wide English Teaching Initiative:** Launched in 2006, the initiative provides \$500,000 to fund micro-scholarships and English teaching programs, supporting English studies for nearly 12,000 students.

**Since 2001, The U.S. Has Invested Almost \$1 Billion To Improve Health Through USAID Programs In Latin America And The Caribbean.**

- **U.S. Funding For HIV/AIDS Programs In Latin America And The Caribbean Has Grown From \$22 Million In 2001 To A Planned Level Of Over \$143 Million In 2007.** Haiti and Guyana are focus countries in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). We are also supporting programs in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and a regional program in the Caribbean.

### Helping Build Economies That Allow Workers To Provide For Their Families And Rise In Society

**The United States Government Led The G-8 Debt Reduction Initiative To Provide \$4.8 Billion In Multilateral Debt Relief To Some Of The Poorest Countries In The Americas.**

**The Administration Is Implementing An Agenda To Promote Job Creation And Equal Opportunity For All Residents Of The Western Hemisphere.**

- The Administration has negotiated trade agreements with 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, with three – Peru, Colombia, and Panama – pending Congressional approval.
- In 2006, CAFTA-DR entered into force for Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. And on March 1, 2007, CAFTA-DR entered into force for the Dominican Republic.
- Countries with U.S. trade agreements in the Western Hemisphere comprise two-thirds of the region's overall GDP.
- The Administration is now working for a strong agreement in the Doha round of global trade talks that will help level the playing field for farmers, workers, and small businesses throughout the Western hemisphere.

**U.S. Assistance To Latin America And The Caribbean Extends Far Beyond Government Initiatives.**

- USAID has registered more than 300 U.S.-based non-governmental organizations working in Latin America.
- In 2005, U.S. companies invested \$353 billion in Latin America and the Caribbean. Foreign affiliates of U.S. companies have employed 1.6 million people in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.