



COLIN L. POWELL, US SECRETARY OF THE STATE
BELIZE - GUATEMALA FACILITATION PROCESS
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(11:15 a.m. EDT)

SECRETARY POWELL: Mr. Secretary General, Mr. Assistant Secretary General, Minister Shoman, Minister Orellana, Minister Perez-Cadalso, Mr. Reichler, (inaudible), Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to be here today to express America's support for the draft proposals that Belize and Guatemala have accepted to settle their long-standing territorial dispute.

The final resolution of this disagreement, which has persisted for over a century will be good for the people of Belize and for the people of Guatemala, good for the people of Central America and good for the people of our entire hemisphere. The proposals that were presented this morning are the fruit of dedicated efforts by the governments of Belize and Guatemala.

I salute the courageous leadership of Guatemala's President Portillo and Foreign Minister Orellana, and of Belize's Prime Minister Musa and Foreign Minister Shoman. Their unwavering commitment to the peaceful resolution of this dispute, once and for all, is the rock upon which these proposals were founded.

Belize and Guatemala did not labor alone. Presidents Flores and Maduro of Honduras and their Foreign Ministers were essential partners in the negotiating process. Their leadership provides a strong and welcome example of regional cooperation to solve the problems that prevent the peoples of our hemisphere from achieving their full potential. I would also like to congratulate our Security General and the Organization of American States for creating the successful process that Belize and Guatemala used to negotiate these proposals.

The Assistant Secretary General, his staff, and the two facilitators were instrumental in making the OAS process work. Indeed, the United States greatly values the OAS's growing role in helping to resolve disagreements of many kinds, including internal disputes within member countries. In this regard, we welcome the OAS's support for efforts by member-states to promote national reconciliation and dialogue, as in Venezuela and Haiti.

I would also like to recognize the Pan American Institute of Geography and History for the essential technical support it provided to the negotiations between Belize and Guatemala. And I am pleased, as well, that the United States could provide technical assistance from our United States National Imagery and Mapping Agency. The results of this broad, cooperative effort is a comprehensive and creative solution that seeks not only to answer complex legal questions, but also to address the human, environmental, geographic, and commercial problems involved in this dispute.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these proposals are another sign that our hemisphere has come of age in common commitment to peace, prosperity, and freedom. With the Inter-American Democratic Charter we approved just over a year ago, we committed ourselves to democracy as the guiding principle in our dealings, in our dealings with our people, and in our dealings with each other.

With the ongoing negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas, we have committed ourselves to breaking down trade barriers and knitting our hemisphere together into a region-wide zone of economic opportunity for all.

Now, with these proposals and our Hemisphere's support for them, we are recommitting ourselves to peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes. Some 16 disputes throughout the region, including at least five in Central America, alone, have bedeviled our hemisphere for far too long.

The acceptance of these proposals by the peoples of Belize and Guatemala will be a milestone, an example, for the region.



A final agreement will remove a chronic obstacle to economic, environmental and social development in Belize, Guatemala and their neighbors. It will open the way to more trade, more travel, more cooperation on everything from fighting drug-trafficking to preserving the environment. We have already begun the process of identifying potential US assistance for the Donor Fund to support implementation of an agreement in the hopes that one will soon be finalized. I urge the people of Belize and the people of Guatemala to review carefully the proposals and to vote wisely in the upcoming referendums. A successful agreement will serve as an inspiration to the entire region to resolve other outstanding disputes.

Each time the process works, each time a dispute is settled, our hemisphere will become a little safer, a little freer, and a little more prosperous. Thank you very much.

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