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URUGUAY: PROPOSED REMARKS TO EMBASSY STAFF

It is a great pleasure for Barbara and me to be here with you today. As you know, I was an Ambassador myself, and I remember how much work is generated by presidential visits. I want to thank all of you -- Uruguayans and Americans -- and I want you to know that your hard work is deeply appreciated.

Your work is especially important because I am the first president to visit Montevideo since President Eisenhower in 1960 and the first to visit Uruguay since President Lyndon Johnson visited Punta del Este in 1967. I have been impressed with what I've seen of Montevideo and look forward to my trip to Punta del Este.

As I prepared for my visit to Uruguay, I was struck by the many interesting parallels between my home state Texas and Uruguay. There are some differences of course. Cowboys are "gauchos", barbecues are asados, and the football is round, but both our people share the same democratic traditions and love of liberty.

I first met President Lacalle in Washington when he was President-elect and we met again during his September visit to the United States. We have an excellent working relationship. He has been a strong supporter of our Enterprise for the Americas Initiative and we appreciate the leadership role he has taken in promoting it among his Latin American colleagues.

We recognize his role in the consolidation of Democracy in the Southern Cone. I believe this visit will solidify the excellent relationship that exists not only between President Lacalle and myself, but between our two countries.

To my fellow Americans, I would like to say that you are among the best of our country and we owe you a debt of gratitude for your superb service here in Uruguay. Your willingness to travel around the world in the service of the United States, to learn new languages, and to adapt to living in a variety of different cultures is very much appreciated. Keep up the good work as you strive to ensure the continuation of our flourishing relations with Uruguay.

I want to pay my personal tribute to the Embassy's Uruguayan employees. As a former Ambassador, I know who really runs the embassy: I would like all of you to know that I have heard warm words of praise from your American colleagues for the cooperation, dedication and professionalism you bring to your work. The contributions you make are essential to the proper functioning of the embassy and, in the end, have a very important effect on the status of Uruguayan-American relations.

Finally, to all of you, Uruguayans and Americans alike, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for your hospitality, for your hard work in making this visit a success, and for your dedication and loyalty. God Bless You.