

**Peace Prize Forum
Luther College
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Dear Friends:

I am honored to participate in the inaugural session of the 1991 Peace Prize Forum. I am pleased to be before an audience that has an authentic interest in peace, especially today, when dramatic events make this subject more important than ever.

I have met with many young people during this visit to the United States. They have reminded me of the satisfaction I felt as a university professor. Young people have been the source of some of my most important decisions as a politician. My efforts to stop the war in Central America were inspired by the commitment I made to the young people of my country when I promised to keep them out of war. All leaders and governments must be inspired by the desire to avoid at all costs the deaths and crippling of young lives. I want to express my deep regret for the suffering of many of this country's families and young people because of the conflict in the Persian Gulf. I feel the same regret for every one of the soldiers and civilians that are experiencing the horrors of war.

Destruction and death. All wars can be reduced to those basic end-products, whatever their justification. Certainly, there have been just or inevitable wars. Wars undertaken by people to recover their freedom or win their independence may have been necessary. Whenever a war is fought, its advocates try to justify it by attributing it to noble objectives. However, just or unjust, necessary or unnecessary, once war begins, its objective goal is defeat, the destruction of the enemy. Parties resort to any means deemed necessary, no matter how cruel and inhuman, to achieve this end.

For that reason, despite how noble its justifications may seem, war must be prevented as often as possible. Dialogue and negotiation cannot be limited by a deadline when the beginning or continuation of war is offered as the only alternative. That basic rule must be observed in the search for peace. Those of us who have devoted our time and effort to that search know that it demands patience, perseverance, unlimited optimism and, at the risk of sounding inmodest, courage.

Courage is more easily associated with the practice of war than with the search for peace. But the courage I am speaking of has a moral and not a physical meaning. It is the courage needed to combat pressure, to resist flattery, to dominate one's own pride. It is the courage that allows us to recognize that truth is always relative and that the person who disagrees with our own beliefs is not necessarily our enemy. It is the courage we need to abandon intolerance and accept that it is possible to reach an agreement.

I was the President of Costa Rica for four years. When I took that position, I assumed specific responsibilities related to only one of the countries of Central America. However, I immediately dedicated a significant part of my energy and efforts to the search for solutions to the region's problems. This should not surprise anyone. The five Central American nations have much in common. They share a similar Pre-Columbian ancestry and the colonizing influence of Spain. The Spanish colonization brought influences from other continents. Five countries emerged that, while retaining their separate identities, have always believed that their destiny should be a shared one.

Perhaps the integration of the Central American countries should take place within new political and economic structures. Examples provided by the United States or the European Community could be helpful, but undoubtedly our societies' future depends on achieving a significant degree of integration. That reality, among others, was one good reason for the President of Costa Rica to worry about the fate of the region as a whole.

In order to explain my other reasons, I must first speak to you of Costa Rica, a nation without an army. I do not mean to brag about our virtues, but the truth is that my country understood a long time ago that a nation's independence and security is not necessarily guaranteed by military strength. The Costa Rican people decided to rid themselves of weapons and declared peace to the world by abolishing their army.

We are a peaceful, free and democratic nation. From the very moment it gained independence, our nation acquired a republican, progressive and libertarian spirit. Since the 19th. century, the leaders of Costa Rica have focused on education and cultural development. Costa Rica was the first state of the world to totally abolish the death penalty. In 1889, for the first time in Latin America, a popular rebellion in Costa Rica defeated an attempt to ignore the will of the people as expressed through the vote. In the twentieth century, the ideals of our people and its government led us to adopt, long before other countries in the region, norms and institutions designed to guarantee social justice. In 1948, under the inspiration and guidance of José Figueres, Costa Rica abolished the army. That measure became part of the 1949 Political Constitution.

Not using resources for the maintenance of armed forces has allowed us to give adequate financial attention to our educational system and to achieve health conditions that are among the best in the world. By eliminating the pre-eminence of force as a means to attain power, the different sectors of our society have learned to defend themselves by turning to tolerance, the strength of dialogue and the capacity for negotiation. Convinced that dialogue and respect for foreign ideas are the essence of democracy, the Costa Rican people have chosen negotiation over confrontation and dialogue over aggression.

Our electoral system is one of our greatest sources of pride. It is a guarantee for periodic and free elections, and for respect for the sovereign decisions of our people in the selection of its government. For many countries of the Third World, this remains an unfulfilled aspiration.

Costa Rica could not ignore the Central American reality. We could not fall into self-satisfaction and isolation in a world in which instability and injustice can easily spread. Common origins and interests created a moral obligation to seek for our Central American neighbors the same possibilities of fulfillment enjoyed in Costa Rica.

We had no reason to believe that democratic coexistence and shared progress were impossible in the other countries of Central America. There are more similarities than differences between us. As such, it was natural for us to try and develop the conditions that would permit all of the Central American people to enjoy peace, freedom, welfare and democracy, at least to the same degree that they are enjoyed in Costa Rica.

Unfortunately, the Central American countries were suffering countless economic and social difficulties. A prolonged economic crisis provoked an uncontrollable process of impoverishment. The immeasurable burden of the external debt, losses in the terms of exchange for our primary products, capital flight, illiteracy, hunger, infant mortality, unemployment, homelessness, and other equally serious problems describe the setting for our battle for peace, democracy and development.

In the political arena, we were being overwhelmed by the growing number of refugees, the incessant violence, the intervention of foreign powers and continued repression. War dominated our lands and death and destruction were endless.

But the people of Central America retained the conviction that it is possible to install permanent forms of democratic coexistence in their countries, that there are peaceful and democratic ways to promote justice. The people of Central America possess the vocation for democracy, justice and freedom that, in Costa Rica, has proven viable.

The people of Central America legitimately aspired to a degree of development and a guarantee of freedom that had already been proven possible. But because this possibility and guarantee was denied to them, they had turned to war, to violence. They are people that do not deserve the horrors of war, people that hope and search for an opportunity to fulfill their aspirations in peace.

This was the initial framework for our efforts to achieve peace and democracy in Central America. From this starting point we focused on trusting our own capacity for negotiation and ignoring external interferences.

Some countries and important groups of the international community believed that Central America was incapable of finding the road toward peace and democracy. The Reagan Administration, for example, believed that the only way to democratize Nicaragua was to artificially prolong a civil war that would drain that country. We challenged that position with a thesis that was proven correct. We sustained that it was possible to democratize Nicaragua through negotiation. The results of the February 1990 elections showed that we were right.

Of course, the people of Central America did not object against the interest of other nations in the fate of our countries. We know that we live in an era of international interdependence. Democracy, just like the political and social stability of a nation, concerns all other nations. All situations of injustice, instability or oppression are of universal

concern. Human solidarity is now less subject to political conveniences and national interests. For this reason, we have accepted the legitimacy of all of the contributions made by governments and international organizations to perfect democratic institutions in Central America. We cannot give up concrete technical or economic aid that can make a positive contribution to the consolidation of our democracies. Demands for the enforcement of human rights, whatever their origin, benefit our people.

During my presidential campaign, I agreed that Costa Rican peace and democracy could not be secure as long as peace and democracy were absent in the other countries of Central America. The people of Costa Rica understood and accepted my warning. By electing me, they authorized me to define an international policy based on the principle that all political differences, whether national or international, can be resolved through dialogue, without violence and without repression. Costa Rica is proof, however, that this is only possible when political pluralism is encouraged, electoral rights are enforced democratically, and human rights are respected. Throughout the peace process, I sustained that the establishment of political pluralism must be an everpresent goal.

Thus, my friends, my government introduced authentically Central American initiatives for the pacification and democratization of the area. We assumed the responsibility to seek needed international support to eliminate all foreign interference in the political processes of our countries. After that, we ourselves, the people of Central America, have had to find our own path toward dialogue.

Gradually, the governments of the other Central American countries joined us in our convictions. There were political differences between us, differences in our respective visions of the world, but we all agreed that the time had come to reduce our people's quota of

suffering and sacrifice. We recognized that we had the capacity to resolve our own confrontations peacefully.

In Guatemala, in 1987, we signed a commitment to change history. Under the name of the "Esquipulas Accords" the Central American countries adopted a new way of addressing our problems and developing our own solutions. Despite predictions to the contrary, despite all dogmatic forces, despite powerful economic interests, the five nations signed a peace agreement.

Esquipulas marked the beginning of an authentically Central American endeavor in the search for peace. We agreed on the obligation that each country has to discourage hostile actions against other states. We also defined precise obligations with regard to the internal democratization of each country. The five governments made a commitment to respect human rights, promote political pluralism and establish conditions so that access to power would take place only through democratic mechanisms.

With the Esquipulas Plan and the accords that followed, the Central American people proposed to establish conditions of freedom, justice and democracy in our region as well as exemplary forms of international co-existence. We decided to establish a climate of peace that would permit us to face the worst of our problems together. We proposed that every government of the area result from democratic processes.

During the pacification process, measures have been taken to perfect our electoral systems. In this manner, we aim to guarantee that our governments would always be the legitimate results of free elections, held with absolute respect for the political rights of citizens. The significant degree of international supervision during the Nicaraguan elections foreshadowed the development of a trustworthy electoral system throughout the region.

Much remains to be done, but I am optimistic regarding the future of peace and democracy in Central America. In El Salvador, where a civil war is taking place, a process of negotiation has begun that, although slow and painful, allows us to foresee a permanent end to hostilities. In Guatemala, the new government has renewed efforts to negotiate peace with insurgent groups. In Panama, after the unfortunate events that culminated with the North American invasion of December 1989, a promising democratic process is taking place.

Now that I am out of office, I have become personally involved in the task of promoting demilitarization in Central America. I firmly believe in the need to reduce the army and the number of military arsenals in the area. I have proposed to the Panamanian people and their leaders the adoption of a constitutional amendment similar to that of Costa Rica. The majority of Panamanian society welcome this initiative. I am certain that we will soon be able to speak of a demilitarized region in southern Central America.

I have approached the political leaders of the Nicaraguan government and opposition to encourage them to reduce the army and military spending. Important steps have been taken toward the demilitarization of this country. An army that had more than eighty thousand soldiers one year ago now has less than 28 thousand. I feel free to reveal another one of my dreams: that one day, Nicaragua will also abolish its army. I can already sense the joy that will be felt by millions of human beings on the day that we can proclaim that three neighboring countries have finally raised the most solid defense for peace: total disarmament.

Friends:

I view your invitation as an expression of support for the cause of peace and democracy in Central America. I express my gratitude on behalf of those who have most suffered the cruelty of war and oppression. Peace is consolidating. Many homes in Central America have seen the return of tranquility. But many men and women still live in danger, many refugees still need to be repatriated. There are entire nations that must be reconstructed and many wounds, physical and spiritual, must be healed.

Here, in the United States, you can do much to help the continued march toward permanent peace. I recognize that when George Bush assumed the Presidency of the United States, the policy of this country toward Central America changed in a manner that contributed positively to the pacification process. I believe that the United States must do justice by the people of Panama and Nicaragua by providing more expedite and substantial aid for the reconstruction of their countries. It would be a big mistake if, while they focus on other regions of the world, the leaders of this country forgot Central America, especially Nicaragua and Panama. The success of democracy in those two countries is fundamental to the future of democracy in Latin America.

Together, we can address the new challenges facing Central America and the world at large. We can provide the willpower that is necessary to effect change. The people of the United States can join the people of Central America in the clamor for peace, democracy and justice. They can unite in one voice, loud and strong, that can defeat a cynical past and forge an optimistic future.

Thank you.

The following information is provided for your reference:

1. The first section of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records.

2. The second section details the procedures for handling confidential information.

3. The third section outlines the responsibilities of all staff members.

4. The fourth section describes the process for reporting incidents.

5. The fifth section provides information on the organization's policies.

6. The sixth section discusses the role of the board of directors.

7. The seventh section covers the financial aspects of the organization.

8. The eighth section addresses the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

9. The ninth section discusses the organization's environmental impact.

10. The tenth section provides information on the organization's future plans.