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FOREIGN SECRETARY MEADE CHAIRS THE PACIFIC ALLIANCE – MERCOSUR MINISTERIAL MEETING

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Pursuant to the instructions of the Pacific Alliance Presidents at the 9th Summit held in June at Punta Mita, Foreign Secretary José Antonio Meade chaired a ministerial meeting of the Pacific Alliance (Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Chile) and the member countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Saturday in Cartagena, Colombia.

The meeting was coordinated by Foreign Secretary Meade and the Foreign Minister of Argentina, Hector Timerman, as pro tempore presidents of the Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR, respectively.

In his remarks, Foreign Secretary Meade stressed the meeting's importance, in that it "brings together, in an atmosphere of good will and for discussion, two integration mechanisms that are deeply empathetic regarding their goals, in terms of creating a more harmonious forum for co-existence among the community of states that are gathered here."

He said that we seek to achieve "a pragmatic goal of creating better living conditions for our citizens and the possibility of meeting to discuss not only the operation and structure of the Alliance, but also the main deliverables that have been achieved by this recently created group over the last three years."

The Foreign Secretary said that it was a good opportunity to "learn at first hand not only about the structure but also the progress made on many of the issues that comprise MERCOSUR'S daily agenda, having agreed on the importance of this dialogue."

The meeting was held to enhance the integration mechanisms' mutual understanding of each others' current undertakings and future challenges, as well as possible collaboration projects. The Pacific Alliance ministers highlighted the Alliance's open and inclusive nature, which neither contrasts nor compares with other regional integration processes. They also highlighted the dynamism and pragmatism of the Alliance, which to date includes 32 observer countries from different regions of the world.

All of the countries that comprise both integration mechanisms were represented at this meeting in Colombia, and the participants agreed that the meeting was held in an atmosphere of openness and frank dialogue.

The Pacific Alliance is an open and inclusive deep integration mechanism that seeks to achieve the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital. Its member countries have a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 3 trillion, or 41% of the GDP of Latin America and the Caribbean. It also comprises 50% of the region's foreign trade.

MERCOSUR is made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. It was created in 1991 with the aim of establishing an area of economic integration among its members. The bloc has a total of about 282 million inhabitants, its economic activity totals USD 3.3 trillion and its total trade amounts to USD 824.658 billion.

Together, the Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR represent 85% of the population, 91% of GDP and about 92% of trade in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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