

THE WHITE HOUSE (English Version)

Office of the Press Secretary
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**TOAST REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA
AT OFFICIAL DINNER**

National Palace
San Salvador, El Salvador

8:25 P.M. CDT

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Buenas noches. President Funes, First Lady, former Presidents Christiani and Saca, distinguished guests -- on behalf of Michelle and our daughters, thank you for the wonderful hospitality that's been shown to us here in San Salvador.

As many of you know, this has been my first trip through Latin America as President, and this is our final night. We are closer to home. I mean this in more than just a geographical sense. El Salvador is one of those places where the bonds between the United States and Latin America are strongest.

Just about every Salvadoran has a loved one or a friend in the United States -- husbands and sons, mothers and daughters -- working hard, sacrificing every day. They strengthen my country, and they mean so much to El Salvador. And they're very much in our thoughts tonight.

In my speech in Santiago yesterday, I said that Latin America is not the stereotype of a region in perpetual conflict or trapped in an endless cycle of poverty. I repeat that tonight because many look at a country like El Salvador and only see the struggles. I'm proud to work with President Funes, a courageous leader, to meet those challenges together, as partners.

But I also want take this opportunity to pay tribute to the side of this nation that is too often overlooked, which is just as real and just as important. It's the El Salvador that endures -- even when the earth shakes and the floodwaters rise -- because Salvadorans are a people who persevere.

It's the El Salvador that has struggled for justice and human rights -- and, along with President Funes, I was honored to visit the cathedral this evening and pay my respects to Archbishop Romero, who remains an inspiration to people all around the world. And I see the current archbishop here. We're very grateful for the wonderful tour that you offered.

It's the El Salvador that not only forged historic accords, but has sustained them for nearly two decades -- proving, in the words of your national anthem, that "happiness is found in peace."

And it's the El Salvador that gets up every day and goes to work -- students, merchants, farmers, young entrepreneurs, business people -- who remind us that building a just and prosperous future cannot be the work of government alone; it must be the responsibility of all who love their countries.

*Of peace enjoyed in perfect happiness
El Salvador always nobly dreamed,
To achieve this has been Her eternal struggle,
To keep it, Her greatest glory.*

With these words, I'd like to propose a toast -- if I can get a glass. (Laughter.) To President Funes and the First Lady, for their outstanding hospitality and friendship, and to the peace and happiness that we seek, for our peoples, for the region and for the world. May we not only achieve our dreams, may we keep them, for this and for generations yet to come. Salud. (Applause.)

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