



Interview With With Pablo Bachelet of The Miami Herald

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC

June 3, 2005

(11:00 a.m. EDT)

QUESTION: The OAS General—we'll start with the OAS. The OAS General Assembly is holding its annual meeting Sunday through Tuesday and the focus is delivering the benefits of democracy. Is the OAS, under the new Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, up to the task? How can the OAS foster democracy in the region?

SECRETARY RICE: This could be a really transformational moment, I think, for the OAS because I do have a lot of respect for and enthusiasm for the new Secretary General, Mr. Insulza. I think he has a demonstrated record of being able to get things done and I've been impressed thus far with how he has spoken about the importance of democracy. And so I think it's a very, very crucial moment for the organization.

At Quebec, when the Summit of the Americas was held, there was a sense in the hemisphere that free markets and free people were moving forward. I think that there is a sense now that we've had a democratic wave in Latin America that's something to be proud of, but that now the issue is: Can those democracies deliver for their people? And there are clearly some troubled democracies in Latin America and I'm very supportive of Mr. Insulza's idea that the OAS needs to be proactive and often early in trying to help in some of these circumstances.

So yes, I do think the OAS can be up to the task but it's going to have to decide that this is going to be its task and that it's going to be an effective and active organization. I think that's what we'll talk about when we're there this weekend.

QUESTION: Do you think the OAS should have an independent mechanism attached in some way to the Democratic Charter to monitor democracies in the region? I know some countries are opposed to this idea. What's your opinion?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I'm prepared to discuss that. I'm looking forward to people's views. I think we need some kind of mechanism because what do we need to do to promote democracy? Well, we, first of all, need to continue the process of helping states to have free and fair elections when those come, and then to make certain that the institutions of governments are being built and built strongly, and that civil society is being encouraged and developed. And civil society needs to be in a two-way conversation with government. Government needs to listen to civil society and civil society needs to listen to government. And I think region-wide there need to be mechanisms for civil society groups to get together so that you have a strong layer of private activity, which is always one of the most important foundations of democracy.

Now, in countries where that is difficult or where assistance is needed, some kind of mechanism in monitoring, in promoting, in helping those conversations to take place, I think needs to be available to the OAS. But we're prepared to talk about how that should go forward.

QUESTION: The U.S. has talked about increasing the participation of nongovernmental groups in the OAS even. I was just wondering, is this opening a Pandora's box of some sort? I mean, many of these groups actually oppose the United States and some of the policies of the Bush Administration and some have even been accused of destabilizing governments. I mean, should they—what kind of a voice—should they get a voice in the OAS, what kind of voice can they get?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, democracy sometimes is cacophonous. That's the way it is. But it's important that voices be heard. And I think we know from our own experience and from the experience of most mature democracies that a role for civil society is really very crucial.

I have always felt very strongly that it's important to note that governments have the real responsibility here; after all, they are the ones that are elected, they are the ones that are accountable. But part of that process of accountability, part of that process of connecting back to the population, is, in fact, through civil society groups. And you're right, we've supported a broad range of civil society being involved, not just those that are of a particular view but a broad range of civil society, and that's because we support and believe in the democratic process.

You asked, and I'm sorry I didn't answer, what the United States could do to promote democracy. Well, we have to work with other democratic leaders and governments in the region to make certain that we pay attention to and help fragile democracies to deal with whatever tensions and difficulties there are inside those states. I think we know that there are tensions in Bolivia, there have been problems in Ecuador, there are obviously potential problems in other parts of the region.

But we also are capable—the United States is capable—of working across the political spectrum with responsible governments from across the political spectrum. Our only criteria are governing democratically, governing transparently, governing accountably, being in favor of open economies and free trade. These are the principles on which we have worked since Quebec and I think they are principles that are very important to a stable and prosperous region.

QUESTION: You mentioned Bolivia. The situation there is obviously quite serious. But the Bolivian Government does not want the OAS to intervene in any way to help them out and that kind of reminisces of what happened in Ecuador when the Ecuadorians also refused the OAS's help. I mean, does this show the OAS is weak when it can't intervene? What can the OAS do?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the OAS has a record of having been able to intervene as well, quite a while ago Peru was a case in which the OAS intervened. And it may be that the OAS itself, as OAS qua OAS, cannot intervene in every circumstance but that it can help to organize other methods of intervention. We've used, for instance, friends groups from time to time that the OAS has helped to organize. We have used trusted envoys who are of a particular stature in certain circumstances. There may be a variety of mechanisms. But I do think that some mechanism that the OAS itself can make available would be very useful.

QUESTION: The United States initially supported two candidates that were on the losing end of the recent election for Secretary General. Do you think this reflects a U.S. weakness in Latin America? And what lessons have you learned from that race?

SECRETARY RICE: We—and I think I said from the very beginning when coming here we were fortunate to have a surplus of good candidates for the OAS. And for a variety of reasons, we supported President—former President Flores, who decided to withdraw, and then we had two excellent candidates in Foreign Minister Derbez and in Mr. Insulza. I think we said from the beginning that we believed the organization was fortunate to have them and would work well with either. What we were looking for was a way to come to consensus around a candidate so that we didn't go to that final meeting and end up 18-17 or 19-16, which would just not have been good for the organization.

And so when I went to Chile, having talked to Foreign Minister Derbez, who was at that point willing to step aside in favor of a consensus, I think all that we wanted to

do—those who had made their support public for Foreign Minister Derbez—was to get a sense for where Mr. Insulza wanted to lead the organization. And having done that and having been impressed with him, I think we had a very good outcome, which was the coming together around his leadership.

QUESTION: Speaking of elections, as the U.S., who do you plan to support for the number two position at the OAS?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we are—again, we are in consultations about that and we'll see. What we need is somebody who can broaden the representation regionally and who can work well with Mr. Insulza. So we'll take a look at it.

QUESTION: Are you worried about the rise of populism in Latin America?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I am certainly not worried about the rise of left-of-center governments. I want to be very clear on that because we have very good relations with Brazil and President Lula, we have excellent relations with Chile, we've had good relations on a number of issues with Argentina. So I'm certainly not concerned about the rise of left-of-center governments.

I think that there are sometimes tendencies in Latin America, as well as in other regions, that there arises a kind of political force that is attempting to use the bully pulpit, if you will, in irresponsible ways and not to tell people that there are going to be difficult choices, to find either external ways to blame difficult conditions or to promise easy answers or to say that, well, we don't have to keep up with the fundamentals of good economic performance, we don't need to worry about open markets, we don't have to worry about open trade, you don't have to be fiscally responsible. That's a bad thing and that sometimes happens in Latin America.

But if you look at what, for instance, the Brazilians have done, they have been absolutely committed to a social agenda that is trying to deal with the very difficult circumstances of poverty in Brazil, trying to deal with the fact that Brazil is a big, multiethnic society in which not all parts have really participated, but doing it in a way that is responsible economically, responsible in terms of the politics, and those are the countries with which we can make common cause.

It is also important that the agenda in this region for opening up of markets and free trade continue because that is what is fueling growth in the region is increasing trade. It's one of the reasons that we've been so supportive of and intent on trying to pass CAFTA, because if you can get a free trade agreement for the Central Americans and the Dominican Republic, then you are going to see greater growth and you're going to see more jobs created, you're going to see people with a future. And we fully understand that the benefits are not automatic; you have to have governments that are responsible and governments that are attentive to the needs of the broad spectrum of their populations. But free trade agreements certainly help in creating the conditions that they can then do that.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, President Chavez of Venezuela has said he will revise and possibly even break relations with the United States if Posada Carilles is not extradited. What is your reaction to that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I'm not going to comment on what President Chavez has said about relations with the United States. We've had good relations with the Venezuelan people for a long, long time and there is nothing that says that we cannot have good relations with Venezuela. It's a matter of what kind of hemisphere we're going to have. Are we going to have a hemisphere in which those who are democratically elected govern democratically? Are we going to have a hemisphere in which people stay out of the affairs of their neighbors and allow democratic processes internally to be truly internal democratic process?

But as to the Posada situation, this is in the appropriate channels in the United States, the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security, and so we need to let this go through its normal process.

QUESTION: The United States has been reviewing its policy towards Venezuela in a policy review. What is the result of that review that has been completed?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the only thing that we are looking to is to understand better how we can promote democratic development in the region as a whole and in Venezuela as a part of that.

We have no interest in having difficult relations with Venezuela. We have important economic relations. As I said, we've got longstanding good relations between our peoples. But yes, we're concerned about some of the activities that the Venezuelan Government has engaged in and so we need to know how to be supportive of the states in the region that might be subject to those activities. It's important, for instance, that we make very clear that we would expect Venezuelan cooperation on terrorism, for instance, or on counternarcotics.

But we have a positive agenda for this hemisphere. Venezuela is not the dominant issue in American relations with Latin America. The dominant issue in our relationship with Latin America is to be a good partner and a good neighbor with the states of Latin America to govern responsibly, to govern democratically, to improve the lives of people, to spur free trade and open markets. That's the — and to fight where we need to, for instance, in places like Colombia the drug trade and the terrorist threat. That's our agenda for the region and it is not a Venezuela agenda.

QUESTION: Yesterday, Maria Corina Machado of the Sumate Movement met with President Bush. Her movement—well, and even she—has been accused by the Chavez government of at least supporting the April 2002 coup. I was just wondering if that reception at the White House is somehow — I mean, it could be viewed as a provocation to the Chavez government. What would be your opinion on that?

SECRETARY RICE: I think for the President to meet with leaders of civil society anywhere in the world, particularly in places that might be difficult for civil society, is simply a signal that the United States values democratic activity in its hemisphere and across the world. And the United States did not support an extra-constitutional solution to the Venezuelan crisis at that time and we believe in democratic processes and constitutional processes. The issue is to make certain that all the states of the region, and that includes Venezuela, are also dedicated to democratic rule.

But the President meets with civil society groups from all over the world. When he was in Moscow the afternoon before he went to Vladimir Putin's house, he met with civil society leaders in Moscow. He met with civil society leaders in Latvia that are critical of the government of Latvia for their policies toward Russian language minorities. So this is not an unusual event for the President.

MR. MCCORMACK: Can we have one or two more questions?

QUESTION: I have one or two more questions. Okay. Just to finish off on Venezuela, they're going to have elections there. Do you think—this year, in the summer. Do you believe that they are in a position to have free and fair elections in Venezuela?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we will see. The important point is that elections, free and fair elections, depend on more than just the day of the election. They depend on access to the media for opposition, for instance. They depend on the ability of the opposition to organize. They depend on the ability of opposition leaders to speak out without fear of intimidation in any fashion. And so those are the kinds of conditions that I think the world will be looking for in the lead-up to the elections.

QUESTION: On Haiti, there has been violence there. A French diplomat was killed. Do you think the UN has a sufficient grip on the security situation for elections to take place?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, there are troubling developments in Haiti, clearly. We do think that the UN mission led by the Brazilians has been doing a very good job. They have been more active in the efforts to demilitarize the situation, to disarm militias. We are taking a look and we are in conversations with the UN and with others about

getting ready now for election support and I do think we're going to need to look hard at whether or not the force posture there is adequate as we get to the run-up in elections, what more needs to be done. It may be not just a matter of force posture. It may be a need for more election help. Really, the Haitian people are going to have an opportunity in the fall in two phases to have free and fair elections, which should unify the country.

Right now, there are too many voices, including too many voices from the past, that are trying to destabilize the country and there are still too many militias in Haiti. We've got to build an adequate and professional police force. We have to make sure that there are not militias because you can only have the authority of the state to monopolize violence; it has to be upheld. The political discussions have got to be invigorated and I think we have to look at the force posture and just make certain that it's adequate to the task, which, by the way, again, when we got ready for elections in Afghanistan, when we got ready for elections in Iraq, as we get ready for elections in Liberia, it's always important to take a look at the force structure that is supporting those elections and to make sure that it's adequate, so I'm sure that will be done.

QUESTION: One more thing, on Colombia. There have been some recent numbers on the spraying campaign there have shown that the crops that could have been eradicated actually haven't been and there's been sort of a studying of the crops that have been eradicated and the Colombians have asked for \$150 million more to boost their spraying program. Do you support that demand? That's one question.

The second part of the question is that some critics suggest that Plan Colombia should now be more socially oriented, less military. What's your opinion of that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we're looking at the Colombian idea of how we might enhance their drug eradication program and we're reviewing it with them. We've had very good cooperation with them and generally I think the Colombians have been pretty successful in building a program in what is an extremely difficult circumstance.

Now, as to what the balance ought to be in the follow-on to Plan Colombia, again, it doesn't end for another year or so, and so we're now reviewing where we want to be. But I'll say this: We have to look at the drug situation but we also have to remember that this is a narcoterrorist problem and we have to look at the ability of the Colombian Government to control its territory. The Colombian Government was not in control of large parts of its territory until a more aggressive campaign very recently by President Uribe and now it is an extraordinary thing that in all 16 of the regions the Colombian police can now enter. That's a new development. I think violence is down in some of the larger cities because the Colombian Government has been more active on the terrorist front. We want to be supportive of the Colombian military in its efforts to make certain that Colombia can control its territory, which, after all, is a precondition for both dealing with the trafficking, the narcotrafficking problem, and dealing with the terrorist problem. So I think you can't just de-link these and say, well, let's worry about the social side. You have to have a stable security environment in which to do this.

The other thing that we're working with the Colombians on, of course, is to make certain that as they carry out this campaign and as they enhance their military capabilities that they also fulfill the commitment to human rights. I had long discussions with the Colombian leadership about the commitment to human rights. This is a democracy. They want to be committed to human rights. And as they think about the reintegration of former militia or others into the Colombian society, that there be a sense that justice is going to be done for those who were offenders during this reintegration process. So this is a big series of issues that we have to deal with with the Colombians, including the social concerns, but one reason that I think we've had some success and they've had some success is that we — this has been comprehensive. We've not tried to de-link these various pieces. I think we've understood the need for a comprehensive strategy.

QUESTION: I have more questions but —

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, well, next time.

2005/588

Released on June 4, 2005

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.