



## Welcoming remarks at Prague Conference

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Colaboraciones n° 1749

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Dear Vaclav, Natan,  
Dear friends,

It is a real pleasure and a personal satisfaction to be here tonight among all of you.

This is a very important, special gathering for me and, I believe, for all who still think that spreading democracy in the world is a moral as well as a strategic imperative.

I always believed that the freedom we enjoy in the Western world it is not, and it shouldn't be, privilege of a few. The basic values of human dignity, respect, tolerance, private property, among others are not Western values anymore, but universal values.

A year ago when we first talked about this meeting, I could not

imagine that we were able, as I see today, to put together such an impressive group of people. We did not want to hold just another conference, seminar or meeting. That's why our emphasis in having drivers of change, dissidents actively involved in this gathering.

Freedom as you all know is not for free. It has to be nurtured and defended. And we all must thank those who risk their lives or well-being for doing it against regimes that are intolerant or fanatical dictatorships. From China to Cuba, from Iran to Venezuela.

Keeping the flame of freedom in those places is the responsibility of dissidents, but it is also our responsibility. We must ensure that we don't fail them, that the liberal democracies do not fail them.

I'm sure that listening to them, keeping their voices alive, we will be contributing to their causes that are our cause, promoting freedom and prosperity for all.

I hope that this meeting will advance our common cause.

Thank you very much.