

Working in tandem

By H.E. ACISCLO VALLADARES MOLINA

AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



ACISCLO VALLADARES MOLINA was appointed Ambassador of Guatemala to the United Kingdom in January 2010. He is also Concurrent Ambassador of Guatemala to Ireland, the Republic of South Africa, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Kenya, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, the State of Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. He has previously served as Attorney General of Guatemala and President of the Central American and Panama Superior Permanent Instance of Attorney Generals.

The bilateral relationship between Guatemala and the United Kingdom has reached unprecedented levels of collaboration and mutual benefits. Holding complementary economies – the UK enjoys a high level of capitalisation, whilst opportunities for successful and profitable ventures are abundant in Guatemala – it is only natural that such disposition continues to gain momentum and for that, my Mission in the United Kingdom has the full support of the Government.

Additionally, Guatemala has shifted its foreign policy and re-prioritised its links with different regions and countries. In such efforts, and within the global cuts on governmental budgets, our country has identified that the United Kingdom, and especially London, is an incredibly useful platform to engage in bilateral relations with many countries that have remained traditionally outside the remit of our scope of coverage. This way a functional set of concurrencies – as opposed to the geographical proximity criterion – have been vested in me to exercise from London. These are focused primarily on the African Continent and the Middle East, bringing us closer than ever before to the Commonwealth of Nations.

Our recently concluded UN Security Council two-year term as a non-permanent Member 2012-2013 demonstrated the ability of Guatemala to play a relevant role in the most important international affairs. From that point and onwards, the world has recognised that we are an able and useful partner in different global initiatives and fora, hence our stronger presence in international affairs.

At the same time, HE President Otto Pérez Molina's initiative to raise the discussion on the change of drug policy came about and took the debate to a governmental level. Aware of the devastating effects that drug trafficking has had in our country and region over the 50 years of prohibition, President Pérez Molina called for a serious and open debate on how to tackle drug consumption around the globe, being the very first Head of State to do so. The results of this initiative are concrete: the UN General Assembly is to convene a special session (UNGASS) in 2016, to review the global framework on drugs. Guatemala has made a contribution to the world, with the aim of aiding in the solution of a problem that it is not ours, it

is a global problem, but as it affect us all. HE President Otto Pérez Molina is the spearhead of the movement.

Guatemala is a powerhouse and ought to be acknowledged as such by its counterparties. With a young and eager population, the largest and most dynamic economy in its region, committed to regionalism and economic integration of free markets, its potential is immense. Many important British companies such as Actis, Perenco, Blue Oil, Ashmore Energy International and others have recognised this, placing the UK as the primary source of direct foreign investment in Guatemala in just a few years time.

Our agro-industry produces with efficiency and profitability some of the finest, most appreciated varieties of gourmet coffee, consistently being auctioned at record prices due to the quality of the lots; we are the top supplier of cardamom and our sugar industry has attained unrivalled levels of efficiency both in its production and its export by bulk through maritime transportation. Nowadays many of these businesses have diversified into different economic activities, such as the co-generation of electricity, leisure and tourism, and most importantly, expanded their regional scope to become investors in the region.

The International Sugar Organisation, that has its seat in this great City, is a key multilateral forum for our region and Guatemala's sugar industry. After 20 successful years at the helm of the ISO, Mr Peter Baron has been succeeded by the Guatemalan citizen Mr José Orive Vides. Mr Orive, using the legacy of Mr Baron as a foundation, will take the Organisation into the future, aided by his experience and know-how gleaned by working for half of his life for the Central American sugar industry. The success of his tenure will undoubtedly showcase the talent and potential of our citizens, and show that our business models are effective.

There is much more to be done between the United Kingdom and Guatemala. We have just started to realise the potential that our relationship holds for both nations. I foresee a stronger bond, much more interdependent and mutually beneficial, with large investments in both directions, and profits in both directions too. Prosperity cannot be achieved in isolation. Guatemala and the United Kingdom can and will promote it for its citizens by working in tandem, whilst continuing its strategic partnership in the great global affairs.

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