



As prepared for delivery

REMARKS BY LUIS ALBERTO MORENO, PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, AT THE OPENING OF THE *DEMAND SOLUTIONS* EVENT

Tuesday, December 2

Buenos días. Good morning. Welcome to the IDB.

I feel that, in honor of our keynote speaker, Secretary Madeleine Albright, I should be able to greet you in at least six languages. But two will have to do.

Madame Secretary, thank you for accepting our invitation to speak to us today. Most people know you for being the first woman to lead the State Department. Many are also familiar with your long and distinguished academic career.

But fewer people are aware of your entrepreneurial side, which has led you everywhere from the boardrooms of major corporations to the frontiers of emerging markets. Madame Secretary, we're thrilled you're here.

I also want to give a special thanks to Richard Blum and the Blum Center at UCLA for backing this event. This is the second year in a row that we've partnered with them. Without the validation of leaders like Richard, who share our enthusiasm and believe in our region's potential, we wouldn't have the reach we've acquired in such a short time.

A few months ago, just before the World Cup, at an event in Sao Paulo with President Rousseff and President Lula, I asked why Latin America doesn't produce scientific prodigies just as easily as it produces soccer superstars.

Why don't we have a Messi of mathematics, a Neymar of nanotechnology or a James Rodriguez of software?

We could also ask ourselves: where are the Latin American versions of Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk or Richard Branson?

Part of the problem is that, in terms of science and innovation, we're only warming up while other countries are already winning championships.

We only need to look at the number of patent applications, a simple proxy for a country's capacity for technological creation and innovation.

South Korea, which has a population of 50 million, registered 12,400 patents last year. Latin America has 12 times more people. But we only registered 1,200 patents – one-tenth of the Korean's total.

How can we begin to narrow the gap?

We could start by approaching science, entrepreneurship and innovation with the same passion and discipline that we devote to raising great soccer players.

But we also need to create a culture that celebrates the achievements of our scientists, our entrepreneurs and our innovators. Because Latin America has them, and very good ones at that. But, as Miami Herald columnist Andres Oppenheimer points out, we hardly ever sing their praises.

We need to learn to accept failure as an integral part of the process of learning and creating, just as they do in Silicon Valley.

And we need to create platforms to let our innovators shine, to help them connect with other groundbreakers, and to inspire new generations.

In that spirit, we've organized Demand Solutions, bringing innovators from around the world to put them in the same room with young entrepreneurs from our region.

We hope this will stimulate a cross-pollination of ideas, leading to new projects capable of changing our people's lives for the better.

Because, here at the IDB, we want innovation to become a driver of development in Latin America.

Our region faces huge challenges that won't be simply "fixed with an app."

We will need system-wide innovations: solutions to big problems such as our high schools' devastating drop-out rates, the chaotic traffic paralyzing our cities, and the red tape choking our citizens and our businesses.

That is why I also believe that we need to innovate right here at the IDB. This isn't easy in a bureaucracy with rules and procedures built on decades of practice.

But we're determined to create a culture where innovation isn't something we do once a year at some event, but rather a daily discipline, and a better way of approaching our work.

Today we're opening a window to the world in order to draw inspiration from others.

Over the next 12 hours we'll meet fascinating people and we'll learn about incredible innovations.

We'll be inspired by Tallis Gomes, a young Brazilian entrepreneur who started his first technological business when he was just 14. We'll also hear from 3M, a company that's been innovating day in and day out for more than 100 years.

We'll find out how Mexico City's government is harnessing the creativity of its entrepreneurs, artists, and neighbors to innovate in its *Laboratorio de la Ciudad*.

We'll learn how Latin American creative talent is being exported as cloud-based services, competing *mano-a-mano* with the giants of the advertising world.

We'll meet a Californian teacher, the daughter of Nicaraguan immigrants, who's revolutionizing how children learn how to read.

We'll meet a living example of globalization, a Danish entrepreneur who helped shape Start-Up Chile, a pioneering program in our region.

And we'll close with an "entrepreneurship evening," where 16 outstanding Latin American entrepreneurs will present their ideas to a panel of experts and to the audience.

I want to underscore that these young people's projects aren't about coming up with pastimes. They're about finding practical solutions to real problems.

Not that there's anything wrong about creating clever games. In fact, companies such as Rovio, the creators of Angry Birds, are shaking up how we approach early childhood education.

But some of these young entrepreneurs' ideas could be actual game changers. One project could potentially unlock the doors to effective job training for millions of Latin Americans who need to upgrade their skills in order to have a shot at better jobs and a better life.

This is exactly why we're holding Demand Solutions.

Because we want to celebrate and be inspired by these young innovators who bring their fresh eyes, their enthusiasm, and their sense that no problem is unsolvable if you work long and hard enough at it.

We have a very full day ahead of us. I hope we'll all make the most out of the experience.

Thank you. *Muchas gracias*.