



**REMARKS BY LUISA PALACIOS
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JANUARY 22, 2020**

Thank you. I'm honored to be here tonight. Before we get to the highlight of the evening – the announcement of the first six awards under the rebirth of the Simon Bolivar Foundation – I'd like to briefly speak to two questions:

First, why is the Foundation's mission so essential to CITGO?

As Chairwoman of the CITGO Board – and as a Venezuelan – I am deeply conscious of the special connection between our company and the Venezuelan people.

To put it most succinctly and bluntly: The people of Venezuela are our ultimate shareholders. And our shareholders are suffering.

I do not need to remind anyone here of the humanitarian crisis that engulfs this once-prosperous nation and still-proud people. The images of hungry children searching back alleys for food ... of people dying for lack of medicine or even the most basic health care ... of civil society collapsing amid an epidemic of crime, corruption, and desperation: All of this speaks far more urgently than I can of the agony and anguish the Venezuelan people face every day.

Since CITGO's new Board was appointed one year ago, we have focused on three related goals:

- Putting CITGO on a strong operational and financially stable foundation;
- Enhancing CITGO's corporate governance to ensure integrity in our operations and adherence to best industry practices on all that we do;
- And preserving CITGO as a vital asset of the Venezuelan people and the potential cornerstone of the nation's eventual recovery.

Every company today seeks to operate as a responsible corporate citizen. But CITGO has a unique obligation. We serve the energy needs of the people of America ... but we never forget that our assets represent the wealth of the people of Venezuela. And that we are entrusted to protect it.

That is why the Foundation's mission is so central to CITGO – and why we are bound to the fate of all Venezuelans.

This brings me to the second question I'd like to address: How can the Simon Bolivar Foundation make a difference?



Given the magnitude of Venezuela's crisis – the depth of its needs – how can these small grants have an impact?

Obviously, no single organization can do it alone. No group has the resources or the reach or the expertise to fully relieve the misery of the Venezuelan people, let alone put the country back on its feet.

Our goals in partnering with the six amazing organizations that will receive awards tonight is far more modest: To start rebuilding civil society brick by brick. To create a network of hope that can begin to alleviate suffering. To instill faith among the Venezuelan people that the world is alert to their distress – and that we will not remain silently on the sidelines. To play a small part in sparking the resurrection of Venezuela.

Think about the reach these grants can have. Organizations that have boots on the ground will be empowered with resources that will have an immediate, real-life impact.

People suffering from malnutrition will get the dietary supplements they need to survive. Organ-transplant patients will receive the medicines they need to recover. Pregnant refugee mothers and newborns can get access to vital care. Young Venezuelan doctors and medical students can stay in Venezuela – where they are so desperately needed

Our aspiration is to see these grants inspire other organizations to join us in the great humanitarian cause of rebuilding Venezuela.

In this way, our small, initial effort can have a ripple effect, galvanizing action and driving broader change.

In this way, hope can be reborn and a long-suffering people can begin to rise again.

That is our hope and our prayer for our fellow Venezuelans.

It's a hope and a prayer that I know is shared by everyone in this room today, as it is shared by the 3,500 employees of CITGO. On behalf of them, I salute you for your commitment to the people of Venezuela, and trust that these grants will help you carry on and expand your vital work. Together, we can bring a brighter day for Venezuela one day closer. Thank you.

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