



## JUAN CARLOS VARELA

President of Panama (2014-2019) and successful businessman

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- Led Panama's economic growth (which was higher than all the economies in Latin America)
  - Established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China positioning Panama as China's gateway to the region
  - During his administration, social impact programs were implemented with an un-precedented scope, such as "Renovación Colón", "Panamá Bilingüe" and "Techos de Esperanza"
  - He implemented a different model for doing justice and fighting corruption by protecting more than 40,000 jobs and the country's economy
  - He developed a successful foreign policy achieving the strengthening of Panama's international relations, obtaining important alliances not only with countries in the region, but also with countries in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia

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Juan Carlos Varela is recognized as a leading promoter of dialogue and conciliation throughout the world. He is also recognized as one of the Presidents with the greatest achievements in Panama's history. He was born in Panama on December 12, 1963. He is an Industrial Engineer by profession, graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States.

His career in the political arena dates back more than 20 years. He actively participated in Mireya Moscoso's first presidential campaign in 1994 and was also President of the Panamanian Party from 2006 to 2014.

In 2009 he was elected Vice President of the Republic of Panama and was also appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. As Vice President, he successfully mediated several domestic conflicts and also suggested the creation of a Panama Metro Secretariat as an independent entity.

As Chancellor, he created the High Level Commission for the Defense of International and Financial Services (CANDSIF in Spanish), in charge of analyzing the challenges of the financial platform and international services. He also led the entire extradition process of former General Manuel Antonio Noriega. Together with the United States, he managed to implement the Trade Promotion Treaty and also signed an Agreement for the Exchange of Information on Immigration Alerts, a new legal framework that raised the security standards of the Panamanian logistics platform. In 2011, given complex situations faced by the President at that time, Ricardo Martinelli, Juan Carlos Varela resigned from his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs and became part of the opposition.

On May 5, 2014 he was elected President of the Republic of Panama. Since his election campaign, he committed to change politics from a business to a service, and also proposed social programs such as "Renovación Colón", "Barrios Seguros", "Techos de Esperanza", "Panamá Bilingüe" and many others. He has been the President who has built more dwellings in the history of the country.

Likewise, Juan Carlos Varela delivered emblematic projects such as the Instituto Técnico

Superior Especializado (Specialized Advanced Technical Institute), focused on technical education for the jobs required by the Panamanian economy; the Centro Regional de Asistencia Humanitaria (Regional Center for Humanitarian Assistance), which offers the region and the world its logistical platform to immediately take care of countries that are affected by humanitarian crises or natural disasters. He actively promoted the electoral reform process, which contributed to the maintenance of a peaceful environment in the 2019 elections.

In terms of security, he positioned Panama as the fourth country with largest drug seizures at global level in 2018 and achieved a 35% decrease in the homicide rate compared to the 2014 figures, making this the lowest homicide rate in Panama for the last 15 years. He also focused on dismantling gangs and worked on important social reinsertion programs to promote loyalty to the State.

Juan Carlos Varela reinforced Panama's vocation as a country of dialogue and conciliation in 2015 by successfully holding the Summit of the Americas, which was attended by the 35 countries of the region, including the then Presidents of Cuba and the United States, Raul Castro and Barack Obama. During that Summit, more than 50 years of no contact between Cuba and the United States came to an end. He successfully faced the national crisis resulting from the publication of the so-called "Panama Papers" promoting laws that position Panama today as a country that meets the highest international standards in fiscal matters.

In the private sector, in his role as a businessman, he led the growth of the Varela Hermanos, S.A., a Panamanian company with more than 100 years of history and which has generated thousands of jobs. He served there as an Officer since 1985 and was executive vice president until January 2008. Thanks to his social vision, Varela supported and promoted projects in favor of culture, sports, education, folklore and the environment, from the private sector.

He has lectured at prestigious universities such as Harvard University, London School of Economics, Renmin University of the People's Republic of China, the Catholic University of Chile, INCAE and IPADE. In addition, he has been guest of honor for important organizations such as the World Economic Forum, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the

Interamerican Dialogue, the Council of the Americas, Washington Economic Club and the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations.

## **TEMAS**

- Economic development and public policies
- (Social, economic and environmental) Sustainable Development
- Security / Fight against drug trafficking
- Infrastructure
- Economy
- Security
- Education
- Social Inclusion
- Transformation of Panama
- Diplomacy
- Fight against corruption
- Much more than the Singapore of the Americas: economic growth, FDI, Infrastructure
- Colon: Urban Renewal, Human Integration. (The history of Colón)

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## **PROGRAMAS**

**Honest diplomacy for the integrity of the country**

Given his experience as Minister of Foreign Affairs, President Varela highly values foreign policy management as a fundamental pillar for his country's progress. Since serving as Chancellor of the Republic, Juan Carlos Varela took on the task of building strong and close relationships with key countries to attract investment, exchange best practices and also promote person-to-person interaction.

When becoming President of the Republic, Varela understood the value of having built such relations, since by having good relations with many countries, he was able to position Panama in areas where the country had never been considered before. It has also given the country the opportunity to attract foreign direct investment, breaking the record in 2018 with a 21.4% increase in FDI. His experience also led him to make historic decisions such as establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, managing pressures and criticisms from some countries regarding this decision and facing the fierce storm of the so-called "Panama Papers".

In this conference, President Varela shares how Panama became a more global and open country without compromising the security of its territory and also how to be a country with the capacity to establish dialogue with all countries, regardless of their ideologies or positions, that helps to solve regional and global conflicts.

### **The Panama Case: Curing Disease Without Killing the Patient**

A friend of President Varela once told him that the only solution to Odebrecht's corruption case was "Curar a doença matando o doente," which means kill the disease by killing the patient. President Varela did it quite differently from that adage. In Panama, "patients" numbered 4 million Panamanians and the "disease" was the illegal practice of a small group of citizens who took personal benefits, taking advantage of the power of the State.

t this conference, Varela shares with us the struggle he waged against the infection of corruption while protecting thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in infrastructure projects for the country

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## **CONDICIONES**

- **Travels From:** Panama

- **Fee Range:** Please Inquire
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