

REMARKS BY RICARD POMA
WILSON AWARD FOR CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

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Thank you, Harry, for your kind and generous words. I am also impacted by the video from my friend Mitt Romney. I truly appreciate it.

This is a very special occasion for my fellow honorees and me to be here today at the Woodrow Wilson Center Gala to receive this recognition. I would like to congratulate the Wilson Center, and Cynthia Arnson in particular, for their outstanding work in bringing together leaders from Latin America to promote innovative ideas for economic and social development.

It is a happy coincidence, but this year Grupo Poma celebrates its 100th anniversary. My grandfather, Bartolomé Poma, who was a Spaniard who had worked in France as a specialized mechanic in the incipient automobile industry, decided to look for new opportunities in the Americas and travelled to Mexico where he settled down in 1908. Due to the Mexican Revolution, in 1915 he was forced to abandon Mexico. In his desire to find a place to achieve his dreams as an entrepreneur and pioneer in what was then considered the new technological frontier, he and his family travelled to El Salvador where he established B. Poma Limited in 1919.

We are the story of immigrants who crossed an ocean to find prosperity, even though, my forebearers were coming from the old world to the new world.

Since that time, Grupo Poma has evolved to become a diversified, international family company, with several operating divisions in nine countries, more than 10,000 employees, and a deep involvement in social causes, in areas such as education, health and culture.

Many things have changed over these 100 years. There have been many disruptive events and transformations that have transpired during five generations; we have had to adapt constantly to evolving circumstances. Today we talk about exponential change, particularly in technology. But there are things that should never change: the values and principles that are critically important for the well-being of our society.

Over the years, I have developed a personal philosophy that I have stated as: VISION, PEOPLE, PASSION. We need to know where we are going and we need the best people to join us, with energy, with commitment, with integrity, with motivation.

Our growth and geographic diversification are the result of focusing on innovative ideas and a degree of audacity, that has propelled us to achieve quantum jumps. Two examples are: the pioneering move to create multiuse complexes in the major cities of Central America – with malls, hotels, and office parks - and transitioning from distributing one brand of automobiles in one country to selling multiple brands in several countries. We have maintained a strict strategic discipline, particularly in not straying from our core businesses. We aspire to be the best in what we do.

Successful people seem to have a rare combination of being conservative and audacious at the same time. Conservative, in being very selective in what they are willing to bet on; and audacious, in doing more work, analyzing more opportunities, being more diligent and tenacious than their competition.

Our responsibility with society is not limited to our involvement in business. Many years ago, in a very disruptive period in the history of El Salvador, we realized that we had to do more. Due to the civil war, thousands of families were being displaced from their homes. This motivated us, in the early 80's, to establish the Poma Foundation which, among many other activities, has provided more than 1,700 scholarships for higher education. Almost simultaneously, we created the Salvadoran American Humanitarian Foundation (SAHF) and the Fundación para la Salud y el Desarrollo Humano (FUSAL), to actively participate in alleviating the needs of the most vulnerable people of El Salvador. Among the highlights of their work is the distribution of over \$650 million of in-kind donations, primarily of medical supplies and hospital equipment. One of the watershed events in my life has been founding the Escuela Superior de Economía y Negocios (ESEN), a university whose primary mission is to train high impact leaders with two main objectives: academic excellence and a need-blind admissions policy that has provided scholarships and financial aid to two thirds of our students. In my early years, after graduate school, founding a university was not in my bucket list. I later came to the realization that education is the key to transforming lives; nothing contributes more to social change than education. I also discovered that one of the lives that has been transformed is my own, through the deep satisfaction and joy that I have gained by serving others.

Looking back on my life, what has worked for me has been to have a good system of priorities in order to achieve balance and efficient use of time - balance among very important areas of our lives: faith, which promotes gratitude and humility, family, friends, health, work, social responsibilities, hobbies. The values and principles that we have inherited are a pillar of strength which have contributed greatly to keep our extended family together.

I have also been fortunate to develop a network of friends who have influenced my life and from whom I have learned things that have been very valuable to me. Many of them, who represent outstanding organizations, have worked closely with us and are partly responsible for our success. I refer to Bain Capital, Greenberg Traurig, Scotiabank, Bancolombia, Citibank, InterContinental Hotels, Price Waterhouse Coopers and Choice Hotels. Thank you for being here tonight. We are grateful for your friendship and support.

We live today in a very uncertain world. The rise of exacerbated nationalism and misguided populism threatens peaceful coexistence among nations. Latin America has also suffered from the scourge of corruption which paralyzes growth and social development. The contributions of the Wilson Center have been very effective in stimulating the discourse to promote public policy necessary to solve economic and social challenges. As responsible citizens, we cannot afford to be cool observers of reality; we must be passionate participants in the changes needed to win the battle against poverty and exclusion.

Thank you.