

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for President Vicente Fox of Mexico
September 5, 2001

Mr. President, Mrs. Fox, members of the Mexican delegation, distinguished guests: On behalf of the American people, it is my honor to welcome you to the United States.

Mexico is the first country I visited as President. Today it is my privilege to welcome President Fox for the first state visit of my administration. This is a recognition that the United States has no more important relationship in the world than the one we have with Mexico.

The starting point of a sound foreign policy is to build a stable and prosperous neighborhood with good relations amongst neighbors. Good neighbors work together and benefit from each other's successes.

Mr. President, you are a Mexican patriot with a great vision for a great people, a vision of justice and prosperity. Your election signaled a new birth of freedom for Mexico and set an example for the entire world. The United States is proud to stand beside you as your partner and as your friend.

Our nations have an historic opportunity to build an authentic partnership grounded in trust and in freedom. Since 1994, the Free Trade Agreement amongst our two countries and Canada has created millions of jobs and lifted millions of lives. NAFTA stands as a model for the benefits that are possible when trade is open and free. Today, our two nations are working together to extend the benefits of free trade throughout our hemisphere and throughout the world.

Our common interests, however, extend far beyond commerce. We value the cultural contributions each nation makes to each other. We treasure the family ties that bind so many millions of our citizens. We understand that the border we share is a vibrant region that unites us.

We understand that our two nations must work together in a spirit of respect and common purpose to seize opportunities and tackle challenges on the issues that affect the lives of our citizens, including migration, the environment, drugs, crime, corruption, and education. And both our Governments share a great project, a fully democratic Western Hemisphere that grows in prosperity and trades in freedom.

Some have described the century that just passed as the American Century. Now, we look forward. We have a chance to build a century of the Americas, in which all our people, north and south, find the blessings of liberty. This goal is worthy of our two great nations.

A Mexican proverb tells us that "*Que tiene un buen vecino tiene un buen amigo*." "He who has a good neighbor has a good friend." Today, both our countries are committed to being good neighbors and good friends. Friends deal in good faith and disagree with respect. Friends stick together in good times and in bad. Most of all, friends bring out the best in each other.

Today, Mexico and the United States are bringing out the best in each other in commerce, in culture, and in our shared commitment to democratic values. We're building a relationship that is unique in the world, a relationship of unprecedented closeness and cooperation. And this visit is a milestone on that journey.

President Fox, in February you welcomed me in your home in Guanajuato. Today Laura and I and the American people are honored to welcome you and Mrs. Fox to the *Casa Blanca nuestro país*. [Laughter]

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where

President Fox was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Martha Sahagun de Fox, wife of President Fox. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary

also included the remarks of President Fox. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Joint Cabinet Meeting With President Vicente Fox of Mexico September 5, 2001

President Bush. Mr. President, first, let me introduce you to many of the members of our press corps, which are fine Americans. [Laughter]

We have had an extraordinary meeting. Not only did the President and I meet in the Oval Office for a continuation of our frank discussions on very important issues that relate to our two countries; we then just had a joint Cabinet meeting. I suspect this is the first time there has been a joint Cabinet meeting between the Mexican Government and the United States Government—or the United States Government and any government, for that matter. And some of our Cabinet officials briefed the President and me on a variety of subjects: crime, agriculture, water issues, energy, migration, and foreign policy within the region.

What I came away with is that the spirit of cooperation has never been stronger, that not only do the President and I consider ourselves friends but our Cabinet officials have gotten to know each other on a personal basis. And the dialog is very important and very frank.

Our relationship with Mexico is an incredibly important relationship. It's one where there's a lot of opportunity, and it's a relationship where there are problems. And in order to deal with those problems and take advantage of those opportunities, it's important to have discussions at all levels in our government. And this is what we've begun.

Mr. President, I'm so honored you are here. This is the first state visit that I've had as the President, and I can't think of a better state visit and a better way to culminate the morning than to have had a frank discussion amongst the able team that you've put together and the able team that I've put together.

I'd be glad to have some of your comments, Mr. President.

President Fox. Thank you very much. I think there are a lot of expectations out of this visit, the state visit to the United States. We are very pleased and honored to be here, especially to witness the effort, the amount of jobs, the amount of work and meetings that have gone through since we last met in Mexico.

As was mentioned here, the *ambiente* is the correct *ambiente*; it is of a professionalism; it is a frank and open discussions; it is of productivity, this *ambiente* which we are living during the day.

It was mentioned here that today we have an everyday contact on most of the working teams that are doing this job behind the scene that we're seeing here. I'm very, very satisfied, where we have been reported today as the work that has been done in the last 6 months. And there is clear advantage on each of the subjects.

But more so, there is a clear advance on this philosophy of trust that we are building in, that we have built in the process, and that is the foundation of the actions, the deliberations, the discussions, and