

to Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon.

“The Monterrey Commitments”: Joint Statement by the Presidents of the United States and Mexico

March 22, 2002

Our meeting today was a valuable opportunity to celebrate the strength and vitality of the U.S.-Mexican bilateral partnership over the past year, and discuss our priorities for the year ahead.

Our two nations have developed a historic level of trust and mutual respect, strengthened by common values and purposes, that has facilitated an unprecedented degree of bilateral cooperation over the past year. It is a high national priority of both nations to continue building on that cooperation over the coming years and harnessing it for the achievement of the important goals of economic and social development, security, and rule of law that are essential to both countries' wellbeing.

In this context, we agreed that the international campaign to eradicate terrorism requires us to address pressing new priorities and shared goals central to defending our societies and ways of life. At the same time, we recognized that the events of September 11 underscore more than ever the importance of the U.S.-Mexican relationship, as partners and neighbors, in the attainment of those goals and in realizing the vision we have set forth for our countries' future. Hence, we reviewed what we are doing together to create a “smart border” for the 21st century. We will build a border that protects our societies against those who would do us harm, and that truly serves the human and economic needs of our dynamic relationship. We share a vision of a modern border that speeds the legitimate flow of people and commerce, and filters out all that threatens our safety and prosperity.

The “smart border” declaration and action plan we have just adopted sets out a series of specific steps we will take to move concretely toward that vision. The twenty-point action plan comprises measures that will enhance the secure flow of goods and people, and build a modern and efficient infrastructure that keeps pace with commerce. We intend to monitor this process closely to ensure the fastest possible implementation of these and other steps on which we may agree. Both governments will work expeditiously to prioritize infrastructure investment needs and cooperate to identify funding sources.

Slightly more than one year ago, in Guanajuato, we talked about migration as one of the major ties that join our societies. We launched then the frankest and most productive dialogue our countries have ever had on this important and challenging subject. Those talks have continued over the past year, and have yielded a clearer assessment of the scope and nature of this issue. This bond between our nations can render countless benefits to our respective economies and families. Over the past year, important progress has been made to enhance migrant safety and particularly in saving lives by discouraging and reducing illegal crossings in dangerous terrain.

On September 7, 2001, during President Fox's historic State Visit to Washington, we issued a joint statement instructing our cabinet-level working group to provide us with specific proposals to forge a new and realistic framework that will ensure a safe, legal, orderly, and dignified migration flow between our countries. We have today

agreed that our Cabinet level migration group should continue the work we charged it with in Guanajuato and Washington.

When we first met as Presidents, we described our shared vision to help unfetter the economic potential of every citizen, so each may contribute fully to narrowing the economic gaps between and within our societies. To help implement that vision, we launched the "Partnership for Prosperity." The Partnership seeks to leverage private resources to create jobs and promote prosperity in less developed areas of Mexico. Today, we welcomed the Partnership's action plan of concrete and innovative initiatives on housing, agriculture, infrastructure, remittances, communications, development financing and information technologies. Some examples include:

- Lowering the cost to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the United States of sending money home so that their families get to keep more of their hard-earned wages;
- Increasing the accessibility of capital to Mexican entrepreneurs so that they can grow their businesses and create more and better jobs.
- Increasing investment in housing, and the creation of a secondary mortgage market, so more Mexicans can become homeowners.

Our aim is to foster economic development so that no Mexican feels compelled to leave his or her home for a lack of a job or opportunity. While achieving the Partnership's goals will require time and persistent effort, the initial steps detailed in this report will build a strong foundation for long-term success. We will closely follow implementation of these promising steps. We are confident that the high level officials we have tasked with turning our vision into reality will produce results that will make us both proud and benefit both our countries.

We commend the ongoing success of the Training, Internship, Education and Schol-

arship program (TIES), designed to support the Partnership for Prosperity by enhancing conditions for sustained development in Mexico. Over the next five years this \$50 million initiative is expected to implement 35 partnerships between Mexican and U.S. higher education institutions and to provide hundreds of scholarships for undergraduate exchanges and graduate studies in the United States.

When we met in Washington in September we talked about the importance of addressing urgent environmental priorities on the border. After a series of discussions with border states, the local communities, and other stakeholders, our binational working group has finalized a series of specific recommendations to strengthen the performance of the North American Development Bank (NADBank), and its sister institution the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC).

As these institutions continue to work on urgent environmental infrastructure priorities in the border areas, both governments will work with their legislatures to make the recommendations a reality. The recommendations include measures to make financing more affordable, expand the geographic scope on the Mexican side of the border in which projects can be financed, replacing the two institutions' separate boards of directors with a single board to oversee their work, and facilitate efforts to work with and co-finance environmental projects with the private sector.

Cooperation against organized crime remains a cornerstone of the bilateral agenda. We acknowledged major successes achieved by Mexico in the fight against narco-trafficking. We agreed on the importance of redoubling judicial cooperation aimed at bolstering the rule of law in both countries and strengthening our ability to ensure the safety of our citizens.

We also reviewed regional political issues of interest to both countries, including sharing assessments of the situations in Argentina, Colombia, Cuba and Venezuela.

We have consulted frequently, as friends and neighbors, over the past six months as we have sought to advance a vision of growing partnership aimed at increasing prosperity, greater economic convergence between our two economies, raising living standards, and ensuring the security of both societies. Our commitment to this fundamental agenda, and to the importance of our partnership, is stronger than ever. We

will continue our close and productive dialogue in the months and years ahead as we take full advantage of the great opportunities before our two nations.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this joint statement.

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by President Vicente Fox of Mexico in
Monterrey
March 22, 2002

Senor Presidente, Marta, *Gobernador*, distinguished guests, Laura and I thank you for this dinner. And thank you for inviting us to Monterrey, a city that is home to so much of Mexico's industry and enterprise and a city that embodies Mexico's prosperous future.

Monterrey has hosted a number of U.S. Presidents over the years, *mi papá*, President Clinton, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. When Presidents Camacho *y* Roosevelt met here in April of 1943, they affirmed our two nations' World War II alliance and agreed to closer economic cooperation. Today we meet with a similar purpose. We affirm our shared struggle against terror, and we work to promote the great alternatives to terror: prosperity and freedom and hope.

President Fox, I deeply appreciate your friendship and counsel, especially since September the 11th. And the people of the United States are grateful for your visit to Ground Zero in New York to honor the victims. And the world appreciates Mexico's support for the international coalition against terrorism. The terrorists have declared war on civilization itself, and the civilized world will defeat them.

It wasn't all that long ago that Laura and I used to live right next door to Mexico. During that time, I saw the steady emergence of a more confident and more hopeful nation. I saw the strong and growing ties of culture and trade and kinship between our countries. Mr. President, your election symbolized these changes and has reinforced them. You're a true patriot with a compelling vision for a stronger and more prosperous Mexico.

I tell the people of my country that a strong and prosperous Mexico is good for the United States. We're working well together, and I am confident our important work is just the beginning. We will build on the success of the North American Free Trade Agreement, to expand the benefits of trade and markets to all of our people. We can build on our political cooperation to make real progress on drug trafficking, environmental protection. And we will build a border that is more open and more secure, and we will confront the issue of migration in a spirit of mutual respect.

The Mexican proverb tells us, *Tenemos mal los momentos, es cuando se conocen al los amigos*.