

The President's News Conference With President Vicente Fox Quesada of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in Cancun
March 31, 2006

President Fox. Good morning. Welcome for your interest and your presence and attendance. We have come to an end in this productive meeting, as you well know, with bilateral meetings yesterday and today a trilateral meeting, a very productive one, followed by an enlarged meeting, trilateral-wise, with the attendance of the entrepreneurial community, business, and investment of our three countries. Consequently, we will give you full information.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, to make some comments.

[At this point, Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, which was translated as follows.]

Prime Minister Harper. Thank you. Thank you, President Fox, and ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to thank President Fox first of all. It was a pleasure to meet President Fox and President Bush to discuss issues of importance to our countries and our common will to work together.

In North America, we have an economy that is integrated; it is not necessary to differentiate our products. And we have discussed the progress accomplished in the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, and we are committed to considering the private sector. First of all, we believe that it is an engine of competitiveness, made up of members of the private sector, that will allow us to make our economies even more competitive.

Our ministers will be working on this. They will be identifying our priorities, and they will make sure that they are followed up. We will be cooperating on issues of importance—on border security, management of urgent situations, as well as energy security. We will prepare a coordinated and exhaustive way to approach the issues of the bird flu, and we will be guided by

common principles. Over the course of the next few months, we will be doing everything possible to ensure the security along our borders and to be able to move our merchandise back and forth. We will be working in the area of energy, the area of research and innovation, to be able to deal with clean technologies.

We are happy with the discussions of our trade ministers on cooperation and of the negotiation of our countries, and we encourage them to follow up with this work.

This meeting has been extremely productive. And Presidents Bush and Fox have accepted my invitation for the next summit meeting, which will take place in Canada in 2007.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

—grateful for our host, President Fox, and to the workers here at the hotel and the Mexican people for their warm hospitality.

Over the past 2 days, I've had the pleasure of meeting with President Fox and President Bush to discuss issues that jointly affect our three nations. I've been encouraged by the common will of our three nations. We are living today in an integrated economy. We cannot afford the politics of isolation.

During my meetings with Presidents Bush and Fox, we reviewed the progress of our Security and Prosperity Partnership, which provides a framework to advance the common interests in areas of security, prosperity, and quality of life.

We committed to further engage the private sector. We've agreed to set up a North American Competitiveness Council, made up of business leaders from all three countries, to advise us on ways to improve the

competitiveness of our economies. They will meet with our ministers, identify priorities, and make sure we follow up and implement them.

We agreed to expand our existing cooperation on key issues such as border security, emergency management, and energy security. As an immediate priority, we'll develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to preparing for a possible avian or pandemic influenza outbreak in North America. Our action will be guided by shared principles. We'll take concrete steps in the coming 24 months to improve the security at our borders and to ensure the smooth and efficient flow of goods and people, particularly—particular discussions with President Bush on the Windsor-Detroit Corridor.

We'll collaborate on energy, especially with respect to innovation and science and technology, with the focus on clean technologies. We also welcome the discussions—the recent discussions by our trade ministers on NAFTA collaboration on trade negotiations with third countries. And we urge that this work be given priority.

These talks were productive. And I'm, of course, very pleased that President Bush and President Fox have accepted my invitation to have the next leaders' meeting in Canada in 2007.

Thank you.

President Fox. President Bush.

President Bush. Thank you for your hospitality. It's a really good choice to pick Cancun—as my press corps will tell you. They're looking forward to staying by the pool after I leave. [*Laughter*] It's a beautiful, beautiful part of the country.

I want to thank you for your friendship as well. It's been a joy discussing very important issues with you over the course of my Presidency. And this is probably one of the most productive meetings we've had. It's been a pleasure to meet with Prime Minister Harper in his official capacity as the Prime Minister of Canada. I find him to be a very open, straightforward fellow.

If he's got a problem, he's willing to express it in a way that's clear for all to understand. And that's the way I like to deal with people.

We've got big goals for this very important relationship. One goal is prosperity. You can't achieve a standard of living increase for your people unless you have a prosperous neighborhood, and it's this prosperity that has been much of a focus on NAFTA. And one of my vows, and I know the other leaders share this goal, is to make sure that people are able to connect the NAFTA relationship with improvement of their own quality of life.

I know there's deep concern about social justice throughout the neighborhood, and social justice can be achieved more likely if people are able to realize their dreams and if there's a prosperous society. And prosperity has been increased as a result of the trade between our nations. And we want to make sure that trade continues in a way that's fair and free but also in a way that enables our countries to be able to compete with the great challenges we face.

And we face prosperity challenges from abroad like never before—the challenge of a growing Chinese economy or the challenge of an Indian economy. And my attitude is we shouldn't fear these challenges; we ought to welcome them and position ourselves so that we can compete. And I think the leaders share that sense of unity when it comes to being a competitive part of the world in the future.

We talked about security. Look, we got long borders, and we got to make sure we work hard to secure the borders. We also have got to make sure we got smart borders. And so the whole vision of our borders has got to be to enhance trade and tourism but to prevent smugglers and terrorists and dope runners from polluting our countries. And I'm confident, with the use of technology and by close collaboration, we'll be able to achieve those objectives.

I want to thank the CEOs and the business leaders from the three countries who are here. I thought we had a very constructive discussion about ways to make sure that there is harmonization between our industries so that the people benefit. And they brought some really good ideas.

We talked about, of course, bird flu, avian flu, and the need to be prepared in case there is an outbreak. We spend a lot of time in my own country preparing for an avian flu outbreak, strategizing as how to coordinate efforts between the Federal, State, and local governments, working to wisely spend money to come up with, hopefully, a vaccine that would then be available for sharing around the world. And I do want to thank Canada for having taken the lead early in this issue and preparing the world for what is possible so that there's good information sharing if the bird flu were to break out in Southeast Asia, for example. But my point is, it's very important for us to share information and data and strategies amongst our three countries so that if this were to happen, there is a focused, coordinated, intelligent response.

We talked about energy. My view of the energy initiative is that we've got to be wise about the resources we have and be smart about the investment for research and development so we can change our energy habits. The truth of the matter is, we'll all be better off if we use alternative sources of energy like ethanol or explore how to use hybrid batteries in a better way. I mean, there's some really interesting things coming down the pike, and I look forward to not only leading my own nation to spend money to be on the leading edge of technological change when it comes to energy but also sharing those technologies and ideas with our counterparts. Because we want to make sure that we've got national security concerns addressed when it comes to energy; we also want to be good stewards of the environment—and we can do both by the use of proper technologies.

It's been a good meeting. I want to thank you for your leadership. I like coming to meetings where people put things on the table and we try to come up with solutions. And this has been such a meeting, Mr. President. Good job. *Es todo*.

President Fox. Thank you. Thank you so much. Undoubtedly, these two days have brought about spaces for meeting of both friends and partners, and undoubtedly, we have made a very good use of time.

The visit to Chichen-Itza was excellent, as well as yesterday evening's dinner, in a relaxed atmosphere but, likewise, creating this association and making a very productive association. Equally important were the different working meetings.

We took advantage of time; we were not working isolated. We touched upon fundamental items in that meeting. First of all, we carried out an evaluation meeting. Then we got information about the development of programs. And then we gave the necessary instructions for the works that should be carried out in the next period of work.

This is a most important thing, and this association has become a dynamic and professional process, a constructive process, a short-term action process, and great vision and perspective in a long term. Consequently, we have concluded that institutionalizing all these mechanisms is of utmost importance so that they will have continuity, so that there will be a followup—a necessary followup, so that they will be fruitful both at a short, middle, and long term.

So we have established the next meeting. The Prime Minister of Canada has suggested and has invited us to Canada. Next June, we shall have, let's say, an information, evaluation, and results study of the work of this association, this Security and Prosperity Partnership. And we have carried out a series of actions that should be integrated in this report.

First of all, I would like to make clear what has been the results of 12 years of joint work in the free trade agreement,

NAFTA. The three nations are fully satisfied of what we have been able to achieve. We have seen the fruits of work through this tool of cooperation, trade, and investment. Nonetheless, we're not fully satisfied. We have to give steps forward. We have many an opportunity and many a challenge.

I want to mention two figures in reference to the results of NAFTA. Mexico has a commercial balance trade of \$535 billion, the seventh in size throughout the world. And these would be a direct product of both trade and investment that has been carried out among the three partner countries. And then we should point out that every single State, border States with the United States had per capita income to December as of last year that go beyond to \$10,000. The per capita average income has to do with \$7,500—the highest in Latin America. Nonetheless, the borderline States are above \$10,000 per capita income, and some of them have a per capita rate to \$10,000.

We're not talking about small numbers, small figures; we're talking about a concrete result of the efforts and work through trade. It is achieved through investment, and likewise, it is achieved through joint work, everybody's work. Behind all this, there's nothing else but work, work, and work.

Now I would like to mention a couple of items in the goals. First, strengthen and maintain, growing, the free trade agreement, first of all. Benefits are evident, but before the new reality of the 21st century, we have decided to give steps forward and strengthen the relationship. Now we have the alliance both for security and prosperity. One item is as important as the other—shared responsibility an important element—one as important as the other. And that is what the three countries think.

We started with the constitution of the North American Competitiveness Council, so as to consider public and private policies—face a challenge of our region. We want to institutionalize our mechanisms,

have a clear project for the next month of June. It would imply mechanisms by means of which we will give the necessary importance and long-term action, something constant, and continuity should be achieved as well. That has been fruitful, and that can give very good results for our region. We are not renegotiating what has been successful or open the free trade agreement. It's going beyond the agreement, both for prosperity and security.

Summarizing, we have to increase competitiveness of our economies, of our companies, our enterprises, our structures, and likewise, our technological and educational levels so as to face competition of other blocs in the world. We have to homogenize normativity standards so as to have common standards to facilitate jobs and productivity. We have to make borders much more modern with technology so as to guarantee security but the good flow of commodities and products. We have invested a good amount of time to logistics, efficiency and efficacy in customs, topics that have to do with sharing—sharing these efficiencies.

We are totally aware that we require infrastructure studies in the borderline areas so as to analyze needs, to facilitate both trade and passage of people and goods. This is fundamental; security is fundamental for our future development. It is a problem and a challenge shared by the three countries. Migration can only be solved in that we agree upon under the framework of a legislation that will guarantee our legal order, safe and respectful migration, respecting the rights of people.

We have spoken about the collaboration of the three countries to support development and generation of opportunities for Central American countries and the Caribbean-area countries. We have seen an excellent level of relationships, and these are giving steps forward. They're better and better.

We have more points of coincidence amongst the three countries. I would like

to thank the attendance, the presence, in this beautiful port of Cancun in this area of the Riviera Maya. You can see it is dynamic, a beautiful place, as it always has been. We receive millions of tourists every single year, people that come over, and we're proud to receive.

We want to thank President Bush; we want to thank Prime Minister Harper—my acknowledgment, my thanks, and my commitment. We shall be working together, no doubt about it, to give steps forward in the field of prosperity and security. May you have a happy return back home. Thank you.

For the question-and-answer period, we have two questions for the journalists of each country.

Border Security/Trade

Q. Good morning, Presidents and Prime Minister. President Fox, what are the concrete measures that Mexico is implementing to guarantee this indispensable security so as to have a legal, safe, and orderly migration?

For President Bush and President Harper, do you consider that there should be a continuity on the economic policy in Mexico before the change of President in our country? Last but not least, how can the partners of NAFTA—can be competitive before the Asian countries if there are so many differences that are leading us to talk first about security, then productivity? And what are the unilateral decisions on migration matters? Thank you.

President Fox. First, security—many actions have been implemented. Many actions have to do with close cooperation with the security authorities with the United States. This effort, headed by the representative of Homeland Security, Mr. Chertoff, and Minister of the Interior here in Mexico, Mr. Abascal, and the cooperation based upon mutual trust, coresponsibility, and what has to do with security in the borders.

Likewise, we're doing our own work in cases of homicides and crimes among the

different Mafias, the drug cartels. We shall continue working on this. There's a presence of Federal forces in the main points in the border, and then a great commitment to win the battle against organized crime and drug trafficking, particularly in the city of Nuevo Laredo. We have programs such as Programma OASISS, OASISS Program, so as to attack the people that are trafficking with people, with migrants. And fortunately, there are more than 120 in jail. And then we have a permanent program, 24 hours a day, so as to achieve this.

We are working in the inner part and in the southern part of the country to stop migration flows that come from Central America that are crossing illegally the southern border of Mexico. And with all due respect to the dignity of these people, respecting their human rights, they are stopped; they remain on temporary bases and stations. They offer them services with dignity, and then we send them back to their communities of origin; 240,000 people—people that were detained, and then they were sent back to Central America.

We are working jointly with the Central American Governments. We have spoken about the fact that the decision of Mexico is not only assuming our responsibilities migration-wise, but we have a firm commitment of generating jobs and employment. We're working jointly with Central America so as to achieve this, so each country will absorb our commitment and our total commitment generating opportunities within our own countries.

And so this program, like the energy initiative for Central America, is one that has the purpose of bringing development and growth to the Central American economies. Thus we're working on a broad spectrum on the issue of security in all of its facets.

President Bush. I don't see how you can be prosperous if you don't have security. I mean, it's—if people are concerned that, for example, the towns along the border aren't secure, it's going to be difficult to

keep prosperity alive. And so I appreciate the President's commitment to security along our border, and we've got—we share the same commitment. It's very important to enforce laws. Robust economy depend upon the rule of law, and therefore, when countries enforce law, it kind of creates the conditions for continued economic growth.

When you have robust trade like we have, there are issues that come up. One way to look at it is if we had no trade, there would be no issues. And the more issues there are and the more opportunities there are to discuss them, the likelier it is these economies will continue to grow. And so I don't worry about having to deal with problems. As a matter of fact, I view the problems that have arisen as a result of complex and active trade as positive. And the fundamental question is, can we resolve these issues in a responsible way? And one of the reasons we meet is to put ourselves in a position to do so.

You mentioned something about the elections. I'm not going to talk about them. The only thing I am going to talk about is I love to have a strong, vibrant democracy on our southern border. And I want to thank the President for his strong leadership and his recognition that democracy is a very important legacy of his administration, the previous administration, that we certainly hope there will be a peaceful transition of power, and I'm confident there will be one.

Prime Minister Harper. Obviously, I don't want to get into the issue of Mexican politics, but I can say the same thing that I said yesterday with regard to the leadership of President Fox. We've had both bilateral and multilateral relationships progressively growing and without precedent. I trust that the President is going to leave a stronger economy that is shared, a firm democracy, respect for human rights, and faithfulness to the most important principles for our shared progress, for the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North

America, and all the good results that come from a free market economy.

All of these things lead to more progress, which we hope the next President will be able to build upon, which will benefit all of our countries.

[*Prime Minister Harper continued in English.*]

And I'll just repeat that I, obviously, do not intend to make any comments or get myself involved in Mexican politics, but I'll just repeat what I said yesterday, which is that President Fox has provided unprecedented leadership for both our bilateral and our trilateral relations, unprecedented progressive leadership.

I believe that the legacy of that leadership will be to leave behind not just the strong democracy that believes in liberty and human rights but also loyalty and adherence to the principles that are—on which the success of our integrated economy is based. And those are the principles of NAFTA, the principles of our security and economic partnership, and, of course, the advantages of free markets from which all of our nations benefit.

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, would you veto an immigration bill that did not include a guest-worker program? And how do you counter the angry argument from conservatives on Capitol Hill who are saying that your demand for one could hurt the Republican Party this fall?

President Bush. The migration issue has been a topic of discussion here, as you can imagine. I told the President exactly what I told our country, that, one, I expect the debate to bring dignity to America, in recognition that America is a land of immigrants and people ought to be treated with respect; and this debate ought to be a debate that does not pit neighbor against neighbor; that focuses on three elements. One is that we are a nation of laws and, therefore, must enforce our laws. And that

includes enforcing the laws of people coming into our country illegally.

President Fox and I discussed this issue at length. I don't know if people recognize, but his Government, all aspects of the Mexican Government came together to send a clear message to the American people: The Mexican Government understands it has a responsibility, as well, to protect the border. It is a nation of law. You heard the President talk about not only enforcing the northern border but also the southern border.

I also have said to the American people that we must enforce our laws in the interior of the country. Employers must be held to account if they're employing the people in our country illegally. However, part of the problem is—that complicates the lives of our many employers who are providing employment for people who are here illegally, is that there has been a lot of document forgery. There's an industry that has sprung up, and part of that industry is to provide forged documents so that our employers don't know whether a person is in our country legally or not.

I also believe strongly that an important part of securing the border and enforcing our laws is to recognize there are people in our country doing work that Americans will not do. And those people ought to be given a chance to have a tamper-proof card that enables them to work in our country legally for a period of time. That's called a guest-worker program. One of the important issues about a guest-worker program is, what does that mean for someone's desire to become a citizen of our country? I believe if someone has been here in our country illegally, they should not get at the head of the line if they want to become a citizen. In other words, we have a line of people waiting, people who are in our country legally, waiting to become a citizen. And people who have been in our country illegally should not get ahead of the line who are there legally.

A nation of laws can also be a welcoming nation, and I believe a guest-worker program will help us rid the society and the border of these *coyotes* who smuggle people in the back of 18-wheelers. I believe it will help get rid of the document forgers. I believe it will help people on both sides of our border respect the laws of our border and enforce our borders. I believe it is important to bring people out of the shadows of American society so they don't have to fear the life they live. I believe it's important for our Nation to uphold human rights and human dignity. And the plan I've just proposed is one that will do all that and achieve important objectives.

And I'm looking forward to working with the Congress. We're making the—I told the President we're making progress. You know, there's a legislative process. It's—some guy, some wag one time put it, it's like watching people make sausage. It's kind of a—you know, probably appears a little unpleasant from your perspective. [Laughter] But we're making progress. And I want a comprehensive bill. And I've made that very clear to the Members of the Congress, and I will continue making it clear to Members of Congress.

Q. [Inaudible]

President Bush. So, no answer—I said I want a comprehensive bill. You're presuming there won't be a comprehensive bill; I believe there will be a comprehensive bill.

Canada-U.S. Relations/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, can you explain to Canadians—

President Bush. Which one?

Q. That would be you, Mr. Bush.

President Bush. Me.

Q. Could you explain to Canadians why they'll need to have a passport or an unspecified secure document before they cross over to the United States? And what would the impact be on both of our countries economically if Canada doesn't follow

through by the deadline of the end of next year?

President Bush. I appreciate you bringing up this issue. This is an issue, obviously, that affects not only border crossings with Canada, it also affects border crossings with Mexico. The Congress passed the law, and I intend to enforce the law. But the law said there ought to be a passport or a passport-like document that, I believe, if properly implemented, will facilitate travel and facilitate trade, not hinder travel and trade. And the reason I believe that is, I think we can be wise about the use of technologies to—envision a card that can be swiped across a reading device that facilitates the movement of people.

It's a—look, I understand this issue has created consternation. Your Prime Minister made it very clear to me that he's very worried that such a implementation of the law on the books will make it less likely people will want to travel between our countries. I've heard from business leaders who are concerned about the bookings for conventions. And so what I've told the Prime Minister and told President Fox, as well, is that we have an obligation to work very closely with our counterparts to provide a set of standards as to what will meet the obligations of the law.

Again, I repeat to you: I believe this can be done in such a way that it makes future travel, future relations stronger, not weaker.

Prime Minister Harper. Maybe I could just add to that. Obviously, we are concerned. I expressed those concerns to President Bush, and I know they've been expressed by Canadian business leaders as well. The President is confronted with legislation passed by Congress and has a responsibility to act upon that legislation, and we understand that. We understand the security concerns that are behind that.

At the same time, we're obviously concerned that if we don't move quickly and properly on this, that this could have effects on trade and movement of people, conven-

tions, you name it, that is not helpful to our economy or to relationships. So we've agreed that Minister Day and Secretary Chertoff will meet as soon as possible to make this their top priority.

Democracy in Mexico

Q. Mr. President Fox, two questions. The first is, our Senate last night passed a law, and I'd like to know what you're going to do. Will you veto that law, or will you leave the legislative packet to the next President of our country? And second, you have spoken and you have warned us Mexicans against populism and the demagogues who exist in campaigns, in Presidential campaigns, and that we are going through a very difficult stage. I'd like to ask if you already forgot the populist language that you used in your own Presidential campaign when you even talked about—[inaudible]—and things like that? What about talking about democracy using a populist language in the past, but now you are against candidates doing that.

President Fox. In reference to the first item, the Ministry of the Interior will inform, on behalf of the Federal Government, our position. And I celebrate—I'm glad that both the Congress, the lower chamber and the upper chamber, have exercised their autonomy, their freedom. They have discussed and approved one more of the many laws that have been approved in our country in this last 5 years of democratic and respectful Government—the autonomies and the independence on the other two powers. As never before, we have lived this reality that has been positive, fruitful, in reference to the application of our autonomy and constitutional freedom that all the other powers have.

Now, in reference to the second item, I can only say—and I will say it very clearly—from the second of July and since the second of July of the year 2000, there has been absolute freedom, and that is of utmost importance for all of us. Every single

person should express according to his own decision and convenience, by all means, respecting the rights of third parties. But above all this, we have the freedom of both Mexicans, ladies and gentlemen, that work in the mass media: press; newspapers; journals; TV. We have now a freedom that we never had in the past. Every single citizen in our country nowadays exercises this freedom openly. This is one of the great fruits and results of democracy won in the second of July of the year 2000.

Iran

Q. President Bush, Secretary of State Rice is finding common ground with the British today on the view that the next step against Iran could be sanctions. Do you agree that's the way to go if Iran fails to comply with the Security Council's 30-day deadline on its nuclear program?

President Bush. Thanks. First, I do want to offer my country's assistance to the people affected by the recent earthquakes in Iran. We obviously have our differences with the Iranian Government, but we do care about the suffering of Iranian people.

There is common agreement that the Iranians should not have a nuclear weapon, the capacity to make a nuclear weapon, or the knowledge as to how to make a nuclear weapon. And the reason there's common agreement is because the Iranian Government with such a weapon, as is now constituted, would pose a serious threat to world security.

Condoleezza Rice is in Europe today to discuss with the P-5, the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany, a strategy to go forward in a unified way that says to the Iranian Government, the world rejects your desires to have a nuclear weapon. Condi is strategizing with those who will be making the U.N. Security Council decisions as to that united front. In other words, we agree on a goal. Now the question is, how do we work together to achieve that goal? And you're watching Secretary of State Rice work with our

friends to remind the Iranians on a regular and consistent basis that if they want to be—participate in the international order of things, if they don't want to isolate themselves, they must listen very carefully to what we are saying with unified voice.

Murder Investigation in Cancun

Q. My question is to President Fox, and I wonder if we could prevail upon you, sir, to answer it in English. A few weeks ago, there was a very bloody murder here with the Ianiero family in Cancun. Two young Canadian mothers are very concerned, back in Canada, that Mexican authorities have mistakenly made them suspects amidst concerns, also in Canada, the Mexicans may have bungled this investigation. Can you tell us where this investigation is going, and can you assure those two young women, indeed, they are not suspects?

President Fox. Well, we are absolutely sorry, and we have our, well, feelings that a crime has been carried out here in a hotel in Cancun. The attorneyship office is working, both the Federal one and the local one—they're working on the investigation. When the data is ready and when they finally decide, we can claim which are the guilty people. As of now, that is the only information we have at hand. We're working closely. We are reporting to the Government and the authorities of Canada. Investigation is being carried out. So far we cannot make any further comments. Thank you.

Prime Minister Harper. —say that we do appreciate the full cooperation of the Mexican Government, Mexican police at all levels. There has been consultation with our officials, and I've spoken to the RCMP, and they assure me that that has been the case, particularly since the commitments made by Secretary Derbez in Ottawa. So we are working together in this; we're fully apprised of the situation. I can just add one small thing, which is that we're told once again, and I think we've been saying

this repeatedly for some time, there is no extradition pending—extradition demand pending, nor is there one anticipated in the near future. And that's probably about all I can say.

President Fox. Muchas gracias.

NOTE: The news conference began at 10:45 a.m. in the Fiesta Americana Condesa

Cancun Hotel. President Fox spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Prime Minister Harper referred to Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day of Canada; and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Luis Ernesto Derbez Bautista of Mexico. President Fox referred to Secretary of Government Jose Carlos Maria Abascal Carranza of Mexico.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, and President Vicente Fox Quesada of Mexico—The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Progress
March 31, 2006

Canada, Mexico and the United States share a continued commitment to enhance the security, prosperity and quality of life of our citizens within North America. We recognize that the success of our countries is enhanced by working cooperatively. The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, which celebrates its first anniversary this month, provides a framework for us to advance collaboration in areas as diverse as security, transportation, the environment and public health.

This Partnership has increased our institutional contacts to respond to our vision of a stronger, more secure, and more prosperous region. In June 2005, our three governments released detailed work-plans identifying key initiatives that form an ambitious agenda of collaboration. Since June, we have worked to implement these initiatives. Many will take months or years to be completed, but we already note significant results. We ask our Ministers to build on this momentum.

We have discussed how we can ensure North America is the most economically dynamic region in the world and a secure home for our citizens. Today, we exchanged views with private sector leaders on how

to enhance the competitiveness of North America.

Building on existing commitments, we agree that priority initiatives warrant special attention in the coming year:

Strengthening Competitiveness in North America. We are pleased to announce the creation of a North American Competitiveness Council (NACC). The Council will comprise members of the private sector from each country and will provide us recommendations on North American competitiveness, including, among others, areas such as automotive and transportation, steel, manufacturing, and services. The Council will meet annually with security and prosperity Ministers and will engage with senior government officials on an ongoing basis.

We are convinced that regulatory cooperation advances the productivity and competitiveness of our nations and helps to protect our health, safety and environment. For instance, cooperation on food safety will help protect the public while at the same time facilitate the flow of goods. We affirm our commitment to strengthen regulatory cooperation in this