

to make sure that countries that break the rules are held accountable.

And Mike believes, just as I believe and just as Penny believes, that our workers are the most competitive in the world, so they deserve a level playing field. And Mike's going to continue to fight for that level playing field in his new role, as he helps to move forward trade negotiations with both the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, and will also continue to advise me on a broad range of economic issues.

And as I think some of you have gathered, I've had a chance to get to know Penny and Mike not just as leaders and professionals, but also as friends. And one of the reasons I'm proud to nominate them is they don't forget what matters. They know this is not about just growing balance sheets. It's about growing opportunity for people. It's about growing a sense of security for the middle class. And most of all, they operate with integrity, and they under-

stand that public service is a privilege and you've got to do it right when you get involved on behalf of the American people.

So I just want to thank Penny and Mike and their extraordinary families for agreeing to serve in these roles. I urge the Senate to confirm Penny and Mike without delay, because they've got a lot of work to do. And I intend to work them to the bone as soon as they're official. [Laughter] So thank you very much, everybody. And thanks to their families for putting up with what I know will be challenging, but ultimately, the extraordinary reward of working on behalf of the American people.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Donald P. and Rose P. Traubert, children of Secretary-designate Pritzker.

The President's News Conference With President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico May 2, 2013

President Peña Nieto. Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon, everyone. First and foremost, after the bilateral meeting, I would like to extend the warmest welcome to President Barack Obama, his team joining him. Once again, we would like to welcome all of you with open arms, and we hope you feel at home.

We appreciate your will to have upon this meeting a relation built on mutual respect, collaboration for the benefit of our peoples.

Before we cover the areas that we have shared during our bilateral meeting, on behalf of the Mexican people, I would like to reiterate our solidarity for the regretful acts that were committed in your country: in Boston and in West, in Texas. Unfortunately, it took the lives of American citizens.

If you allow me, I would like to share with the audience and the members of the media the areas that we have addressed with President Obama during the meeting that we just have had.

First of all, we have reached an agreement that the relation between Mexico and the United States should be broad in terms of the areas that it covers. It should open up opportunity and collaboration spaces in different arenas, with a very clear purpose in mind to make North American region a more productive and competitive region that will, in result, trigger the enormous potential that our peoples have, that our nations have. And we're well aware of the fact that we can take stock of our bilateral relation. Within the framework of the agreements made, we have reached a new level of understanding, as our two new administrations that begin roughly at the same time: the second term of President Obama and my administration.

Among the items that we covered, I can speak for how relevant trade and commerce is in the Mexico-U.S. relation. We have dimension of all the achievements made upon the free trade agreement and the benefits that our

economies have received from it. The exports made from the U.S. to its top trade partners, Mexico and Canada, this represents one-third, one out of each three products that are exported from the U.S. And only the relation with Mexico is higher than the one the U.S. has with European countries like the U.K., France, the Netherlands all together. Or the exports sent to China and Japan together doesn't reach the level that the U.S. has with Mexico.

I must stand out that the integration of our economies in the last years has shown to be relevant, and the content of exports sent out from Mexico have 40 percent of U.S. input. Therefore, I can conclude that the more growth Mexico shows and the more capacity to export, the more benefit the U.S. gets. Jobs are created in Mexico; therefore, jobs are created in the United States.

Therefore, one of the first agreements that we have made was to create a high-level dialogue that, within its framework, will foster trade and commerce with the United States. This means that for the first time—and probably, this is unprecedented—we will have the Mexican economic cabinet with their counterparts from various Government agencies from the United States, as well high-ranking officials. And we've heard from the President that in this group, the Vice President of the United States will participate in order to set a dialogue that will result in arrangements in terms of how the government can support all the efforts made by the private sector in order to have a stronger economic integration.

For this purpose, we have agreed that during the fall of this year, this high-level group will meet for the first time with the attendance of high-ranking officials to start working in the area of the economy.

We have also agreed to endeavor joint actions to have a safer border. Within the framework of the agreement made, we will have a 21st-century border that was about to be defined the work and action agenda that our teams have already set up. And now, through this agenda, we will have safer borders that will enable and expedite the transit of people and goods that every day cross our borders.

We have also agreed to create a binational group in order to find joint actions and joint mechanisms to support entrepreneurs in both of our countries, and by this, we will boost SMEs in our countries. We believe that this mechanism will serve as an enabler, and it will see further development for these small and medium-size companies that are present in both of our countries. And we hope that all the actions in a very near future will make the SMEs in the future becoming large enterprises. And this action will favor specifically young entrepreneurs in both of our countries.

Thirdly, we have agreed to boost our economy and our potential; we have agreed to create a bilateral forum on higher education, innovation, and research. Two government agencies will work together—CONACYT and the National Science Foundation from the U.S.—and presidents from Mexico and U.S. universities will be part of this group. And by this, more exchanges will happen between Mexico and the U.S., and students coming from the U.S. to Mexico.

We have agreed that higher education serves as a platform to boost the economic potential that we have in our nations. In order to compete with the world, specifically with highly developed countries where science and technology have been the target of their efforts and investment, it is fundamental that we have well-prepared youngsters with the skills necessary to give our economic development a greater strength and a greater capacity.

In a different arena, we have addressed security. We have both recognized the level of cooperation that the U.S. has shown towards the Mexican Government. And the new strategy in the area of security in our country has a very clear purpose, and that is to fight organized crime in all of its forms, be it drug dealing, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, or any crime perpetrated. We are not going to renounce to that responsibility as a Government and my administration. We're going to face crime in all of its forms.

But in our new strategy, we have emphasized the fact that we will reduce violence. Unfortunately, it affects coexistence between

Mexicans. To fight organized crime and reduce violence are not objectives that contradict each other. There is no clash between these two goals. These are two goals that fall within the framework of one same strategy. And President Obama's administration has expressed his will, as we know, to cooperate on the basis of mutual respect, to be more efficient in our security strategy that we are implementing in Mexico.

I have shared with President Obama, as well, what Mexico has done during the first months of my administration. I have shared with President Obama that Mexico has reached maturity in terms of its democracy. All political forces in the country have reached political maturity, have shown to be civil, and have managed to show respect to each other and also towards the Government of Mexico. Together, we have managed to set up a working agenda that, in result, will advance the reforms that will transform this structure that Mexico needs to boost its development. I have shared with President Obama the fact that we recognize all political voices in Mexico.

Finally, I would like to share with all of you that we fully agree that our nations, that our peoples must move from being neighbors to being part of a community. We are already part of a trade integration process. We have reached high levels of development. But still, there is potential to make of our nations, through a collaboration and integration of North America, we can make a more productive and a more competitive region.

I would like to conclude by quoting the words of former President Kennedy shared during his visit to Palacio Nacional 51 years ago, under former President Adolfo López Mateos. We have shared this quote with President Obama, but I would like to share it with all of you.

President Kennedy said to President López Mateos, "Geography has made us neighbors; tradition has made us friends." Let us not allow a gap fall between what nature has united. And that is why we vow so that this understanding, this dialogue climate that we have set up, in re-

sult, will give us more growth, more development, and more opportunities for our peoples.

Once again, allow me to reiterate, President Obama—and this goes for your delegation as well—you are warmly welcomed to Mexico, and I hope that your stay is fruitful and you enjoy your stay in Mexico as well.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Muchas gracias, Señor Presidente, to President Peña Nieto for your kind words and your extraordinary hospitality. As President-elect, you were the first leader I welcomed to the White House after our election. It was a sign of our extraordinarily close relationship between our two countries.

During Enrique's visit, I noted that he spent time as a student in the United States in one of our most beautiful States, the State of Maine. I must say, though: Maine is very cold, and so when I come here on a beautiful spring day here in this beautiful city, I understand why you came back home.

I want to thank you for your hospitality. I look forward to joining you and the First Lady, *la Señora* Rivera, this evening. And I want to thank all the people of Mexico for such a warm welcome. It's always a pleasure to visit.

As President Peña Nieto discussed, between our two countries, we're some 430 million people. Ten million—tens of millions of Mexican Americans enrich our national life in the United States. Well over 1 million Americans live here in Mexico. Every year, millions of tourists—most of them from the United States—visit this magnificent country. Every day, millions of workers in our countries earn a living from the jobs that are made possible by our trade, and more than 1 million people cross our shared border: businesspeople, students, educators, scientists, researchers, collaborating in every sphere of human endeavor.

In other words, Mexico and the United States have one of the largest, most dynamic relationships of any two countries on Earth. And yet we don't always hear about all aspects of these extraordinary ties because too often two issues get attention: security or immigration.

Obviously, these are serious challenges, and President Peña Nieto and I discussed them in depth today. I agreed to continue our close cooperation on security, even as the nature of that cooperation will evolve. As I told the President, it is obviously up to the Mexican people to determine their security structures and how it engages with other nations, including the United States. But the main point I made to the President is that we support Mexican Government's focus on reducing violence, and we look forward to continuing our good cooperation in any way that the Mexican Government deems appropriate.

I also reaffirmed our determination in the United States to meet our responsibilities: to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and to combat the southbound flow of illegal guns and cash that help to fuel violence.

Again, I want to pay tribute to the people of Mexico, who have made extraordinary sacrifices for their security and display great courage and resolve every day.

But even as we continue to deal with these urgent challenges, we can't lose sight of the larger relationship between our peoples, including the promise of Mexico's economic progress. I believe we've got a historic opportunity to foster even more cooperation, more trade, more jobs on both sides of the border, and that's the focus of my visit.

The United States and Mexico have one of the largest economic relationships in the world. Our annual trade has now surpassed \$500 billion, more than \$1 billion every day. We are your largest customer, buying the vast majority of Mexican exports. Mexico is the second largest market for U.S. exports. So, every day, our companies and our workers, with their integrated supply chains, are building products together. And this is the strong foundation that we can build on.

I want to commend President Peña Nieto and the Mexican people for the ambitious reforms that you've embarked on to make your economy more competitive, to make your institutions more effective. And I know it's hard, but it's also necessary.

Ultimately, only Mexicans can decide how Mexico reforms. But let me repeat what I told to the President: As Mexico works to become more competitive, you've got a strong partner in the United States, because our success is shared. When one of us prospers, both of us prosper. And that's the context for the progress that we made today.

As President mentioned, we're, first of all, creating a high-level dialogue to broaden and deepen our economic relationship. On our side, it will be led by members of my Cabinet. Vice President Biden will participate as well. Together with Mexico, we'll focus on increasing the connections between our businesses and workers, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship and making our economies even more competitive.

To that end, we also reaffirmed our goal of concluding negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership this year. This would be another major step in integrating our two economies and positioning us to compete in the fastest growing markets in the world, those in the Asia-Pacific region. We want to be able to sell more goods from Mexico and the United States. And if we're partnering together, we can do even better.

We agreed to continue to make our shared border even more efficient with new infrastructure and new technologies so it's even faster and cheaper to trade and do business together. We reaffirmed our commitment to the clean energy partnerships that allow our two countries to enhance our energy security and combat climate change. And I'm very pleased that we've agreed to expand collaborations and exchanges between our students, our schools, and our universities.

Just as Enrique once studied in our country, we want more Mexicans studying in the United States, and we want more American students studying here in Mexico. And we're going to focus on science and technology and engineering and math to help our young people, including our daughters, succeed in this global economy.

And finally, I updated the President on our efforts in the United States to pass commonsense,

comprehensive immigration reform that lives up to our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, including generations of Mexican Americans.

As we do, I think it's important for everybody to remember that our shared border is more secure than it's been in years. Illegal immigration attempts into the United States are near their lowest level in decades, and legal immigration continues to make both of our countries stronger and more prosperous and more competitive.

And this, in part, reflects the economic progress and greater opportunities here in Mexico. I think this progress should help inform the debate in the United States. And I'm optimistic that we're finally going to get comprehensive immigration reform passed.

I'll have much more to say about this and some other issues in my speech tomorrow. But for now, I want to express my gratitude to the President for his hospitality and also for your leadership. And given the progress that we're seeing here in Mexico, I see so many opportunities to continue to deepen the extraordinary friendship and common bond that we share between our two great nations and our two great peoples. I know we will do that.

So thank you very much. *Muchas gracias.*

Moderator. Now we will have a round of four questions. Marú Rojas from Radio Formula.

Border Security/Mexico-U.S. Relations

Q. To the President of Mexico, we welcome gladly that the agenda is broadened. There is no speculation on the priority topics to be included in your agendas. Could you clarify if this high-level group, please, as you have pointed out, will overcome efficiently the results of a fight that these two nations had on the issue of security? It seems to be that trade is now a priority; no longer security is.

And for President Obama, given your expertise during this second administration, what is your take on Enrique Peña Nieto's new administration in terms of reforms? You have acknowledged the reforms made so far. Is the U.S. Government seeing this reform as on the

part of the administration or a pact? Thank you.

President Peña Nieto. Thank you very much. We have relaunched our relationship, and we have agreed on the climate within which we're going to work on. We have defined our priorities. We don't want to make this relationship targeted on one single issue. We want to broaden our relation to include different areas, and we want to specially emphasize our relation on the trade relation potential between Mexico and the U.S.

We're also going to cover other areas. Of course, public safety is included, and we have shared our view on that topic to work towards reducing violence by combating efficiently organized crime.

And I must insist, we have reviewed the long list of potential and opportunities that we have identified in the economic relation between the U.S. and Mexico in the area of trade and commerce. President Obama has already put it for the U.S. We represent a market that receives their exports. We're the second export destination, and in our case, the United States ranks first. We need to identify the areas where we can supplement each other's production of goods and exports and goods from Mexico to the world, because these products have a high content of U.S. input.

As I have stated, this means that if Mexico does well in its productive capabilities—that is to say, by creating more labor and its capability to export more products—the U.S. will benefit, and vice versa.

That is why this high-level meeting foresees the participation of officials that are a part of my cabinet. The U.S. has not a tradition of having cabinets like the ones we have, but President Obama has decided that high-ranking officials from different Government agencies will participate, including the U.S. Vice President. They will be part of this high-level group that will define specific actions. That—what has been done so far in the private sector complementarity has happened. And we have seen a good flow of trade between our countries. There is no doubt that even when it has reached a certain level, we can push it further.

We can extend its capabilities if both of our governments identify the right mechanisms, the right formula to boost economic integration. And that is precisely the agreement that we have reached today.

President Obama. Well, first of all, just on the security issue, I think it's natural that a new administration here in Mexico is looking carefully at how it's going to approach what has obviously been a serious problem. And we are very much looking forward to cooperating in any ways that we can to battle organized crime, as President Peña Nieto stated.

And we anticipate that there's going to be strong cooperation, that on our side of the border, we have continued work to do to reduce demand and to try to stem the flow of guns and cash from north to south.

So this is a partnership that will continue. I think that President Peña Nieto and his team are organizing a vision about how they can most efficiently and effectively address these issues. And we will interact with them in ways that are appropriate, respecting that ultimately, Mexico has to deal with its problems internally and we have to deal with ours as well.

With respect to the President's agenda, we had a wonderful relationship with President Calderón and the previous administration. The bonds between our two countries go beyond party. If a Republican President replaces me, there's still going to be great bonds between Mexico and the United States because not just the geography, but friendship and our interactions.

But what I have been impressed with is the President's boldness in his reform agenda. He's tackling big issues. And that's what the times demand. We live in a world that is changing rapidly, and in both the United States and in Mexico we can't be caught flatfooted as the world advances.

We have to make sure that our young people are the best educated in the world. And that means that some of the old ways of educating our kids may not work. We have to make sure that we're staying at the forefront of science and technology. And that means we've got to make sure that we're investing in those areas

appropriately. We have to make certain that our economies are competitive around the world and that when it comes to energy, that we're addressing issues like climate change, but also making sure that it's done in a way that's creating jobs and businesses on both sides of the border.

And so what I very much appreciate is the President's willingness to take on hard issues, because sometimes, I think there's a temptation, once somebody is elected, to just stay elected, as opposed to trying to make sure that we use our time as well as we can to bring about the kinds of changes will help move the country forward.

Syria/Immigration Reform

White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney. From the U.S. press, Julie Pace of the Associated Press.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Administration officials, including Secretary Hagel, say that the U.S. is now more seriously considering sending weapons to the Syrian rebels. How has your thinking on the effectiveness of such a step evolved as the violence in Syria has continued? And do you now see lethal aid as the best option available for a U.S. escalation in Syria?

I also had a question on immigration that I was hoping you both could address. Senator Rubio said today that on the immigration bill being considered on Capitol Hill may not pass the Senate unless the border security measures are strengthened. Are you concerned that an effort to bolster those border security triggers may make a pathway to citizenship almost impossible for many people already in the U.S. illegally, including many Mexicans?

President Obama. Well, first of all, on Syria, what Secretary Hagel said today is what I've been saying now for months, which is we are continually evaluating the situation on the ground, working with our international partners to find the best way to move a political transition that has Asad leaving, stabilizes the country, ends the killing, and allows the Syrian people to determine their own destiny. And we've made enormous investments, not just in

humanitarian aid, but also in helping the opposition organize itself and make sure that it has a consistent vision about how it's operating.

And as we've seen evidence of further bloodshed, potential use of chemical weapons inside of Syria, what I've said is, is that we're going to look at all options. And we know that there are countries that are currently providing lethal aid to the opposition. We also know that the Asad regime is getting not just lethal aid, but also training and support from countries outside of Syria. And we want to evaluate and make sure that every step that we take advances the day when Asad is gone and you have people inside of Syria who are able to determine their own destiny rather than engage in a long, bloody sectarian war.

And we'll continue to evaluate that every step of the way. But as I mentioned at my press conference back in DC, we want to make sure that we look before we leap and that what we're doing is actually helpful to the situation as opposed to making it more deadly or more complex.

With respect to immigration reform, I expressed to President Peña Nieto that I'm optimistic about us getting this done, because it's the right thing to do. We've seen leaders from both parties indicate that now is the time to get comprehensive immigration reform done. And part of what we discussed is the importance of getting it done precisely because we do so much business between our two countries; that for us to constantly bog down on these border issues and debates instead of moving forward with a 21st-century border that's maintaining security and that is making sure that legal immigration and legal trade and commerce is facilitated, but at the same time, ensures that we're not seeing a lot of illegal traffic and allows us to continue to be a nation of immigrants that has contributed so much to the wealth and prosperity of our Nation—if we're going to get that done, now is the time to do it.

And the bill that Senator Rubio and others put forward, I think, is a great place to start. It doesn't contain everything I want, and I suspect that the final legislation will not contain

everything I want. It won't contain everything that Republican leaders want either. But if we can get a basic framework that secures our border, building on the extraordinary success we've already had and the cooperation we've had with the Mexican Government; that cracks down on employers who are not taking the law seriously; that streamlines and enhances our legal immigration system, because the problems with our legal immigration system often force people into the illegal immigration system; and provides a pathway to citizenship for those who are currently living in the shadows inside of the United States—if it has those elements, then we should be able to build on that. And we can have arguments about other elements of this as we go further, but that's the core of what we need.

And frankly, we've put enormous resources into border security. Don't take my word for it: You had folks like Senator McCain and Senator Graham come down to the border and see the progress that's been made. There are areas where there's still more work to be done. Some of it, by the way, is not simply securing the United States from illegal traffic, some of it is also improving the infrastructure, which we talked about, for commerce to be able to come in smoothly, which creates jobs and helps our businesses both in the United States and in Mexico.

But what I'm not going to do is to go along with something where we're looking for an excuse not to do it as opposed to a way to do it. And I think we can. I think if all sides operate in good faith, that can be accomplished.

President Peña Nieto. On that matter, allow me to note that the Mexican Government acknowledges the efforts made by—the leadership made by President Barack Obama and your Congress to eventually pass the immigration bill. Mexico understands that this is a domestic affair for the U.S., and we wish you the best in this push that you're giving to immigration.

That is what I have to say in terms of the reform. Francisco Reséndiz from *El Universal* journal.

International Trade

Q. Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Mr. President, good afternoon. I would like to ask you both, specifically, what would be the most important outcome of President Obama's visit to Mexico, on the one hand? That is my question. And I would like to ask you as well: Have you considered the possibility to scale up the Mexico-U.S. relation and to integrate the region further? This could lead to a binational strategy in terms of fighting organized crime transnationally. Thank you very much for your answers.

President Peña Nieto. Thank you very much. In order to conclude this meeting, I would like to say that we have revitalized our relation between two governments that have two new administrations. This is President Obama's second term and this new administration for Mexico. The climate within which we are strengthening our relation is based on cordiality. Our relation is based on respect; it's based on cooperation and collaboration in all of those areas that we share a common interest.

We are not going to target this relation in one specific area. We want to address multiple issues. We want to work on an agenda that would allow us to identify all the potential areas that could help us advance our agenda.

We have emphasized trade and commerce during this visit because we have made a thorough analysis of the U.S. and Mexico trade relations. We have analyzed trade flows and how our economies supplement each other. And there is potential if we truly want to become in a more productive and more competitive North American region, well, that's what we need to do first to compete with other regions in the world.

Those are the highlights and specifically the agreements made to create a high-level dialogue, the bilateral forum to advance academic exchanges and to work towards science and innovation in both of our countries.

Also, we will have a binational dialogue to foster SMEs. Undoubtedly, these are mechanisms that, in result, will help us project fur-

ther the economic and trade relation that Mexico has with the United States.

And certainly, I must insist, let me say it very clearly, the cooperation that we already have with the U.S. in the area of security, let me tell you that under this new strategy, we're going to order things up. We're going to make it institutional. The channels will be very clear. We're going to use one single channel in order to make—to be more efficient, to attain better results.

And we have reached a very good understanding with the U.S. Government. They know why we're emphasizing violence reduction in our strategy. President Obama has expressed his respect to the strategy that the Mexico's Government will define in the area of security, and they have shown to be willing to cooperate with us in order to reach the goals that we have set up to have a peaceful Mexico where there is security.

President Obama. Well, I think President Peña Nieto summarized it well. Let me give you one specific example, and that is the work that our countries are doing together around the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the TPP.

Our largest trading partner is Canada. Our second largest trading partner is Mexico. So North America has already become far more integrated economically than it was 10 years ago or 20 years ago. There are suppliers from Mexico who sell to U.S. companies that in turn sell back into Mexico or sell to Canada or sell around the world. There are jobs that are created in Mexico, jobs that are created in the United States. All of our economies have grown as a consequence of the work that's taking place together.

But as I said, the world is changing. So the fastest growing part of the world is the Asia-Pacific region, huge markets. And by us working closely together to upgrade and revamp our trade relationship, we're also in a position to project outward and start selling more goods and services around the world. And that means more jobs and more businesses that are successful in Mexico and in the United States.

Some of that is going to be bilateral. So finding ways that we can reduce trade frictions,

improving our transportation and our infrastructure cross-border, how we can improve our clean energy cooperation. Already, you have a situation in which energy that is created in power plants in California sometimes is sold during nonpeak times into Mexico. And then when it's peak times in California, then it's sold back into California, which makes it more efficient on both sides of the border, and that reduces the cost for consumers on both sides. Well, those are the kinds of very specific areas that we can continue to refine and improve on. And that's what this high-level economic dialogue will accomplish.

But even as we're improving our bilateral negotiations, what it also allows us to do, then, is to say we're aligned in projecting both to the Pacific and to the Atlantic in saying, let's make sure that we're taking advantage of all the economic opportunities that are taking place around the world.

When the United States prospers, Mexico does well. And when Mexico does well, the United States does well. And that I think is the main message of my visit here today. That's what I want to make sure we're focused on, because certainly in the United States—and I know here in Mexico as well—when the economy is growing, when people have opportunity, then a lot of our other problems are solved, or at least we have the resources to solve them. And so that is something that we really want to make sure that we're focused on during the rest of my term in office and during President Peña Nieto's term in office.

Family Planning and Access to Contraception/Gun Control

Press Secretary Carney. Next from the U.S. press, Kathleen Hennessey of the Los Angeles Times.

Q. Thanks to you both. Mr. President, I wanted to ask about a domestic issue if I could, the FDA rule on the morning-after pill that came out this week that prohibits girls under 15 from buying the "morning after" pill without a prescription. I'm wondering if—what your opinion on the rule is, and if it resolves some of the concerns you expressed last year

when you talked about your role as a father and how that's influenced your thinking on this, and if you believe that there's scientific evidence to justify the 15-year-old cutoff.

And for President Peña Nieto, I wanted to ask you about gun control. The President's most recent attempt to pass new legislation on guns just failed in the Senate. You've spoken out on this before. I'm wondering if you talked to him about this in your meeting and if you would urge him—have urged him—to try again, or if there's more that you think the White House could do administratively, without approval from Congress, to resolve the issue. Thank you.

President Obama. Well, first of all, on the FDA issue, let me make a couple points clear. Number one, this is a decision made by the FDA and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. It's not my decision to make.

The first time around, where there were no age restrictions, Secretary Sebelius expressed concerns, and I supported those concerns. And I gave voice to them in the press room back in DC.

I—the rule that's been put forward by the FDA, Secretary Sebelius has reviewed, she's comfortable with. I'm comfortable with it.

The second point I want to make is, I'm very supportive of contraception because I think it's very important that women have control over their health care choices and when they are starting a family. That's their decision to make. And so we want to make sure that they have access to contraception. As you know we had a little bit of a fuss around what we're doing with the Affordable Care Act, but I very much think that's the right thing to do.

So the current ruling is actually—you phrased it as prohibiting. I think you could phrase it as, they're now allowing these contraceptives to be—contraceptives to be sold over the counter for 15-year-olds and older. It has not resolved the question of girls younger than 15.

There was a court case that came up that is being appealed by the Justice Department. That's a Justice Department decision. My understanding is, part of it has to do with the

precedent and the way in which the judge handled that case. And my suspicion is, is that the FDA may now be called upon to make further decisions about whether there's sufficient scientific evidence for girls younger than 15.

That's the FDA's decision to make. That's Secretary Sebelius's decision to review. But I'm very comfortable with the decision they've made right now based on solid scientific evidence for girls 15 and older.

I know you didn't direct the question to me, though I do want to editorialize just for a second about gun control. As I think all your Mexican counterparts understand and as I talked about with President Peña Nieto, we recognize we've got obligations when it comes to guns that are oftentimes being shipped down south and contributing to violence here in Mexico.

But frankly, what I'm most moved by are the victims of gun violence not just in Mexico, but back home, like the parents in Newtown. And I said the day that the legislation that had been proposed by Senators Manchin and Toomey in the Senate, the day that that failed to get 60 votes, that that was not the end, this was the beginning.

The last time we had major gun legislation it took six, seven, eight tries to get passed. Things happen somewhat slowly in Washington. But this is just the first round. And when you've got 90 percent of the American people supporting the initiatives that we put forward around background checks and making sure that drug traffickers, for example, can't just send in somebody with a clean record to purchase guns on their behalf with no way of tracking or stopping that. When you have commonsense legislation like that that the overwhelming majority of Americans, including gun owners, those of us who strongly support the Second Amendment, all of us supporting, I believe that eventually, we're going to get that done. And I'm going to keep on trying.

So I didn't mean to horn in on President Peña Nieto's response, but I just want to be clear that we're going to keep at this. One thing I am is persistent.

President Peña Nieto. In that regard, I believe that we have an agreement with President

Obama's words. And what Mexico would like to see happening in the U.S., that is to control better the sales of weapons. And we cannot ignore the efforts made by President Obama's administration in order to approve the better control of weapons. If Mexico could add itself up to this important sector of the U.S. population—90 percent in favor of gun control—we would do it. But this is a domestic issue in the United States.

In terms of the areas that we are working in collaboration, areas that we can address, is specifically the fact—to avoid the fact that weapons bought in the U.S. could be brought to Mexico. Regretfully, many lives of Mexicans have been lost due to that illegal smuggling of weapons bought in the United States have reached Mexican soil. We have made our commitment, and we're working on it to work together towards making our borders safer. We are fighting illegal smuggling of weapons.

Mexico vows towards the efforts made by your Government, and we'll keep on supporting you to have better gun control in your country. But we're not going to wait until that happens. We are working by using more intelligence information, and we are taking action to have safer borders so that we don't have weapons being smuggled into Mexico that regretfully end up hurting many Mexicans.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

President Peña Nieto. Muchas gracias.

President Obama. Muchas gracias.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:24 p.m. at the Palacio Nacional. In his remarks, the President referred to Angelica Rivera, wife of President Peña Nieto; former President Felipe de Jesus Calderón Hinojosa of Mexico; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and Edward R. Korman, judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. President Peña Nieto referred to the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT). President Peña Nieto, the moderator, and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.