

[Applause, the Members rising.]

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
VICENTE FOX, PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES

(Portions of the following address were delivered in Spanish, with a simultaneous translation in English.)

President FOX. Thank you. The applause in this room welcoming me has been heard by 100 million Mexicans which, in the name of them, I thank all of you for being so kind with us in Mexico.

Honorable Members of the Congress of the United States of America, it is a distinct honor for me to meet you here in the oldest legislative assembly on the American continent, a Congress whose deliberations have such a strong influence not only on the history of this country, but of the entire world.

This is an historic moment between our two nations in which the governments of Mexico and the United States have decided to begin a new era of friendship and cooperation to benefit both our peoples.

Mexico and the United States wish to bring together our principles and interests, as well as our traditions and hopes. The meeting of our two countries at the dawning of this new century may represent the beginning of the most promising chapters in our common history.

My presence in this Chamber bears witness to that will to bring our countries closer together. It is our very firm wish as Mexicans and Americans to establish a new relationship, a more mature, full and equitable relationship based on mutual trust.

Honorable Members of the United States Congress, I stand before you today with a simple message. Trust needs to be the key element of our new relationship. I am aware that for many Americans and for many Mexicans the idea of trusting their neighbor may seem risky and perhaps even unwise. I am sure that many on both sides of the border would rather stick to the old saying that good fences make good neighbors.

This perception has deep roots in history. In Mexico, they derive from a long-held sense of suspicion and apprehension about its powerful neighbor. And in the United States, they stem from previous experiences with a political regime governing Mexico which for the most part was regarded as undemocratic and untrustworthy.

Our countries, thus, cautiously distanced themselves from one other to pursue this frame of mind; but circumstances have changed. We are now bound closely together, whether in trade or tourism, economic or family ties. Our links are countless and ever growing. No two nations are more important to the immediate prosperity and well-being of one another than Mexico and the United States.

That is why our two great nations must go forward together to establish

wider and deeper forms of cooperation and understanding. In this task, trust will be essential to achieve our goals. We must, therefore, leave behind the suspicion and indifference that have so often in the past been the source of misunderstandings between our two peoples, for it is only by engaging more fully as neighbors and partners that we can make a difference to our societies, and we now have before us a historic opportunity to achieve this end which has proved so elusive in the past.

We intend to be forthright in our friendship and unwavering in our commitment. For as Corinthians states so simply and truly, it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. The relationship between Mexico and the United States has changed in one fundamental way. True democracy in Mexico, for decades an unfulfilled dream, is now a reality.

As a result of last year's vote, Mexico now has a legitimate and truly democratic leadership. This has meant a change in government, but it is also a reflection of a profound change in the values and aspirations of Mexican society. I am, therefore, determined to make democracy and tolerance the principles that guide all government actions, and to ensure that public institutions in Mexico become the guarantors of the rights and highest aspirations of citizens.

I have also pledged to address the most pressing problems now confronting Mexico, some of which are perhaps unintended, but nonetheless tangible legacies from our authoritarian past. Among them, the poverty and inequality that for so many decades have condemned millions of Mexicans to a life of disadvantage and insecurity; the crippling disease of corruption, which has had such an insidious effect on the life of our country; and the fragility and weakness of our judicial system, which itself must be reformed in order to bring an end to impunity and to consolidate the rule of law throughout the country.

I am convinced that it is time to bring Mexico up to date on all fronts, both within and beyond our borders. It is also time to bring Mexico up to date in its relations with the United States. Both of our nations now fully share, without qualification, the fundamental values of freedom and democracy. Thanks to those democratic changes inaugurated in Mexico last year on July 2, the time has come for Mexico and the United States to trust each other.

Simple trust, that is what has been sorely absent in our relationship in the past, and that is what is required for us to propel and strengthen our relationship in the days, weeks, and years to come. Let us foster trust between our societies. Let us build trust along our common borders. Let us take the road less-traveled-by and build confidence every step of the way. Only trust will allow us to constructively tackle the challenges our two nations face as we

undertake to build a new partnership in North America.

Take, for example, our common struggle against the scourge of drugs. It should be clear by now that no government, however powerful, will be able to defeat on its own the forces of transnational organized crime that lie behind drug trafficking. Intense cooperation is required to confront this threat, and trust is certainly a prerequisite of cooperation.

This is why since I took office last year, Mexico has enhanced its cooperation with U.S. authorities. We have arrested key drug kingpins and extradited drug traffickers wanted by the United States Justice Department.

However, much more needs to be done. Trust will be crucial to enhance intelligence and information sharing between both governments. We are committed to becoming a full partner with the United States in the fight against drugs. But trust requires that one partner not be judged unilaterally by the other.

Members of this honorable Congress, give trust a chance. Give both governments a chance. The bill to suspend drug certification for 3 years, S. 219, will allow us to move forward. In the fight against drugs, cooperation is not a nicety; it is a necessity.

We ask that you demonstrate your trust in us by passing this legislation as a gesture of your faith and confidence in this new country that we are working so hard to build.

We must also trust each other if we are to deal successfully with the issue of migration. In recent months, President George Bush and I have already shown our willingness to trust each other by agreeing to discuss this most complex matter.

As the history of this country shows, migration has always rendered more economic benefits to the United States than the costs it entails. Let us also not forget that migrants invariably enrich the cultural life of the land that receives them. Many among you have a parent or a grandparent who came into this country as an immigrant from another land.

Therefore, allow me to take this opportunity to pay homage to those brave men and women who in the past took on the challenge of building a new life for themselves and for their families in this country.

And let me also salute the Mexican migrants living in this country and say to them, Mexico needs you. We need your talent and your entrepreneurship. We need you to come home one day and play a part in building a strong Mexico.

When you return, when you retire, we need you to come back and help us convince other Mexicans that the future lies in a prosperous and democratic Mexico. My dear countrymen, Mexico will not forget you and will support you. We will not fail you.

There is one crucial fact that we must not lose sight of. Migration flows that respond to deep underlying economic incentives are all but impossible

to stop and must instead be regulated. Mexico is therefore seeking an agreement that will lend greater security and orderliness to the migration flows between our two countries.

That is why trust in dealing with migration entails reaching common ground to address the status of Mexican migrants already working and living in the United States, already contributing to enrich this Nation. Let me be clear about this: regularization does not mean rewarding those who break the law. Regularization means that we will provide them with the legal means to allow them to continue contributing to this great Nation.

The agreement that we seek would establish a higher ceiling for permanent visas awarded to Mexicans coming to this country, and it would also expand opportunities for Mexican workers to obtain temporary work visas so they can enter the United States safely and legally. Additionally, the agreement would require us to enhance our cooperative efforts to improve border safety, save lives and crack down on criminal smuggling gangs, or polleros. And, finally, it would demand that we promote economic growth in Mexico, and we know this is our responsibility, to promote specific opportunities for all those kids and young persons specifically in those regions that are the source of most migrants.

Progress regarding migration will not be easy. Yet it is essential that we maintain our commitment to an open and frank discussion, so that we may find a lasting solution that is acceptable to both our countries.

Such a discussion can only take place in a climate of trust. We have a fundamental decision to make. It is a decision that provides us with an opportunity to achieve the highest aspiration of any politician, leaving a lasting legacy of well-being to their people.

Mexico and the United States must also work constructively to promote our common values within our region. By adopting a clear and consistent stance, our governments may jointly address some of the most relevant and pressing issues of our hemisphere, such as the deepening of democracy and the promotion of human rights. This should be our most noble cause in the Americas and in the rest of the world.

On issues of common concern, such as the situation in Colombia, the promotion of economic development across Central America, the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the negotiation of a democratic charter for the OAS, or the shared goal of fostering financial stability and disarming financial crises throughout our region, it is vital that Mexico and the United States work together, each one as a partner that we are, in building peace and stability throughout the Americas on the basis of our own principles and interests.

Evidently, we will not always see eye to eye. But both countries should convey to each other, in all sincerity and

candor, their respective perceptions about how best to tackle issues of common concern for the well-being of our peoples. Trust will allow us to do this.

Members of the Congress of the United States of America, we have before us today the opportunity to dramatically change the future of our relationship. This meeting between Mexico and the United States is today the meeting between two democracies willing to build a better future.

The relationship between Mexico and the United States is now in our hands. It is up to us to open wide the windows of opportunity before us. We are the architects of our common destiny.

This means that we must re-create the relationship between our two great nations in a conscious and deliberate manner, moving forward firmly without leaving anything to chance. We must fully share this commitment in order to later enjoy together the fruits of our common labors.

Obviously, we all know full well that there are no easy answers nor magical solutions to the challenges faced by Mexico and the United States, but there is a path along which we can make progress with firm steps towards their solution, the path of mutual trust, trust that our governments will always behave with integrity in their daily work, trust that the strength of our relationship as partners and friends is strong, trust in our future of shared prosperity.

□ 1145

Honorable Members of the U.S. Congress, the political change currently under way in Mexico is the most powerful reason why we are now able to establish new forms of friendship and cooperation with the United States. We are ready to turn this change into the seed of a better future for both of our countries.

I hope that the United States will embrace this historic opportunity to build a new era of prosperity and understanding between our peoples. It requires will, as well as vision, to take advantage of this favorable turn in history and forge a new friendship between Mexicans and Americans.

This legislative body, along with its peers in Mexico, can play a decisive role in bringing our two countries together. You are a key partner in fostering trust between our two peoples.

Years ago, the United States Congress faced a difficult decision and chose to vote in favor of a greater integration with Mexico through the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The partnership between Mexico and the United States is still incomplete. There remain many unresolved issues that must be dealt with in order to achieve our common goals as partners. One of these goals is an issue which this great body will soon consider and which entails an important obligation under NAFTA; it is the issue of access to the United States for Mexican trucks. For this, as in many other

items of our common agenda, we need your trust. Trust will allow both countries to comply responsibly and maturely with their obligations to one another.

The overarching question is not, then, whether we can afford to trust each other, but whether we can afford not to. The growing convergence of our nations can lead to shared responsibility and prosperity and to the strengthening of those values that we have in common.

Let us begin anew, as those who founded our modern nations once did, remembering on both sides that there can be no friendship without trust and no trust without true commitment.

When history comes knocking on our doors, as it has done now, bold decisions are required. Let us make one today. Let us decide to trust one another.

John F. Kennedy believed in new beginnings. In accepting his party's nomination as President he spoke of a New Frontier, "We stand today on the edge of a New Frontier . . . the New Frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises—it is a set of challenges." That was in 1960.

Today, at the dawn of a new century, our two great nations face new challenges. But we do so with new opportunities, unimaginable even a few years ago.

Our new frontier will be conquered not by confrontation, but through cooperation; not by threats, but by common aspirations; not by fear, but by trust.

My friends, let us pledge today to create a new special partnership between the United States and Mexico for the benefit of our two great peoples.

Senoras y senores:

Viva Mexico!

Viva Estados Unidos!

Viva nuestro futuro en comun!

[Applause, the Members rising.]

At 11 o'clock and 51 minutes a.m., the President of the United Mexican States, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet;

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The purpose of the joint meeting having been completed, the Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly, at 11 o'clock and 52 minutes a.m., the joint meeting of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The House will continue in recess until 12:15 p.m.