

# Mexico and the United States: Sharing a Border and a Common Purpose

*Hillary Rodham Clinton*  
United States Secretary of State

*At the invitation of Mexican Foreign Secretary Patricia Espinosa, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton traveled to Mexico City and Monterrey, Mexico from March 25-26, 2009. While in Mexico, Secretary Clinton discussed a broad range of bilateral and international issues of mutual interest.*

*The following is a transcript of Secretary Clinton's remarks, reprinted by permission of the Department of State, delivered at TecMilenio University on March 26, 2009.*

\* \* \*

I am both delighted and honored to be here with you this afternoon. I am impressed by this campus and by the enthusiasm of the young people whom I met as I was coming into this room. And I thank them, even though they're not here with us, for being part of this digital webcast town hall. And it's exciting that we can use technology together on a tech campus to connect up with one another and communicate.

I want to thank Marco for his kind words and his excellent presentation. I want to also thank very much Mr. Zambrano, who eloquently described the mission of this university, and of course, Tech de Monterrey and the extraordinary role that it has, and now along with TecMilenio, will be playing in the development, growth and prosperity of Mexico.

I am delighted to be joined here by my counterpart, the Mexican foreign secretary, Secretary Espinosa, who has spent a great deal of time with me yesterday talking about a range of issues that are important to our country. Also to Ambassador Sarukhán, thank you for being here as well. We had excellent meetings, and I appreciate their both coming to Monterrey.

I also want to acknowledge Governor González Parás. I just met with the governor and some of his staff about the border cooperation going on between a border state such as this and others along both sides of the border between the United States and Mexico.

You know, for millions of people in my country and yours, Mexico and the United States are more than good neighbors, more than trading partners. They are places of shared customs and ancestral heritage, of common history and a common future. Indeed, Mexico and the United States are, in many ways, one family.

Our people and our nations are connected by the busiest border in the world, a robust economic partnership, a firm commitment to democratic values, a common ecosystem, and a vibrant exchange of cultures that has been nurtured by generations of immigrants and their families.

Today, these ties are being put to new tests as we attempt to seize the unprecedented opportunities of a new century while also addressing its urgent threats, including a global economic crisis that has spared neither the United States nor Mexico, and amplifies the already serious challenges we share.

I've come to Mexico this week because the United States, the new Obama Administration, believes that the relationship between our countries must be even stronger in the future than it is today. And to make it so, we are committed to a partnership built on comprehensive engagement, greater balance, shared responsibility, and a joint attention to hemispheric and global issues.

- ◆ Comprehensive engagement, because making the most of this century's opportunities, and addressing the complex problems we both face, from security to economics to immigration to climate change, demand all the tools that we have at our disposal.
- ◆ Balance because strong partnerships are based on listening, learning and mutual respect.
- ◆ Shared responsibility, because the United States and Mexico can do more, and do better, to meet our shared challenges.
- ◆ And greater outreach across the hemisphere and around the world because to achieve global progress and prosperity, we must rely on global, not just local, approaches. And where they don't exist, we must work together to invent them.

This is especially important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world in which we live. We are now linked to peoples and nations throughout the world in ways unimaginable even a generation ago. The interdependence between Mexico and the United States is so much greater because of our historic, economic, geographic and cultural closeness. That's what makes our relationship unique. And it's why it deserves our best thinking and our commitment, especially involving young people like the students here, so that together we can forge a more prosperous, peaceful and progressive future.

You know, it is the custom in my country that when we elect a new president, the first foreign leader that new president meets is the Mexican president. And President Obama continued that tradition when he met with President Calderón before he was even inaugurated. I'm very pleased that President Obama will be coming here in just a few weeks. He will also see President Calderón at the G-20 summit next week in London, and again at the Summit of the Americas toward the end of April in Trinidad, Tobago.

So over the past two days, as I have had such productive meetings with the foreign minister, with President Calderón [and] other leaders committed to this broad partnership, we've discussed a range of issues. I've also met nongovernmental organizations and citizens forming collaborations beyond government that improve people's lives and contribute to a sense of possibility and potential, even for those who sometimes find themselves on the margins of society. I know that Mexico, like the United States, understands that the only way we will be successful in this new century is through concerted action and partnership with others. Perhaps it was possible at one time to ignore other countries, other cultures, other societies, but that no longer is possible.

And I know that one challenge that we will work with you to address is drug trafficking that has terrorized some Mexican communities, especially those along the border. And I join my voice to all those who know that this situation is intolerable for honest, law-abiding citizens of Mexico, my country, or anywhere people of conscience live. This affects not only the government, the law enforcement, the military, the judicial system of Mexico and the people of Mexico, but of the more than 60 million Americans who live in US border states. That is why I have been very clear in my time here. The United States recognizes that drug trafficking is not only Mexico's problem. It is also an American problem. And we, in the United States, have a responsibility to help you address it.

Traffickers use guns purchased in the United States to fight each other and to challenge the Mexican military and police. Their enterprise is financed in part by our country's demand for drugs, which sends up to \$25 billion a year in illicit drug profits back into the hands of the drug kingpins. Drug profits are propping up cartels financially allowing them to continue their campaign of violence and lawlessness. Earlier this week, the Obama Administration announced a comprehensive plan to increase security along our border, including more officers to stop the illegal flow of guns into Mexico.

We are closely working with Mexican leaders through the Merida Initiative. And through this partnership between our nations, the United States has pledged \$1.4 billion to train and equip Mexican law enforcement, facilitate the gathering and sharing of information, and help to strengthen your judicial system and public institutions.

Before coming to Monterrey this morning, I visited a police base in Mexico City to see the technology that Mexico is already using to assist with law enforcement. It's an effort that has been enhanced by the Merida Initiative, but it's one undertaken by the Calderón Administration, and I was very impressed by what I saw. The dedication, the high morale, the commitment of the young men and women who are prepared to risk their lives for the country they love was inspiring.

Yesterday, I also announced the creation of a bilateral office where Mexican and US officials can work together in Mexico City to coordinate our efforts to fight drug trafficking. And the Obama Administration intends to provide more than \$80 million in urgently needed funding for Blackhawk helicopters to enhance the capacity of Mexican law enforcement officers. I saw some of those Blackhawks at the base I visited this

morning, and heard firsthand about how it is helping to right the disadvantage that law enforcement has had, given the military assault weapons and the other ways that the drug cartels have been spreading lawlessness and violence.

We are committed to supporting the Merida Initiative and other efforts initiated by the Calderón Administration, by the Government of Mexico, and supported by people across the political spectrum. Everyone whom I have met has told me that this is an issue that goes beyond politics. This is an issue that goes to the heart of what Mexico will be and what kind of security can be given to the next generation of young Mexicans to build their futures, create their lives, start their businesses, raise their families right here at home.

I know that there are problems. There are problems in any country. I spend my time thinking about the problems in my own country as well. Every country, just like every family, has problems. Anyone who tells you they don't, check to see whether they're from outer space.

So I have had very fruitful discussions with Mexican leaders who are committed to strengthening public institutions, to rooting out corruption, to helping make sure that the judicial and police reforms passed in recent months will come into full fruition.

But this is not just a problem for governments. This is the responsibility of citizens as well as leaders. It's the responsibility of business people as well as generals. It's the responsibility of academics as well as police officers. It is a mutual responsibility. And it's particularly important for the young people of Mexico who have enormous power right now to strengthen your democracy, to call for more reforms, to shine a bright light on corruption wherever you might see it, and stand up with those who are doing right. Mexican young people can be a transformative force at this critical juncture in your country's history. And I urge you to seize this moment and join your voices in this struggle.

When one thinks about how important it is to tackle corruption and drugs, that's not the only solution. There is so much more work to be done. Progress can only take hold if it is built on the foundation of economic growth and material improvements in people's daily lives. One of the biggest challenges facing democracies everywhere—and I include my own country in 2009—is we must demonstrate unequivocally that democracy produces positive outcomes for hardworking people who get up every day and do the best they can to raise their children, who go to work, who work hard, and deserve to have that hard work rewarded.

So we will support efforts to create jobs and expand education and health care and bolster opportunities here in Mexico, because we think that's not only a challenge we share as fellow democracies, but that your prosperity and security is absolutely connected to our own.

The global economic crisis has reinforced how closely our economies are linked. More than a billion dollars in goods and services pass between our countries every single

day. Twenty-two states in the United States depend on Mexico as their first or second export market. So when Mexico's economy rises, millions of people in the United States see their incomes rise as well. And the same is true in reverse: The United States is Mexico's number one trading partner. And we, therefore, have a major impact on the strength of your economy here in Monterrey and across Mexico.

We must do more to ensure that the benefits of trade are more evenly distributed, and President Obama is committed to doing that. There is no question that our economic pact with Mexico has increased prosperity for both nations in the past. But now we are seeing the flipside; when one of us struggles, the effects are magnified and mutual. Slowing trade flows, job losses in both nations, a falling peso, the dwindling remittances that Mexican immigrants send home to their families—these are all evidence of our connection.

But it's also true that if we don't demonstrate that trade between our countries benefits people at the bottom, then people begin to wonder, where is the money going? We're having a similar debate in the United States right now. Where did all the money go? We know that people are losing their jobs. Unemployment is climbing. Government and citizens together must answer the questions that people legitimately ask of their elected leadership.

So we have to begin by getting our respective houses in order. President Obama has taken unprecedented steps to address our economic crisis by correcting deficiencies in our banking and regulatory systems, and stimulating our economy to produce jobs and get America back on the track to economic recovery. Here in Mexico, President Calderón has led the push to strengthen your country's economy by announcing three stimulus packages in the past year, including a comprehensive infrastructure development plan. Both of our presidents have voiced strong support for continuing our policy of free trade and open trade as part of a broader competitive agenda.

That is the right response, but we also have to recognize that we must demonstrate the benefits broadly so that people believe that this is in their interests. Building a strong economy does not only mean implementing smart policies from the top down. It also means advancing opportunities from the bottom up; the material conditions of people's lives, whether they have access to education and health care, enough food to eat, shelter over head and a decent job with a fair wage, speaks to our capacity to raise our children prepared for global citizenship, to build a workforce that can compete in a global economy and have communities that are safe, secure and prosperous.

That is why economic progress must be measured in more than trade flows or currency values, but in the real meaningful improvements in people's daily lives. I believe education is the foundation for that kind of progress. Yesterday, I was pleased to meet with students and teachers from indigenous communities throughout Mexico who have been given the chance, through a scholarship program, to study in the United States. They didn't come from families that had a history of education. They didn't come from affluent families. But what that experience meant for them was so moving to hear.

They talked about how they had learned what they could give back in their own communities. They found the voice and the strength to take on issues like gender inequality. They were prepared to be leaders. I was privileged to announce a new English language program called Access, again focused on talented but not well-off Mexican students, to make it easier for them to learn English and to participate in foreign exchange programs. We want to dig deep into our two societies to find the talented young man or young woman who might otherwise never find his or her way to this campus; who might never, in my own country, have a chance to go to college. We are losing talent every day because of inequality, because of lost opportunities.

And I am strengthened by my experience in seeing the results of what education can bring, not just to individuals and their families, but to communities, societies and countries. We also have the opportunity to amplify the impact of nongovernmental organizations and civil society because of new technologies. The State Department is working with several companies, including Google and YouTube, Howcast, and AT&T, to develop innovative ways to use networking technologies so we can put more power in the hands of citizens, giving people online tools to track corruption or report on the activity of cartel members without risking their safety.

Young people around the world are poised to lead this kind of innovative citizen empowerment, which is why the United States is supporting a summit here in Mexico of Alliance of Youth Movements, to connect up young people working to end violence throughout Latin America, whether it's domestic violence or dating violence or lawlessness in the streets of your community, we must all take a stand against violence. And this is a new tool that will help.

We are supporting efforts like this because we know we've got to continue to look outward, not retreat inward in the face of the economic crisis. And Mexico, too, has adopted this view. And I want to congratulate the foreign secretary and the ambassador and others in the national government for being a powerful voice on humanitarian issues, particularly the ongoing crisis in Haiti. As the chair of the Children and Armed Conflict group at the United Nations, the Mexican Government has led the call to stop the use of child soldiers worldwide. The United States is eager to work with Mexico on these efforts, and [we] look forward to Mexico's presidency of the United Nations' Security Council next month.

There's also a tremendous opportunity for partnership in developing clean energy. This is another area where Mexico is a leader. Last December, Mexico became the first middle-income country in the world to pledge a 50 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This was a visionary step that Mexico took, and it is one that other nations, including the United States, can learn from. Mexico has also committed to producing more than a quarter of your electricity from renewable energy sources in the next four years.

Now is that possible? Well, we won't know until we try. Mexico has all the ingredients for making it possible, potential wind energy, ethanol, biogas, modernizing the

oil industry, cutting emissions, increasing energy efficiency. Clean energy will move both of our nations closer to a healthier and safer environment, and create green jobs. This is an issue where young people, again, are leading. We need to be doing everything possible to generate new good ideas. You know, there is a college, a university in New York, Cornell University, where some of the young people there are going around to restaurants and collecting used vegetable oil and filtering it and using it to power their cars. I mean, it smells like french fries going down the road. That should be very attractive to a lot of people.

I will be visiting later this afternoon the Benlesa biogas plant, where universities from Mexico and the United States will sign an agreement to expand our collaboration on clean energy research.

Now, despite all the ways that I think our nations and our peoples are on the same wavelength, we will not always act as one. Like all families, we will have disagreements. We have different backgrounds. We have different cultures. But meaning that we are family gives us the opportunity to disagree without jeopardizing our fundamental bonds.

So we should remember as we pursue this broader and more equal partnership with Mexico, that whatever our differences, we will always work hard to resolve them. We will work jointly with our Mexican friends to find solutions that arise in our trade relationship, including rules on trucking and agriculture, but we won't lose sight of our overall advantage if we continue to support free and open trade.

We will discuss how the United States should achieve comprehensive immigration reform, and we won't waver from our shared goal of an immigration policy that is effective and humane. The United States is a nation both of immigrants and of laws. And the millions of Mexican Americans have enriched our culture, our understanding of the world, and indeed, our national identity.

Last night in Mexico City, thanks to the minister, I met with a group of remarkable Mexican women. And over a wonderful dinner, we shared stories and perspectives, we talked about our concerns and our hopes for the future. And we talked about a lot of important issues, but before long it was clear that what we really cared about is what kind of lives we led, what kind of people we were, how our families were doing, and what was happening to our children. That is the ultimate tie that connects us. And it's what gives me so much hope and optimism.

We will always face difficult days in a life, in a family, in a community, a country. But believing that we can do better tomorrow, resolve that the most important task of any country is the preparation of the next generation. To plant trees that we may never sit under so that they can shade our children and our children's children. And that is the kind of future I hope we will make together by harnessing our energy and our talents, innovative spirit, we will create a better world worthy of every single child in America and Mexico. And we will provide the opportunities so that each and every one of those boys and girls have a chance, if they work at it, to live up to their God-given potential.

We may have a border between us, but we have a common purpose. And if we believe in that, there's no limit to what we can accomplish together.

Thank you all very much.