

Remarks by President of United States Barack Obama

The White House, East Room
March 03, 2011

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Good afternoon. I am delighted to welcome my friend and partner, President Calderón, back to the White House. I want to discuss our meeting today and then address the situation in Libya.

President Calderón was last here, along with First Lady Señora Zavala, for a very productive state visit last spring — a visit that reflected the new era of respect and cooperation and partnership between our two countries. We've since worked together as global partners at the G20 summits in Toronto and Seoul and at the APEC Summit in Yokohama. And I very much appreciate President Calderón being here today to deepen the cooperation that is so essential to the prosperity and security of both of our countries.

Of course, the relationship between the United States and Mexico isn't measured just in the partnership between two Presidents. It's evident every day in the strong bonds between our two societies. It's the thousands of people who work together, at every level — federal, states and community levels — to keep our citizens safe, to keep our economies growing. It's the tens of thousands of students and teachers and researchers in exchanges between our schools and our universities.

It's the one million people who cross our shared border every day — tourists and business people — sustaining one of the largest trading relationships in the world. And it's our families and our friends — the many Americans living in Mexico, and the tens of millions of Mexican Americans who make outstanding contributions to this country every single day.

As I said, we're also global partners. As part of the G20, we're advancing the global economic recovery, and I look forward to visiting Mexico when President Calderón hosts the G20 next year. Together, we've responded to the earthquake in Haiti, and we're securing the world's vulnerable nuclear materials. I especially want to commend President Calderón for Mexico's successful leadership of the Cancun Conference, including progress toward a Green Fund that he himself helped to get started and champion and which will help developing countries adapt to climate change.

Most recently, our governments have spoken out forcefully for the human rights of the Libyan people, and Mexico played a leading role at the United Nations in suspending Libya from the Human Rights Council.

President Calderón, this not only reflects our commitment to the shared values of freedom and justice and rule of law. It's also another example of Mexico's global leadership — as you said in your address to our Congress last year — that “Mexico is standing tall” and ready to take its “rightful place in the world.”

It is this appreciation of the great bonds between Americans and Mexicans, and the values and responsibilities that we hold in common that allowed us to make progress once again today.

We're working to expand the trade that creates jobs for our peoples. Remember, Mexico is the second largest market for American exports. It supports some 1 million American jobs. And our exports to Mexico are growing faster than they are with the rest of the world.

So we're moving ahead with plans for a 21st century border so people and goods can cross securely and efficiently. We're working to coordinate and streamline regulations and get rid of unnecessary trade barriers to make it easier to do business together. We're making new investments in clean energy partnerships, including green buildings and smart grid technologies. And based on negotiations so far, I'm hopeful that we can conclude an agreement by the end of the year to develop new sources of energy in the Gulf of Mexico.

I'm especially pleased to announce that, after nearly 20 years, we finally have found a clear path to resolving the dispute over trucking between our two countries. I thank President Calderón and his team — as well as my Transportation Secretary, Ray LaHood, and our U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Ron Kirk — for reaching this proposed agreement. I look forward to consulting with Congress and moving forward in a way that strengthens the safety of cross-border trucking, lifts tariffs on billions of dollars of U.S. goods, expands our exports to Mexico, and creates job on both sides of the border.

We're also deepening our cooperation against the drug cartels that threaten both our peoples. As I've said before, President Calderón and the Mexican people have shown extraordinary courage in the fight for their country. Tens of thousands of Mexicans -- innocent citizens and dedicated security forces -- have lost their lives. I have reaffirmed to President Calderón that in this cause, Mexico has a full partner with the United

States. Because whether they live in Texas or Tijuana, our people have a right to be safe in their communities.

So we are continuing to speed up the delivery of equipment and training that our Mexican partners need to keep up this fight. As President Calderón cracks down on money laundering in Mexico, we're putting unprecedented pressure on cartels and their finances here in the United States. And we thank our Mexican partners for their close cooperation following the murder of one of our immigration and customs agents, Special Agent Jaime Zapata.

I reiterated that the United States accepts our shared responsibility for the drug violence. So to combat the southbound flow of guns and money, we are screening all southbound rail cargo, seizing many more guns bound for Mexico and we are putting more gunrunners behind bars. And as part of our new drug control strategy, we are focused on reducing the demand for drugs through education, prevention and treatment.

We have also discussed immigration, an issue on which both countries have responsibilities. As I told President Calderón, I remain deeply committed to fixing our broken immigration system with comprehensive reform that continues to secure our borders, enforces our laws -- including against businesses that break the law -- and requiring accountability from undocumented workers. And we have to conduct this debate in a way that upholds our values as a nation of both laws and immigrants. So I'm eager to work with Republicans and Democrats to get this reform done, which is vital to the U.S. economy.

Finally, I'm looking forward to receiving insights from the President as I prepare for my trip to Latin America this month, which will be an opportunity to strengthen our security cooperation throughout the region.

Mr. President, thank you for your partnership and for deepening the bonds between our countries, which only grow stronger each time that we meet.

Now, before I turn it over to President Calderón, I want to address the situation in Libya.

The United States, and the entire world, continues to be outraged by the appalling violence against the Libyan people. The United States is helping to lead an international effort to deter further violence, put in place unprecedented sanctions to hold the Qaddafi government accountable, and support the aspirations of the Libyan people.

We are also responding quickly to the urgent humanitarian needs that are developing. Tens of thousands of people — from many different countries — are fleeing Libya, and we commend the governments of Tunisia and Egypt for their response, even as they go through their own political transitions. I have, therefore, approved the use of U.S. military aircraft to help move Egyptians who have fled to the Tunisian border to get back home to Egypt. I've authorized USAID to charter additional civilian aircraft to help people from other countries find their way home, and we're supporting the efforts of international organizations to evacuate people as well.

I've also directed USAID to send humanitarian assistance teams to the Libyan border, so that they can work with the United Nations, NGOs and other international partners inside Libya to address the urgent needs of the Libyan people.

Going forward, we will continue to send a clear message: The violence must stop. Muammar Qaddafi has lost the legitimacy to lead and he must leave. Those who perpetrate violence against the Libyan people will be held accountable. And the aspirations of the Libyan people for freedom, democracy and dignity must be met.

Remarks by President of Mexico Felipe Calderón

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PRESIDENT CALDERÓN: Thank you very much, President Obama. Thank you so much for your hospitality. Ladies and gentlemen of the media, good afternoon.

President Barack Obama and I have held a very valuable conversation concerning the status of our bilateral cooperation and many aspects of this. As always, it has been very satisfying for me to see that we agree on the basic principle of co-responsibility. And I thank you, Mr. President, for your invitation to hold this working visit here in the city of Washington.

Some of the things that we evaluated is that our governments have progressed substantially on many of these aspects. The results of our cooperation in some aspects, unprecedented cooperation, have been translated into concrete examples, such as the opening last year in 2010 of the three first new border crossings over the past 10 years.

My state visit last year, as you mentioned, Mr. President, and the ongoing meetings that we have held and that we will continue to have in the immediate future have been especially important to our bilateral relationship so as to generate confidence -- the confidence that we have today. We know today that we need to continue to be personally involved so as to ensure that the objectives that we trace are reached, such as those dealt with today. And we have broached the following subjects today.

First, internationally, at the international level, we have reiterated that Mexico and the United States are authentic, strategic partners, as can be seen by our joint work on the global and regional agendas. We have achieved substantive progress, as mentioned by President Obama, in matters such as climate change during the Conference of the Parties 16. And now we have made efforts to make the agreements reached in Cancun operational and as well as to adopt the next steps for the Conference of the Parties 17 in Durban.

Both countries will also play an important role within the G20, a mechanism that Mexico will be presiding over next year and in which we have reached important agreements for stability and recovery of the international economy. And in this context I would like to congratulate President Obama for the visit that he will be making to Brazil, Chile and El Salvador in a few weeks' time. Greater dialogue among the United States and Latin American nations will always be beneficial to the hemisphere, and beneficial not just for Latin American countries but also for the United States.

The specific case of Central America, in addition here we've agreed to continue to work with the U.S. government so as to achieve more determined cooperation in support of regional efforts to strengthen the rule of law and the fight transnational organized crime.

Secondly, in terms of the border, both President Obama and I agree that we must turn this area into the land of opportunities and not of conflict. Last year we adopted a declaration on the administration of a 21st century border, which we want both for the United States and Mexico. And since then, the bilateral executive committee entrusted with that implementation has agreed to a plan of action in addition to issuing a joint declaration to prevent border violence, so as to enable us to avoid tragic events such as those that we've seen on both sides of the border.

Thirdly, in terms of immigration, President Obama has always recognized, invariably recognized the contributions of immigrants to the economy and society of the United States, and I recognize and value his clear and determined support for the adoption of a comprehensive migratory reform in this country, as well as his firm commitment to the human and civil rights of communities, regardless of their point of origin. I've expressed to him my concern for the proliferation of local initiatives that are against the interests or the rights of immigrant communities.

Fourth, in terms of competitiveness, Mexico has a regional perspective. The United States and Mexico can and must make the most of the comparative advantages that make us unique as a region and that would enable us to convert, to turn North America

in its entirety into the most competitive region of the world. I am convinced that together we can achieve this.

The North America Free Trade Agreement was a great step forward for the commercial trade integration of the region. It generated hundreds of thousands, even millions, of jobs in the United States and in Mexico. And we are ready to deepen and to make the most of this relationship.

We must work efficiently to take advantage of the relative abundance of capital in the United States with the labor manpower available in Mexico through productive actions, investments in our countries, as well as the access that is secure, orderly and legal of national workers from Mexico in the U.S. market.

Our governments, something that is very important to us, have today reached an agreement, an agreement to solve our differences with respect to cross-border cargo trucking that had existed for many years. As I said, this has existed for a long time despite the fact that we had -- that the integrated system for transportation existed and benefited both countries. It was strengthening our competitiveness and it generated jobs and it existed since 1994 when we agreed on the NAFTA.

In this sense, Mexico will be suspended -- will be phasing out reprisals after non-compliance of the free trade agreement of North America by the United States and will be ending -- and as a result of this, will be furthering liberalization of cargo transportation. The objective of my government has always been to reach a solution that's mutually acceptable in this field.

And fifth, in the chapter of security, both governments have taken on our positions as co-responsible parties in the fight against transnational organized crime. This is a paradigm change in our relationship. And today we have reached increased levels of exchange of information that are unheard of in the past. I would like to thank President Obama for the clarity with which he speaks of the effects that the consumption of drugs has on his country, as well as the illegal traffic of weapons and of monies into Mexican territory. I know that together we can achieve ever greater results.

Last year was the year where we had the greatest number of achievements in the capture of the number of criminals -- unprecedented number of criminals were caught, and this is the result of the increase of the institutional capacity of our agencies as well as international cooperation in terms of information and intelligence.

I also truly value the clear effort of the United States through transfer of equipment and training programs to our efforts -- added to our efforts of institution -- institutional efforts. And this I am sure will further our efforts tremendously. And I thank you for your support there, Mr. President. And I also am grateful for the clarity with which President Obama has recognized the great sacrifices that the Mexican society has had to make in view of organized crime and our fight of drug trafficking.

In the fight for the security of Mexico, thousands of military officers and members of the police force have died in Mexico. They fall in the line of duty. And to these deaths we add the death of Agent Jaime Zapata from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency of the United States. And I would like to add my deepest condolences to his relatives, to the people and government of United States in view of his death.

I would like to tell you that the suspected perpetrator of his murder and his gang has been arrested and we hope to bring them to justice. His death must urge us to continue to work together so as to ensure a prosperous and peaceful future for our region.

Ladies and gentlemen, today I'd like to say that I thank the hospitality of President Obama, and I would reiterate my trust, my confidence in the government and institutions of this country. This country is a good friend to Mexico, as is President Obama. This opportunity represents for me a chance to strongly renew our efforts and to redouble our efforts to accomplish the security that our peoples deserve.

At the same time, I would like to congratulate President Obama for the leadership that he has shown in the problem of concern to all of us in North Africa, heading up the responsible efforts of the people and government of the United States to quickly find solutions to this problem.

Mr. President, once again, thank you ever so much for your hospitality, the friendship that you have always shown to Mexico, the responsibility that your government, your administration has unprecedentedly taken on in the subjects, the issues that are of common interest to us. Our bilateral relationship, my friends, does not only have a huge impact on the lives of Mexicans and Americans, but today it's taken on with increasing strength and clarity and coordination by both of our governments.

Once again, thank you for your personal commitment, the cooperation, and co-responsibility of your government. We will continue to work together and harder to achieve the prosperity of both the Mexican and U.S. peoples. Thank you very much.
