

## Press Room

### Address by Mexican President Felipe Calderón

Monday, May 4, 2009 | Speech

#### Official Residence

Mexicans:

Good evening.

Over the past few days, the entire country has focused all its energy on coping with a virus that just over a week ago, was completely unknown to the world's scientists: the Influenza A/H1N1 virus.

The situation we faced was by no means easy, so Federal Government took firm decisions to protect your and your families' health.

Similar experiences recorded at various periods in history, in other words, epidemics associated with the emergence of new, unknown influenza viruses in several countries have usually left a large number of people infected and claimed several lives.

So, knowing that in Mexico we faced a new virus that had already caused the deaths of several Mexicans, we realized we had to act responsibly but above all, quickly to prevent a greater tragedy.

This has posed an enormous challenge to Mexicans, but we have risen to it. Because we have done what we did at other difficult times in the country's life, we have responded to this problem with great strength of character.

We have acted firmly. We have done the right thing because we did what we had to do to cure all those that contracted this virus and at the same time, to curb its spread as far as possible.

And because we did the right thing, our strategy is working.

The number of deaths recorded has fallen off, together with the number of cases of persons infected with this virus.

I would like, once again, to express my sincerest condolences to the relatives of those that lost their lives as a result of this epidemic.

But I would also like to thank the doctors, nurses and administrative workers in the health sector who have worked tirelessly over the past few days and saved the lives of thousands of people who, as a result of being treated in time, have been cured.

The responsibility and maturity with which you, your family and millions of citizens have acted have proved crucial to overcoming this problem. Thousands of lives have been saved, not only in Mexico but throughout the world because Mexico acted responsibly.

I also applaud the efforts of all the children in the country. I know, because my own children, with whom I have spent a lot of time over the past days, have told me, that they have been worried about the situation we are going through and are anxious to go back to school.

I would like all the children in Mexico to know that thanks to their bravery and the responsibility with which their parents have followed the Health Secretariat's instructions, we will soon pull through this experience.

From the moment I was informed of the existence of this outbreak of the new virus, I have directed the actions required to deal with this contingency. I have met with authorities, doctors and experts and I have also visited Mexican scientists who are investigating and combating this new disease in the country's laboratories. I also visited patients and the relatives of those being treated for this illness.

In order to coordinate actions, I have been in contact with Presidents and Heads of State, such as U.S. President Barack Obama; the Prime Minister of Canada; the Presidents of Spain, Chile, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador and many other countries.

Fortunately, Mexico was already preparing for a contingency such as this, which is why we had a stock of medicine that has been more than sufficient for dealing with all the cases that have arisen in the country's hospitals and clinics.

Today I met with all the governors in the country to determine the actions to be taken.

Since we have taken the right measures, we are now in a position to gradually resume our everyday activities.

Why?

Firstly. To date, the number of persons affected by Influenza A/H1N1Q being admitted to hospitals has not only stabilized but also considerably declined.

Secondly. Because patients have responded very favorably to the medicine and are being cured.

Thirdly. Because the national and international experts we have consulted agree that if Mexicans continue to implement preventive measures responsibly, then we can gradually return to our everyday activities. I know that parents are worried whether it is safe to send their children back to school. I assure you that this return will be carried out gradually.

What does this mean?

It means that on May 7, classes will begin for those that are able to follow the preventive measures we have indicated on their own. May 7 will mark the return to classes of high school and university students throughout the country. On May 11, activities will resume at the preschool, elementary and secondary level throughout Mexico, as well as at day-care centers.

What are we going to do to ensure that this return to classes is safe?

We are going to meet with educational communities, teachers, directors, parents, municipal and state authorities to clean all the schools thoroughly, as a team.

Desks, classrooms, bathrooms and banisters will be thoroughly cleaned, and many other preventive and hygiene measures will be implemented.

We should not forget that this virus is still circulating and may be present, which is why we must follow all the preventive measures for protecting our children.

From the day students go back to classes, school filters will be organized to ensure that the children and young people coming in to class have no symptoms that could jeopardize their health or that of their classmates. Health monitoring and prevention activities will also be carried out.

Parents' and teachers' participation will be crucial to ensuring that we make schools, safe, clean, influenza-free places.

We must continue to instill in our children the importance of constantly washing our hands, not sharing food, cutlery, glasses, snacks or school supplies among many other hygiene measures that should form part of our children's routine from now onwards.

Unfortunately, this situation will also affect us economically.

The main priority at the moment is to get rid of this epidemic, because for government and I am sure for your families too, the most important thing is health.

At the same time, we will now have to concentrate on restoring economic growth as quickly as possible.

I know that once we have got over the health contingency, our economy will also begin to gradually recover. That is why I have instructed members of the Economic Cabinet to design a series of measures aimed at mitigating the impact on Mexico's economic activity.

One of these will be to actively improve our country's image so that tourists from all over the world come to visit Mexico.

Although details of these measures will be announced tomorrow and over the next few days, they include tax incentives for economic activity, some of which are specifically designed for the most heavily affected sectors such as tourism.

Among other measures, we will temporarily suspend the taxes on cruise ships that come to Mexico. Other tax incentives will be general, which is good news for taxpayers, such as allowing firms to offset their income tax payments with their monthly payments of the Single Rate Business Tax, known as IETU.

Now is the time to resume the country's economic activity.

That is why, as from May 6, work will resume at factories, offices and businesses throughout the country. When we go back to work, we must obviously reinforce prevention and hygiene measures at work places. Now is not the time to lower our guard, because the most important thing is still to protect everyone's life and health.

I would ask parents, teachers, workers and firms to consult the guidelines and recommendations on the government's website to ensure a safe return to our everyday activities.

The point is to get back to normal with everyone taking care, to get back to normal with a thorough change in our everyday hygiene and health habits.

The point is to control this new disease and at the same time, to engage in everyday activities while implementing preventive health measures.

I would like to make it quite clear that we will continue to give citizens the medical care they require and to provide them with all the necessary medication in the country's hospitals and public clinics.

The fight against the A/H1N1 virus is a global challenge that requires the cooperation of all nations, which is why Mexico has collaborated very closely with other governments.

We have acted transparently by informing the whole world and we have worked very closely with the World Health Organization, the world's highest authority in this issue. Incidentally, the WHO has hailed the firmness and effectiveness of Mexico's reaction and the visibility given to our measures for containing the virus.

Mexico has led the global battle against this new virus, because the first line of defense against this virus is being put up in the country's clinics and hospitals by Mexican doctors.

The battle front is Mexico, which is where we are defending not only Mexicans but all the human beings in the world that could catch this new disease.

And we will be able to fight this battle more easily if the world collaborates with us.  
That is why, on behalf of Mexicans, I would ask all the countries that have done so, to stop taking actions that only damage Mexico and fail to stop the spread of the disease.  
That is why, on behalf of Mexico, I express my absolute rejection of the offensive or discriminatory actions taken by several countries against Mexicans.

Friends:

This is not the first time the country has been subjected to such a difficult test, not will it be the last but I am convinced that adversity builds the character of both people and nations.

We should reflect on what we have achieved as a nation. In just a few days, we have been able to identify the presence of a new virus. Despite the cost and difficulties for the country, we took the right measures to curb its spread and deal with and cure all the cases that arose after the emergency was declared.

We should all feel very proud of the way our great nation is dealing with and overcoming this difficult challenge.

I know that once this trying moment is over, Mexico and Mexicans will be much stronger.

Let us continue to work together to help our beloved Mexico pull through.

Thank you.

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