



Mexico's Long Road to Democracy

**Remarks by Vicente Fox
Former President of Mexico**

February 6, 2008

Thank you very much for being here. I want to recognize and thank the World Affairs Councils, not only the one here in New York but all over the United States for the intense promotion of dialogue and participation of citizens in World Affairs. Today was an important day here in the United States. This process, this electoral process, is calling the attention of most everybody everywhere in the world. Marta and myself just came back from a trip abroad, we went to Madrid, then Jakarta, then Tibia, and Istanbul, working. The trip had to do with my new responsibility, the presidency of the Center Democrats International which gathers about 110 political parties which center origin and from over 88 different nations, different democracies throughout the world. I went to Jakarta to preside the annual meeting of the 20 political parties of Asia that are associated with the CDI and I was highly surprised how open and wide today's range and center ideologists because the CDI used to be called the Christian Democrat International, that the word Christian now is being withdrawn because some of us parties in Asia are either [inaudible]. I am very, very pleased that it's so wide open with a center [inaudible] capacity to be working in a political party with a center ideology commitment with [inaudible] policies with intense commitment with the human beings, with the dignity of human beings but the case is that on that trip everywhere, everybody was speaking about the election here. I think its to congratulate this mature democracy in the United States that over 200 years still is at renewal in election it refreshes it, brings back optimism, hope, and intense citizens participation. I think that's what is going on here is an example for other democrats and certainly will have an impact, an influence in different grades of consultation and democracies throughout the world, many that are very recent and they need this kind of example, this kind of events like we are witnessing here so congratulations to this great democratic nations.

I wanted to share with you some thoughts, precisely departing from this election, trying to look ahead into the future, especially this great nation, which by the way I feel part of a lot and share the core values of the founding fathers of this nation, maybe because my grandfather was born here and that you will be able to read on the book in Cincinnati, Ohio and surprisingly he came down to Mexico on a horse back in 1895 as a migrant without a penny in his pocket. He came all the way down to the state of Guanajuato in Mexico and

he said he of course was after his American dream and he found his American dream in Guanajuato, Mexico. This is to say that we allow people, most people serve that dream and those values and also to say that it's a two side issue, it's a multilateral, bilateral issue, it's a phenomena that is present all around the world. It's surprising that very few nations, to say not one that I know has developed a framework, legal base, a project related to immigration to make sure that it keeps being a win-win situation. No doubt that immigration is a NAFTA. Nations we just have to see how this nation was built and developed by immigrants in most everybody in this nation if you look behind would have a heritage from immigrates outside. The same thing happened in Mexico. We all remember those huge amounts of thousands and thousands of Espanas that came to the port of Lacrosse, same mass, others came through the port of New York, through Eli Island, same thing happened in Argentina, Brazil.

So migration is a NAFTA and I'm in a way disappointed and the debate about immigration her in the states. I think that debate is totally misinformed; it's misguided. This may be a product of the fear that I sense in this nation after September 11th. That was a tragic day you never repeat again but it's still not fair to confuse immigrants with terrorists and fear the liberty of good advisor to make decisions. We should vacuum this empty space because U.S. congress has not reached a decision in years and years. There are enough proposals; there are enough bills, pretty well structured in congress for them to decide. It is a federal issue. What is happening is the local authorities now are taking the leave in the responsibility of this issue and some of them will reform some changes against immigrants. That is real promotion of violating because of the absence of the U.S. Congress on this decision the senate Republicans have taken over. We turn on the TV. And you will find there the - - with a language very extremely aggressive, offensive to immigrants, offensive to Mexico, to Mexican government. Again I will say thoroughly misinformed so I think it's very important to reach this debate that is going on right now in this electoral process. I do hope and I'm optimistic that the next administration will take care and meet this challenge so that we have a reform on immigration. It will be to the better of our nations, to Mexico, to the United States.

No doubt that this nation has enriched itself through immigrants and that it has made its economy competitive through immigrants working hard with quality, with dedication, with loyalty. No doubt that many sectors of the economy in the United States survived thanks to the immigrants like it is all the production in agriculture, farming cattle, the construction industry, the service industry continue to be supported by immigrants. The health industry now is beginning to be supported by this immigrants at the very end they have made this economy competitive and the very end they have brought in quality of life to the homes of U.S. families so my respect to all immigrants. I should make clear that I am not for illegality for open borders. What I am for is legality other and corporate framework to manage the issue of immigration. It's about what we both have to do.

The United States needs those workers and hires those workers to the benefit of this economy and Mexicans I should say because it's a wrong opinion that not, I will say very few immigrants come here because of hunger or because they don't have a job. Most of them that are coming in the last years they do have a job in Mexico. They do and did have income but the immigrants like my grandfather is only for better, is always looking to

improve the conditions of its family and this is why they take the decision, the risk and why they come here. So I take this one key issue for the future and the decision taking on immigration of course to the future this nation and the next administration will do so. It's very complicated, very complex, the situation in the world, words, violence and all this shakes off and crisis of economy in the financial system today that again calls for attention everywhere in the world.

What I foresee is a change in the world. This change in parity should move towards diplomacy over military force, it should move towards multilateralism over unilateralism, it should move to democratic and compassionate leaders, solidarism over selfishness, unity, dividing, listening over imposing, negotiating, democracy dialogue with full respect to other nations of course. No interventions like the one in Iraq or in other parts of the world. That's why we created the United Nations. We all together did. Mexico and United States were founders of that great institution that should reinforced, restructured, reformed so that it meets the challenges of bringing peace and harmony among nations. United States has to rebuild its strategic alliance that have been lost, Europe, even Canada, a neighbor, what about Mexico. Its strategic to have solid friends, solid democracies to weather, to work for a better world. Must be reinvented. The whole concept of Foreign Aid is not serving the purpose. It has to be granted with a sense of responsibility. We should move from Foreign Aid to a partnership for prosperity. It's much better to invest, much better to teach how to fish then to give away the fish.

This nation must work together with other developed economies in this world to assure the compliance made public, the commitment, reporting on the aid programs, .07% of the gross product. I witnessed that commitment. I was present when the leaders committed but we don't see that happening. We don't see the resources now be applying to combat poverty, to reduce debt, to bring up those countries who have lost hope and that don't have many opportunities to move ahead. The cure to the problems with the climate, the WTR and the - - which has been this cure for years and years, and time goes by and no solutions so the key to is a relationship of this great nation with Mexico and whit the whole of Latin American but for now there is a total absence of attention in respect for our nations and the rest of the continent.

Again, a change of power is needed there. We all recall in Latin America those great driving ideas like the - - that was launched by President Kennedy that unfortunately he couldn't carry on with it but we miss those kind of actions, like the Marshall Plan for Europe. We have that successful European union with great democracies and economies with high standards of living due to the Marshall Plan. No doubt that was a moving strong needing idea that we will love to see again because I don't really understand the leader, the champion of democracy of globalization moving backwards. We all nations were convinced 10, 15, 20 years ago that we should open our martinet, we should open our economies and we did so, fortunately it worked out but the poor in our nations paid a high price for the economic reforms, for opening the martinet and abroad in our nations in Latin America today incredible - - is building a wall. I don't really understand what's the purpose of that wall. The fault is not deterrence. The fault will be isolation. Who's going to stay out? What's going to happen when the Andrew Globes, President of - - came from Hungary and has contributed to this nation incredibly to the competitiveness of this

economy to create jobs and how many more people will be in the same dilemma? President Reagan in front of the wall in Berlin shouted loud and clear, "Tear off this wall". Walls don't work. The Berlin wall didn't work. The Chinese wall didn't work against their enemies.

So that wall that is being constructed by Mexicans I hope it will be tore off by Mexicans in the future, that we have understanding instead of division, instead of separation. When we understand that we have a partnership, that we're partners: Mexico, United States and Canada and we have to be up to the commitments of that partnership. Many people don't know that Mexico buys from the United States more products and services than what Italy, France, Germany and Britain do together. We buy from this nation. We import over 200 billion U.S. dollars worth of products and services. That means a lot of jobs, millions of jobs for U.S. citizens. We are partners building a future together.

My vision is that we need to keep advancing with Nafta, we need to further intricate, we need to understand this partnership and make prosperity out of that partnership. Mexico is doing its part of the job. It was already mainstream here. The transition to democracy, the first democratic administration in Mexico founding the pillars on which to build a successful nation and solid economy. It was our proposal, our commitment to converse economic variables with the United States economy and fortunately it happened. The last year of my administration inflation rate in Mexico was lower than the inflation rate in the United States. Interest rates in Mexico were of the same exact level then interest rates in the United States. We came a long way from very high interest rates and high inflation to those - - . - - on the budget, which this nation cannot say. And today the foreign debt of Mexico has been reduced to half of what it was, from 80 billion to 40 billion.

And a last word about democracy because something that we must take that we must nourish and promote as specifically today when we see this regression trends, this war in trends in Latin America. It was very difficult for Latin America in the twentieth century. We were the big loser. We lost our time in the hands of dictators, military dictators, personal dictators, Italian dictators, and corruption. That was the twentieth century for Latin Americans. Now in the eighties and the nineties nations decided to move into democratic consolidation and we saw and witnessed that democracy wave together with economic reforms. They were very painful, especially for the poor. They were the losers at the beginning of those reforms but today at the end of the century Latin America started moving ahead after those changes. Latin America back to growth of 5% on its gross product, which didn't happen since 50 or 60 years ago. But more important Latin American for the first time has a very, very impressive reduction of the amount of families in poverty.

In the case of the whole of Latin America, a drop from 45% of the population either in poverty or extreme poverty, dropped down to 35%. In the case of Mexico, the advances is much more solid, a 35% reduction of the number of families in poverty or extreme poverty in the last ten years. So Democracy pays off, stability pays off and that's what we have to keep in Latin America. I respect social democrats, I admire many of their governments, like the one of President - -, or the one of Philippe Gonzalez in Spain, or in Germany or in France or in other places. They do great governments. It's a solid ideology as well as

centered ideology or center right. But what I don't think is convenient to our nations is - - that we see back in Latin America. We see we in Israel We in Mexico one president that was similar to that, President - - who decided to follow the same ideology and the same trend and we are still 35 years after paying the price in Mexico.

So Marta and I have decided to keep working after we left the presidency. We just didn't want to retire, retiring and having nothing to do but beginning to die. So we are meeting new challenges, one is the Presidency of CDI; number two is building a presidential library. First experience in Mexico, Latin American of presidential library. It's not easy we have to confront lack of understanding that presidents don't have to go home, don't have to go to other nations, that they can keep themselves very active. Like President is doing, like President - - . It's very fortunate, this new trend of very active presidents. But in Mexico the cultural it still calls for presidents to keep quiet because I don't know what reason, and you cannot intervene in politics, you cannot open your mouth; you cannot give a press conference. In the sake of what I don't understand. That is a pure cultural, the old regime's cultural. But today Mexico also in that is changing.

This library is a vocational library center associated with many important universities, like Georgetown, like George Washington, like Emory in Atlanta, like - - in Madrid, like - - in Spain, like - - and all of them are working programs to run through the center, like PhDs, Masters all will be ran there, to create, to produce, to impulse, to promote a new cast of leadership, a political leadership highly needed in Latin America, Spoken about. Ethics to begin with and that kind of leaders we want to create through the center. Number two is a think tank a place to reflect, to meet world leaders in this course, subjects that are key to our nations.

The largest think tank in the world with over 1,000 specialists that work full time for the Ran cooperation. We offer them the land and the building and in exchange they accept it to open their first office in Guanajuato, Mexico in the branch of by the side of the center where they will have their staff to attend and bring in their specialists and researchers to investigate and to work on public policies that are adequate for the progress of our economies in Latin America and for the progress of the powerful social policies. That center is right there, Marta and myself are right there in Guanajuato where my grandfather came and settled, where he found his American dream. Now you have a home there, all of you and I mean it. We will be open arms and waiting for your visit. You can contact us at www.centrofox.org.ennex. Thank you very much for your attention.

-END-