

[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