

106th Congress }
2d Session }

COMMITTEE PRINT

{ S. PRT.
{ 106-75

**THIRTY-NINTH MEXICO-UNITED STATES
INTERPARLIAMETARY CONFERENCE
PUEBLA, MEXICO**

MAY 5-7, 2000

**REPORT
OF THE
UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AND
SENATE
DELEGATIONS**



Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate
and the Committee on International Relations of the House of Rep-
resentatives, respectively

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

70-637 CC

WASHINGTON : 2001

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

November 16, 2000.

Hon. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

Hon. AL GORE,
President, U.S. Senate

GENTLEMEN: Pursuant to Public Law 86-420, it is our privilege to transmit the report of the thirty-ninth annual meeting of the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference, which was held in Puebla, Mexico, during the period May 5 through May 7, 2000.

For thirty nine years, these meetings have helped to build bridges of understanding between Mexico and the United States. As Chairmen of the 2000 meetings, we are pleased to report to you that this valuable tradition was maintained with a renewed commitment to continued cooperation between our two countries.

We continue to believe that these annual meetings, which have been held since 1961, serve as a useful forum for discussions and that they have a positive impact on relations between our two countries.

Additionally, members of the U.S. delegation would like to acknowledge the great loss of Senator Paul Coverdell, chairman of the Senate delegation, who passed on before the printing of this report. His contributions to the Mexico-U.S. IPG working group will always be remembered.

Sincerely,

JEFF SESSIONS,
Chairman, Senate Delegation

JIM KOLBE,
Chairman, House Delegation,

(v)

Background and Composition of Delegations

U.S. participation in annual parliamentary conferences with Mexico was authorized by joint resolution (Public Law 86-420), approved April 9, 1960. The meetings are held alternatively in Mexico and the United States.

Attending the Thirty-Ninth Mexico-United States Inter-parliamentary Conference held in Puebla, Mexico, May 5 through May 7, 2000, were:

UNITED STATES

Attending from the U.S. Senate were:

Paul Coverdell (R-GA), *Chairman*
Frank H. Murkowski (R-AL)
Jeff Sessions (R-AL)

Attending from the U.S. House of Representatives were:

Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), Chairman	Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)
Cass Ballenger, Vice Chairman (R-NC)	Brian Bilbray (R-CA)
Charles Stenholm (D-TX)	Phil English (R-PA)
David Dreier (R-CA)	Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX)
Thomas Ewing (R-IL)	Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)
Ed Pastor (D-AZ)	Eni F.H. Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa)
Bob Filner (D-CA)	
Donald Manzullo (R-IL)	

MEXICO

Attending from the Mexican Senate were:

Martha I. Lara Alatorre, Co-President PRI	Jose Ramon Medina Padilla PAN
Martina Montenegro Espinoza PRI	Francisco J. Molina Ruiz PAN
Jose Luis Medina Aguilar PRI	Jorge Calderon Salazar PRD
Ricardo Garcia Cervantes PAN	Cuahtemoc Sandoval Ramirez PRD
	Adolfo Aguilar Zinzer IND

Attending from the Mexican Chamber of Deputies were:

Cesar Jauregal Robles, President PAN	Julio Faesler Carlisle PAN
Alfredo Phillips Olmedo PRI	Carlos Heredia Zubieta PRD
Guillermo Barnes Garcia PRI	Ricardo Garcia Sainz PRD
America Soto Lopez PRI	Luis Patino Pozas PT
Miguel Quiros Perez PRI	Aurora Bazan Lopez PVEM

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Larry Storrs, Latin American Specialist, Congressional Research Service

Issues on the Agenda

ELECTORAL LEGISLATION AND PROCESSES

With presidential and congressional elections approaching in both countries, the 39th Mexico-U.S. Interparliamentary Conference opened with a discussion of each country's electoral processes and the prospects for the coming elections.

Several members of the Mexican delegation explained that the Mexican elections of July 2, 2000, would be very comprehensive national elections, and would for the first time be completely supervised by independent electoral authorities. In this election, the voters would elect a new president, all 500 members of the Chamber of Deputies, all 128 members of the Senate, two governors from the states of Guanajuato and Morelos, and a new Head of Government (Mayor) in the Mexico City Federal District. Presidential candidates are Vicente Fox for the conservative Alliance for Change, Francisco Labastida for the longruling and centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and Cuauhtemoc Cardenas for the leftist Alliance for Mexico. Several delegates indicated that their presidential candidates had excellent prospects, and some expressed hope that the election would lead to more equitable conditions in Mexico.

Several delegates stated that the Mexican presidential elections in 1988 had been questionable or fraudulent, but that the country had evolved toward genuine democracy because of a number of electoral reforms in the 1990s. Central among these reforms was the creation of an independent and autonomous Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) headed by highly respected Counselors selected by the Congress, in which the incumbent Government plays no role, and the political parties have only a right to voice but not a right to vote in decisions. Other reforms included creation of the Federal Electoral Tribunal to resolve disputes, mechanisms to permit domestic and foreign groups to observe the elections, and public financing of campaigns, with 30% of the funding distributed among the parties equally, and 70% distributed on the basis of electoral strength in the previous election. Because of the formula for distributing funds, the opposition parties in coalitions would receive greater funding than the longruling party. Several delegates pointed out that opposition parties had elected governors and mayors in many states and cities, and that the opposition parties had won a majority in the Chamber of Deputies in the 1997 election.

As a result of the various reforms, the members of the Mexican Congress are elected under a complex formula. Voters were to elect 500 members of the Chamber of Deputies for three year terms, with 300 elected by plurality in single-member districts, and 200 elected by proportional representation in five 40-member "plurinominal" districts. Voters would also elect 128 members of

the Senate for six year terms, with 62 (two from each state) elected by plurality, 32 elected from the first minority in each state, and 32 elected by national proportional representation.

While nearly all Mexican delegates stated that they expected the coming elections to be the fairest in Mexico's history, a number expressed concern about the use of government resources and social programs to buy votes, especially in rural areas, where local chieftains also exercise coercion. Other delegates argued that the vote was secret in Mexico, that parties could be rewarded for developing good programs, that opposition parties control 11 of the 32 states, and that the electoral reforms had the support of all parties. One of the delegates mentioned that the Chamber of Deputies had created a commission of vigilance against the misuse of government resources to monitor allegations of this sort. Another delegate commented that the costs to fund the electoral institute's activities were excessive, more than the funds devoted to environmental programs in Mexico.

A U.S. delegate stated that all Mexican political parties should be praised for the transition to democracy in Mexico. He praised the opposition parties for fighting for democracy, and praised the sections of the dominant party for accepting reform. He stated that the reforms were extensive, and not well enough understood in the United States.

Several Mexican delegates mentioned an electoral reform, with support from opposition parties, that was not adopted in 1999, namely a procedure to permit Mexicans living abroad to vote in the Mexican elections. Some suggested that there were over a million Mexicans in the United States with electoral credentials who would not be able to vote, unless they traveled to Mexico. Since Mexico does not use absentee ballots, some suggested that the voting could take place at Mexican consulates in the United States, while others suggested that the logistical problems had not been adequately resolved for this election. While some party members accepted absentee ballots, most supported some procedure for voting in person.

Another Mexican delegate argued that the progress toward democracy in Mexico was a significant advance, but that it had largely neglected the 15 million indigenous peoples in the country. This delegate said that indigenous groups have called for the creation of an additional nationwide district, similar to those used in the distribution of Chamber and Senate seats, where indigenous peoples could be represented and focus attention on the extensive needs of these groups. Several U.S. delegates indicated that it was important for indigenous peoples to have representation, but that in the United States voting was on an individual basis, not on the basis of membership in any group.

U.S. delegates explained that the U.S. election of November 7, 2000, would elect a new president for a four year term (with possibility of one reelection), 435 representatives in the House of Representatives for two year terms, and one third of the 100 senators in the Senate for six year terms. He noted that the House and the Senate are currently controlled by the Republicans, while the Presidency is held by a Democrat. In the coming election the major candidates are George W. Bush and Albert Gore, with Bush leading in a close race. During the Republican convention in July, Bush

would likely gain in the polls, and during the Democratic convention in August, Gore would likely gain. No single issue would determine the outcome, according to the delegates, although campaign financing reform, and programs for the disenfranchised were mentioned by some delegates as major topics. A spirited race for control of the House of Representatives was noted, where the Republicans currently have a narrow 6-vote advantage. California, New York, and Texas were mentioned as key battlefield states.

Several delegates portrayed both U.S. presidential candidates as friendly toward Mexico, and one delegate mentioned that both are studying Spanish to appeal to important Hispanic constituencies. Another delegate mentioned the important role of women in the electoral contests with their views on education, crime, and other issues, and pointed out that Hispanic communities would play a large role in races in California, New York, Texas, and Florida.

COMMERCE, TRADE, AND INVESTMENT

A U.S. delegate began the discussion of this topic by saying that after attending 20 interparliamentary meetings, some involving disagreements over Mexico's nationalization of banks and Mexico's policies toward Nicaragua and El Salvador, it was exciting in the new millennium to have a sense that free trade was now the wave of the future, with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) being a key factor. He mentioned that Mexico had become the United States' second most important trading partner, and he asserted that many Mexicans were better off economically because of the increased trade. He mentioned the vote in the U.S. Congress to grant China normal permanent trade relations as another test of support for expanding trade.

A Mexican delegate said that everyone favors increased trade, but a crucial issue is the division of the benefits in this trade. A study in Mexico had concluded that NAFTA had polarized society by increasing the concentration of income of the wealthy, and had exaggerated the differences between the regions in Mexico. He said it was curious that U.S. Secretaries of the Treasury say that Mexico's economy is doing well, but that the U.S. Attorney General requests additional funds to control undocumented immigration. He and others asserted that too much of the trade was intra-industry and related to the maquiladora operations (in bond, usually foreign-owned, border industries) where less than 20% of the production remains in Mexico. A U.S. delegate responded that it was the U.S. Congress that was demanding the hiring of 1,000 new Border Patrol agents per year, and was criticizing the Justice Department for failure to comply.

Another Mexican delegate said that Mexico's economy was growing at a rate of 6% per year, and that there was a good trade and investment climate. He said that the demand for jobs in Mexico was growing and that wages were increasing. While admitting that there is serious poverty and inequality in Mexico, he said that the country needed trade and investment to stimulate economic growth and create new jobs.

Still other Mexican delegates argued that the United States should provide compensatory financing to Mexico as the weaker partner under NAFTA, as was done for the poorer economies in the

European Union experience, although another delegate stated that this was not expected. Several delegates mentioned that the newly-elected presidents in the two countries should develop a social policy for NAFTA and deal with labor and immigration rights under NAFTA. Reflecting a common sentiment, one Mexican delegate stated that a major objective of trade should be to improve the lives of people.

U.S. delegates mentioned the main benefits of increased trade under NAFTA, but also mentioned adverse effects in several of their districts where key industries were being hurt by competition from Mexico or transfer of production to Mexico. One delegate stressed that NAFTA had given consumers in both countries greater quality of products and greater choice. Another delegate noted that the United States had gone from a trade surplus to a trade deficit with Mexico under NAFTA. Several delegates mentioned that trade with Mexico might be affected by growing U.S. trade with China, or by competition from African and Caribbean countries following the recent passage by Congress of legislation giving these two regions preferential trade benefits somewhat equivalent to NAFTA treatment. Other U.S. delegates noted that NAFTA was bringing the countries closer together, and that NAFTA had contributed to political change in Mexico. Another U.S. delegate noted that Mexico was improving its record of respect for intellectual property rights, and that there was some progress under the NAFTA side agreements on labor and environmental issues.

Turning to more specific trade issues, Mexican delegates complained about U.S. postponement on safety grounds of NAFTA provisions that would give Mexican trucks access to U.S. highways, and the slowness of efforts to resolve this issue through NAFTA dispute settlement mechanisms. One U.S. delegate urged Mexican truckers to improve safety standards, and noted that there were inadequate resources at present to inspect foreign trucks, but that appropriations were being approved to rectify the situation. Mexican delegates argued that the postponement was largely political as a result of the political pressure of the Teamsters, and they found the inadequacy of funds to be an unsatisfactory explanation since the United States has been postponing implementation since 1995. One U.S. delegate pointed out that the Mexican trucking industry was not pressing the issue out of fear that U.S. trucks would operate in Mexico.

Mexican delegates also complained about the continuing failure to resolve the tuna/dolphin issue between the countries. The United States lifted the embargo on Mexican tuna in April 2000, after procedures were worked out to insure that dolphins trapped in encircling nets were released without harm. Despite this action, a federal judge blocked the Administration's plan to loosen the standards of a 1990 law for the dolphin safe label, and Mexico was denied the benefit that it had been seeking. Mexican delegates asked for help from U.S. legislators to resolve this problem. A U.S. delegate said in a later session that legislation was in progress.

Another issue raised by Mexican delegates was the flow of U.S. agricultural commodities to Mexico that were being subsidized by U.S. government programs. This was having a great impact on corn producers in Mexico in particular, and was said to be a reason for

unemployment in certain areas, resort to drug trafficking activities, and migration to the United States. A U.S. delegate replied that hearings were being held on the subject, and he had expectations that some resolution would be forthcoming.

Mexican delegates complained about long delays for products and people at border crossing points, and urged the United States to increase the number of personnel assigned to these tasks. U.S. delegates agreed that the delays were sometimes excessive, and noted that increased funding was being pursued.

Some U.S. delegates criticized Mexico for going along with OPEC in oil production cutbacks, with the result that oil prices had increased considerably and were hurting the U.S. economy. Mexican delegates, while stating a preference for more stability in oil prices, argued that oil was crucial to Mexico's economy and especially to the federal budget. They said that oil prices in real terms were lower than 30 years ago and were not unreasonable.

U.S. delegates also urged Mexican authorities to reduce Telmex's continuing dominant position in the telecommunications industry, in keeping with complaints by the U.S. Trade Representative. One U.S. delegate noted that the free play of the marketplace was necessary, or Mexico would cripple progress in this area.

NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AND JUSTICE ISSUES

Mexican and U.S. delegates agreed on the seriousness of drug trafficking and on the need for cooperation between the countries to deal with this issue. One U.S. delegate mentioned the Mexican Attorney General's request for FBI assistance in the search for graves from drug-related killings in the El Paso/Juarez area as an example that sends a message that the two countries are acting together. He also noted that a subgroup of Mexican interparliamentary members had been invited to El Paso and received briefings from U.S. agencies on drug, border, and trade issues. Another U.S. delegate mentioned advances in cooperation on law enforcement issues by the countries through the bilateral meetings of the High Level Contact Group on Narcotics Abuse, and the joint meetings of the countries' Attorneys General. Delegates from both sides emphasized that unilateral approaches would not be successful, and that finger-pointing was not productive. Several delegates suggested the need to honor law enforcement officials who have been killed in the battle against drugs, including the police chief of Tijuana murdered in February 2000, and the three Mexican anti-drug agents killed in April 2000 near Tijuana.

Mexican delegates emphasized that demand for drugs in the United States was a key factor in drug trafficking. They called for the United States to devote more resources in this area, and to see drug trafficking issues in a broader context. Many U.S. delegates accepted this argument and called for greater attention to prevention and treatment of drug abuse, while some suggested that Mexico had a growing drug consumption problem that needed to be addressed. One Mexican delegate expressed concern that a number of Mexicans return from the United States with drug habits and with AIDS. He wanted to know how much the United States was spending to reduce drug consumption. Another Mexican delegate mentioned that the United States had a somewhat permissive attitude

toward drug use, and that a number of US-made movies show drugs being consumed. Still another Mexican delegate noted that recent studies were showing an increase in U.S. drug production, particularly the newer designer drugs.

Mexican delegates pointed out that the Mexican budget devoted to counter-narcotics efforts had increased more than 100% in recent years, and they pointed to progress in recent years in a number of areas, including the arrest just days ago of Ismael Higuera Guerrero, a key lieutenant in the Tijuana cartel. A U.S. delegate noted that the share of Mexico's budget devoted to anti-drug purposes was greater than the U.S. share. Several Mexican delegates wondered why the United States was unable to more effectively control money laundering and drug trafficking activities within U.S. borders, and why concern with corruption seemed to be focused on foreign countries. A U.S. delegate replied that there were legal obligations to report suspicious transactions over \$10,000, but that electronic transfers were making these requirements out of date. At the same time, a number of Mexican delegates called for the United States to provide more assistance to Mexico in dealing with money laundering activities and in discovering illicit use of chemical precursors.

U.S. delegates argued that the United States was devoting considerable resources to drug control, and was providing extensive assistance to foreign countries, including many Andean countries and Mexico. They urged Mexico to accept shiprider agreements, to go beyond the token extraditions of druglords to the United States, and to take other measures to cooperate at the border, such as using sniffing dogs to deter transit of drugs. A Mexican delegate mentioned that Mexico had a list of requested extraditions as well.

Many Mexican delegates objected to the U.S. drug certification requirement under which the President must certify annually whether a country is fully cooperating with the United States in drug control efforts. They mentioned that it was seen as a unilateral measure that did not contribute to cooperation, and they said that it was widely rejected by Mexican parties and public opinion. A number of U.S. delegates agreed that the certification process was not helpful and indicated that efforts were underway to make changes, while another delegate stated that U.S. citizens had demanded a review to make certain that their tax dollars were well spent. Many Mexican delegates urged the United States to rely upon a multilateral mechanism for evaluating drug control efforts, and many mentioned the Organization of American States' multilateral evaluation mechanism (MEM) as a possible model.

Mexican delegates voiced concern about the implementation of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, enacted by the United States in 1999, which strengthened the President's authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to block the assets in the United States of designated international drug traffickers and companies dealing with them. The delegates agreed that greater action needed to be taken against the druglords, but they viewed the new measure as a unilateral determination, without consultation with countries, that was lacking in due process safeguards. This raised the danger of mis-designation of kingpins and sanctions against companies inno-

cently working with them. A U.S. delegate replied that the IEEPA legislation had been in effect since World War II, and was not contrary to international law. He said the President's powers under the act had been used against key drug traffickers in Colombia since 1995, and he was not aware of any mistakes in designation. With regard to other concerns, he noted that the legislation created a commission to review and report on due process issues.

Mexican delegates stressed the United States' responsibility to control the flow of weapons and guns to Mexico, with several saying that 80% of the illegal weapons in Mexico come from the United States and contribute greatly to drug-related crime in the country. They viewed U.S. legislation on possession of weapons as very lax, compared to Mexico's laws, and suggested that the two countries have very different philosophies in this area. Mexicans called upon the United States to ratify the Inter-American Convention Against Illicit Arms Trafficking signed at the OAS in November 1997, and to adhere to its provisions. A U.S. delegate stated that many of the weapons entering Mexico were brought by so-called coyotes, people who smuggle undocumented aliens and illicit drugs into the United States, and then smuggle weapons back into Mexico. U.S. delegates also complained about the arrests of U.S. citizens in Mexico who have inadvertently brought guns into Mexican territory, and several mentioned the case of a U.S. Marine arrested in Tijuana when he went to pick up a friend. Mexican delegates indicated that legislation to reduce penalties for accidental introduction of weapons into Mexico was under consideration.

MIGRATION ISSUES

U.S. and Mexican delegates noted that the root of migration issues was the asymmetrical relationship between the countries, with differences in wages and living standards greater than at any other border in the world. While delegates from both countries emphasized the importance of consultation, and praised a number of agreements between the countries on migration issues, including the Binational Study on Migration and the Border Safety Campaign to reduce violence on the border, there were differences in approaches.

Mexican delegates argued that undocumented migrants posed social and humanitarian problems, not criminal and law enforcement issues. They claimed that migrants were attracted by the demand for labor in the United States, and that the human rights of the migrants had to be respected at all times. With more than 300 million legal border crossings per year, it was impossible to control the flow, despite the recent efforts by the United States to expand the Border Patrol and to increase fencing and surveillance on the border. They argued that U.S. legislation had failed to impede immigration, but had forced migrants to take more remote and dangerous routes through the mountains and deserts, leading to a growing number of deaths in border areas. Some delegates called upon the United States to ratify and enforce the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families signed in 1990. Other delegates argued for seeing the border as a joint responsibility, and an opportunity for collective action.

U.S. delegates stated that the United States was generous in receiving numerous legal immigrants each year, but that it was not prepared to have a completely open border with Mexico. One delegate called for acknowledgment of the distinction between legal and illegal migration, and recognition that illegal migrants were violating U.S. laws or regulations, and that they were trespassing on private property. One delegate wondered if Mexico accepted the right of the United States to enact its own immigration legislation, and he indicated that he felt that Mexico should discourage Mexicans from entering U.S. territory without proper documentation. He regretted the number of border crossing deaths, but noted that few if any of the deaths were caused by the Border Patrol. A delegate stated that he would seek legislation to require employers to examine more carefully the documents for workers as a way of discouraging immigration, but another delegate stated that such actions were presently prohibited, and still another delegate indicated that such measures had often led to discrimination against Hispanics in the past. Another delegate noted that dangerous and criminal activity was occurring at the border when smugglers prey upon migrants in various ways, including robbery and crowding them into trucks and trains, and when migrants dart across freeways. While some delegates emphasized the contribution of migrants in their communities, others noted that there was considerable frustration in many communities with the social welfare, education, and health costs of undocumented migrants.

Mexican delegates were particularly disturbed by the recent reports of ranchers in southwestern Arizona taking matters into their own hands, and, in some cases, using weapons to detain and turn over migrants to the Border Patrol. They accused the ranchers of encouraging others to join them to "hunt" for migrants. They claimed that these actions were violations of the human rights of the migrants, and violations of U.S. law, as stated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). They noted that this situation had led to numerous speeches in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and a resolution calling on Mexican legislators to raise the issue at the Interparliamentary Conference meetings and to report back to the legislature.

U.S. delegates reported that Arizona had experienced a surge of migrants when efforts to control the border were successful in California, Texas, and other areas. One delegate said that 500,000 migrants had crossed into Arizona in two months through sparsely populated counties with only 90,000 inhabitants. Migrants were coming through the ranch areas by the hundreds, cutting fences and leaving trash that can be dangerous to animals. He said the number of people engaged in so-called vigilante action was very small, and that evidence to prosecute these individuals was inadequate. The INS had said that this behavior could lead to criminal activity, and a number of U.S. officials had discouraged this behavior, and called upon people to leave law enforcement to legally designated authorities. He noted that there was a serious problem on the Arizona border when hospitals are forced to provide health care to migrants but there is no reimbursement.

A number of delegates from both sides commented on the need for a structured program for migrants, especially agricultural work-

ers, to enter the United States legally, something similar to the bracero program in the past. Several Mexican delegates suggested that a pilot program be adopted in areas where the needs were greatest, but a U.S. delegate emphasized that decent living conditions needed to be required. One U.S. delegate indicated that the U.S. economy was booming, and there was a need for labor, unlike the earlier period when immigration was a major political issue. He noted that the AFL-CIO had called for amnesty for undocumented workers and for repealing the immigration legislation that imposes sanctions on employers who hire them. Another U.S. delegate noted that the Congress would be voting shortly on legislation to increase the number of temporary professional workers and temporary agricultural workers under the H1B and H2A provisions.

One U.S. delegate indicated that he had hosted a meeting of an interparliamentary subgroup of Mexican legislators to El Paso to focus on the challenges of the border, and he had found that discussion to be very useful. Another U.S. delegate offered to host a similar meeting in Arizona to focus on migration and border issues. Delegates from both countries stressed that continuing dialogue on the issues was crucial for mutual understanding. Several delegates indicated that an improvement in the living conditions in Mexico was the only long range solution to the problem, and delegates from both countries promised to work toward that end.

BORDER AND ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

A Mexican delegate began the discussion by saying that the border area was a complex place where the countries come together with vast asymmetries in resources, and where many of the bilateral issues intersect trade, drug trafficking, immigration, and environmental issues. This delegate expressed great hope for continuing dialogue on the border to make it a peaceful and cordial place, and called for greater environmental cooperation through mechanisms such as the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADBank). A U.S. delegate called for strict compliance with environment legislation in both countries, a matter of concern in his district. He asserted that the NAFTA environmental side agreement was starting to work, and that the countries were cooperating on migratory birds. He expressed hope that enforcement of environmental standards would be upgraded and that there would be no race to lower standards to attract industry. Another U.S. delegate said that air pollution and wildlife habitat issues between the countries were being adequately addressed. A Mexican delegate asserted that neither country could feel pride about the border because there are many disagreements there, and he urged greater cooperation to deal with the critical human issues.

A U.S. delegate focused on the water shortage in Texas, and particularly upon the water debt of Mexico to the United States under a 1944 water-sharing treaty. He said that discussions with Texas water districts, the Mexican Ambassador to the United States, and with the Mexican and U.S. Commissioners of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) had concluded that Mexico had failed to provide up to an accumulated amount of 1.4 million acre-feet of water under the terms of the 1944 treaty. Mexico

had acknowledged its obligations under the treaty, but was having difficulty complying under the current drought conditions. He said that Mexico recently provided a certain amount of water for farmers in Laredo, McAllen and Brownsville for immediate needs, but he called upon Mexico to take action to eliminate the deficit over the five year cycle. He noted that a primarily agricultural area was in decline, and that unemployment was about 14%.

A Mexican delegate said that Mexico is committed to end the water deficit completely, but he argued that the treaty permits modifications in amounts in time of drought. He also mentioned that the salinity of the Colorado River was so high that Mexican farmers were unable to grow cotton, and that proposed modifications of the All-American Canal would seriously damage Mexico. He urged the IBWC to deal with the issue, and suggested that the NADBank develop projects to help in these areas. Several other Mexican delegates mentioned that the planned modifications of the All-American Canal would have the effect of reducing the amount of quality water for Mexican farmers in the Baja California region, and they called for full consultations between the countries as required by the 1983 La Paz border and environment agreement.

A U.S. delegate mentioned the problem of flows of sewage from rapidly growing Tijuana that were spoiling U.S. beaches near the border and discouraging tourism in his district. He said that the IBWC had taken inadequate action on the issue, and he suggested that some border communities were talking about boycotts against Tijuana. One Mexican delegate suggested a meeting of an inter-parliamentary subgroup on the issue, and other delegates pointed out that Tijuana already had an International Plant for treatment, and the new Tijuana Plant would soon enter into operation to resolve the problem of sewage flows. A U.S. delegate countered that despite the plants there have been closings of beaches near the border.

Mexican delegates noted that Mexico had ratified the 1997 Kyoto protocol to the 1992 U.N. Convention on Climate Control, and called upon the United States to do the same, and to reduce the high level emissions of greenhouse gases that may be causing global warming. They also called upon the United States to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to reduce fears in that area. A U.S. delegate replied that the United States is unwilling to ratify the Kyoto protocol, which would set binding limitations on greenhouses gases for industrialized countries, as long as the limitations do not apply to less developed countries as well. He mentioned that under these provisions, a plant in the United States that was exceeding allowable gas emissions could dismantle and move to Mexico where it would have no such legally binding limitations.

A Mexican delegate expressed concern about the accidental and involuntary incursions of military forces from either country in poorly marked border areas. She mentioned an incident in March when a Mexican patrol entered U.S. territory and an armed confrontation was narrowly avoided. She noted that the Mexican Ambassador to the United States had immediately urged the IBWC to undertake a project to improve boundary markings along the bor-

der. A U.S. delegate remarked in the next session that this was a commendable project.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS AND OTHER EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

The conference ended with a session devoted to finding ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the interparliamentary meetings, and to sharing information on other exchange programs. A U.S. delegate noted that there had been an interim meeting of some interparliamentary conference members in Mexico in January, and he thought there should be a similar interim meeting in the United States in the future. He mentioned a useful interparliamentary staff exchange that took place in Mexico, but regretted that followup was lacking.

The U.S. delegate noted that several delegates had mentioned the usefulness of a meeting of an interparliamentary subgroup on migration and border issues in El Paso, and he offered to host a meeting devoted to the same issues in Arizona so that delegates could talk to ranchers, migrants, health officials, and local residents on both sides of the border. He said that it would be useful to have a meeting of a subgroup on environmental issues, and he thought there had been an invitation to hold such a meeting in Tijuana.

This delegate also mentioned that several U.S. legislators had invited Mexican students from the University of the Americas in Puebla to serve as interns in their congressional offices, and he suggested that additional exchanges of staff or interns would provide a better understanding of the operations of the respective congresses.

A Mexican delegate stated that it would be useful for the group to meet more often, perhaps two or three times per year, whenever important topics arise, without major administrative staff. The group would not be expected to come up with agreements, but it would provide an input as the legislators deal with various issues. He welcomed the suggestions of interim meetings of interparliamentary subgroups dealing with environmental and migration issues, and thought that internships would be useful to better understand each country's congressional operations.

This Mexican delegate reminded the legislators that the interparliamentary conference had decided in previous meetings to have more constant communication through email and the possible creation of a website that would show the agendas of the two congresses. He also suggested that there could be access to material prepared by the research services of the respective legislatures. A U.S. delegate stated that they were well on the way to having two separate websites, one for each congress, with links to each other, which was more practical than a single website.

A U.S. delegate suggested that the interparliamentary meetings be extended by one day, and perhaps split up into subgroups on one of the days. A Mexican delegate suggested that they could invite experts to speak on pertinent topics similar to a U.S. congressional hearing. One U.S. delegate suggested the use of teleconferencing capabilities, and another encouraged greater academic student exchanges between the countries. Delegates on both sides in-

icated support for the many suggestions, particularly the various meetings of subgroups.

A U.S. delegate suggested that it would be useful to examine the cooperative efforts of local communities. He mentioned one program in Georgia where a community had gone from being 4% Hispanic to 40% Hispanic and was having some difficulties in the school system. Turning this situation into an opportunity, local officials went to Monterrey, Mexico, and hired bilingual teachers who have proved to be very effective. This shows that the citizens of the two countries are cooperating in a whole range of activities.

The conference concluded with thanks to the staff and to all participants from a U.S. delegate. He said that he looked forward to the next session, but he recognized that there would be many new faces in the Mexican delegation following the July 2000 election because of Mexico's strict adherence to the principle of no reelection at all levels.

