

Office of the President of the Republic of Mexico

Press Office of the Federal Government of Mexico

SOURCE: Mexican Dept. of External Relations

External Relations Secretary Patricia Espinosa participates in the closing ceremony of the Leaders Summit of the NASCO Conference 2008

Thursday, June 5, 2008 | Formal Statement

Comunicado 162

Department of External Relations

GUANAJUATO, Guanajuato

Secretary extols regional commercial and economic benefits generated by NASCO (North America's SuperCorridor Coalition, Inc.)

The Secretary of External Relations, Ambassador Patricia Espinosa Castellano, today praised the economic benefits generated with the help and support of groups like that meeting at the North America's SuperCorridor Coalition, Inc. (NASCO) Conference 2008, and stated there is a need to strengthen commercial cooperation strategies in the North American marketplace to address the rising competition from international trade outside the region.

As a participant in the closing ceremonies of the Leaders Summit of the NASCO Conference 2008, the External Relations Secretary said after 15 years in operation the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had help the partner nations triple the total trade of U.S.-Canada-Mexico from \$304 billion U.S. dollars in 1993 to more than \$900 billion U.S. dollars in the last calendar year.

Secretary Espinosa Castellano reported that currently each day the three partner nations trade \$2.74 billion U.S. dollars in the region, with direct investment in the region rising above \$530 billion U.S. dollars, more than triple that of \$138 billion recorded in 1993.

She emphasized that the Declaration of Guanajuato 2008, signed by the Leaders Summit participants at the NASCO Conference and made public today, states that NASCO has contributed to the healthy expansion of a market of nearly 450 million citizens, the world's largest marketplace, and that the three neighbor nations produce more than 30% of all the goods and services traded worldwide and account for more than 17% of total world trade.

The Ambassador said that the North America region includes more than 12,000 kilometers of borders that represent multiple crossing points for commerce and information exchange, which the three nations should maximize to benefit their citizens.

"In these days in which voices rise to question the benefits of trade between our countries, it's worth the effort to recall what has been achieved under NAFTA and the great advances achieved in the context of initiatives such as NASCO," she said.

She said she views the Declaration of Guanajuato 2008 as a valuable document because it incorporates the spirit of collaboration and enlightened self interest that governors, business leaders, academics and civil society have put forth as the goals of NASCO. She also valued the document for its clear outlines of efforts required in the years ahead.

The Declaration covers key subjects of the three neighbor nations' common interests, including the work needed to enhance and improve border cooperation to spur ever greater efficiencies and higher security policies.

Mexico's top diplomat said the NASCO Conference 2008 had attracted more than 400 businessmen, elected officials and public servants from the state and Federal governments of Mexico, the United States and Canada, to who are truly the drivers of change and transformation of the continent, particularly in areas of logistics and transportation infrastructure.

This portends great advances for increased connections between our nations and spurs more business and more economic development to benefit our populations, she said.

The External Relations Secretary expressed the full support of the Administration of Mexican President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa and of

her Department of External Relations for NASCO's efforts, which she described as most valuable and commendable.

The closing ceremony included, besides the Secretary of External Relations, Mexico's Secretary of Communications and Transport, Dr. Luis Téllez Kuenzler; the Governor of the state of Zacatecas, Amalia García; and her counterpart, the Governor of Nuevo León state, José Natividad González Parás. Also present were the Premier of the Canadian Province of Québec, Jean Charest; and that of the Province of Manitoba, Gary Doer.

The host of the annual NASCO Conference and Leaders Summit was Guanajuato state Governor Juan Manuel Oliva Ramírez, with support from sponsors and business leaders from the three North American nations.

SOURCE: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, (SRE).

Last Modified:

Thursday, 5 June 2008 at 23:01 hours by José Antonio Monterrosas Figueiras.

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0.203285

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