

Remarks Following Meetings With President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado of Mexico in La Paz

August 14, 1983

President de la Madrid, members of the official party, and ladies and gentlemen:

I'm delighted to be here in La Paz in Baja California Sur on the Bay of Peace. This is a particularly appropriate place for us to meet as we work to ensure peace in our hemisphere and in other areas of the world. Your cordiality and hospitality, Mr. President, are deeply appreciated.

Mr. President, you and I have spent a good bit of our time this morning discussing the future and how we can make sure that it's good for both our peoples. Relations between our countries are excellent. Last October we got off to a good start when we met in Tijuana and San Diego prior to your inauguration.

Our sessions have given us a further chance to get to know each other as individuals. I can tell you that you are a man whom I respect and admire. It's a pleasure to work with you. I pledge to you, Mr. President, my best efforts to strengthen and broaden our personal and professional relations to the benefit of both our peoples.

Mexico and the United States share a continent together. We share many traditions and values, as well. Coming from one of the Southwestern States, I greatly appreciate the magnitude of our common bonds and of the strong Hispanic traditions that we have -- something of which I've been reminded these past few weeks when I met with various Hispanic groups in the United States. They are keenly aware of our relations with Mexico and stressed to me the importance of strengthening our ties. These citizens of Hispanic descent are a permanent link for us to the Hispanic world.

I do not minimize the differences between our two countries. We have every reason to be proud of the distinct cultural traditions of our two peoples. Yet our differences need never diminish our good will and our respect for one another, because good will and mutual respect always should be the hallmark of relations between the United States and Mexico.

We have a 2,000-mile common border. I prefer not to look on it as a border, but instead as a meeting place. It provides enormous potential for cooperation that we can tap.

Cooperation between our two governments has already accomplished much.

Increasingly effective narcotics control activities by Mexican authorities have made a major contribution to my government's efforts to attack this problem. We're deeply grateful for your help.

Over the years, our two governments have established a wide spectrum of arrangements concerning science and technology, educational and cultural exchanges, housing and urban development, and coordinated responses to natural disasters.

In a series of treaties and other agreements stretching down through this century, the United States and Mexico have established effective mechanisms for an equitable division of the border water resources. The International Boundary and Water Commission has been exceptionally successful in defusing problems and developing equitable solutions to difficulties involving our precious water resources.

As one would expect of a friend, during Mexico's financial crisis of last summer the United States took the lead in arranging international support for Mexico's recovery efforts.

Mr. President, I think that we can be pleased with the successes that we've had. And the businesslike atmosphere of today's meeting suggests that much more will be accomplished in the future.

Yes, mistakes have been made in the past by our governments in their dealings with one another. Human beings err, and that's to be expected. But friendship can overcome mistakes, and that, too, should be understood.

I came primarily to listen, to try to understand the concerns of the Mexican people and, as our actions have shown, to be responsive.

In the United States, we're just now emerging from a long period of economic turmoil, and we fully appreciate the tough job

you face in restoring economic health. We're impressed with the efforts being taken by you, Mr. President, and the citizens of your country to resolve Mexico's economic problems. As you've said on a number of occasions, the solution to Mexico's economic difficulties will come from Mexico itself. That, clearly, is as it should be, and we applaud your determination.

Our role is to support your efforts as best we can. We appreciate that droughts and other factors during the past 3 years have severely affected agricultural production in Mexico, compounding Mexico's economic problems. Therefore, I have approved the extension this fiscal year of additional commodity credits to help finance the purchase of agricultural commodities in the United States. We hope that these agricultural credits will be useful to Mexico in buying the food it needs without impeding your economic recovery efforts. We also hope to negotiate a further purchase of Mexican petroleum for our Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Mr. President, we've demonstrated on several occasions that we intend to shape our future as equal partners. I am pleased that our meetings today have been productive and that we've laid the groundwork for future action along these lines.

In our discussions today, we dealt with a number of significant trade matters. Mexico is one of our largest markets and a vital source of supply. We are Mexico's largest market and supplier. Despite the current difficulties, Mexico rightly looks to our market as fundamental to the strength and vitality of its own, and I can assure you that we consider Mexico's economic health of great importance to our prosperity and well-being.

Mr. President, you and I are determined to continue working out our trade problems and to reduce impediments to commerce that prevent our people from enjoying its maximum benefits.

We also see investment as an avenue for Mexico to obtain the capital it needs to expand its industry and increase efficiency. I know that you, Mr. President, understand this and are determined to work out arrangements that will attract investors. We agree that the Maquiladora and the Twin Plants program make a contribution to the economies of both our nations by increasing jobs and promoting economic activity, especially at the border.

Much of our discussion today related to the border. We are looking into ways we can work together to foster economic stability and prosperity there. We're also concerned about protecting the environment in the border region, especially with respect to pollution of the air, water, and land.

President de la Madrid, you and I will sign an agreement today which establishes a framework for environmental action in the border region. We expect this agreement to strengthen cooperation between our two countries by addressing serious pollution problems. Our joint International Boundary and Water Commission has discussed the problem of sewage which affects the communities of Tijuana, San Diego, Mexicali, and Calexico, and other locations. We need to solve these problems quickly, as they affect people in both countries. President de la Madrid, I know you and I are both committed to this task.

Finally, Mr. President, we've discussed the situation in Central America and, while we have differences, there are substantial areas of potential cooperation. I continue to believe that a solution to the crisis in Central America must encompass four basic principles: one, establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions in order to resolve political differences within each state; two, respect for nonintervention, including ending support for subversive elements seeking to destabilize other countries; three, removal of the conflict from East-West confrontation through such measures as the verifiable withdrawal of all foreign military and security advisers and a freeze on the acquisition of offensive weapons; and four, cooperation to sustain a level of economic growth that guarantees the basic needs of the people of this area.

The principle of self-determination is as important to citizens of the United States as anyone. Our history proves it. We've fought wars for that very principle. We believe that people should be able to determine their own solutions, and that's why we've responded to calls for help from certain of our Latin American neighbors. We will consider it a beautiful day in the history of that region when all foreign elements, including our own, may be safely withdrawn.

Mr. President, I hope that God, who made us neighbors, will look favorably upon us as we work closely together to find solutions to our mutual problems.

Thank you.

Note: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. to reporters assembled in the Baja California Sur Legislative Chambers. Earlier, the two Presidents met privately in the Governor's Office at the Palace of Government. They then moved to the Governor's Conference Room, where they were joined by U.S. and Mexican officials, for further discussions.