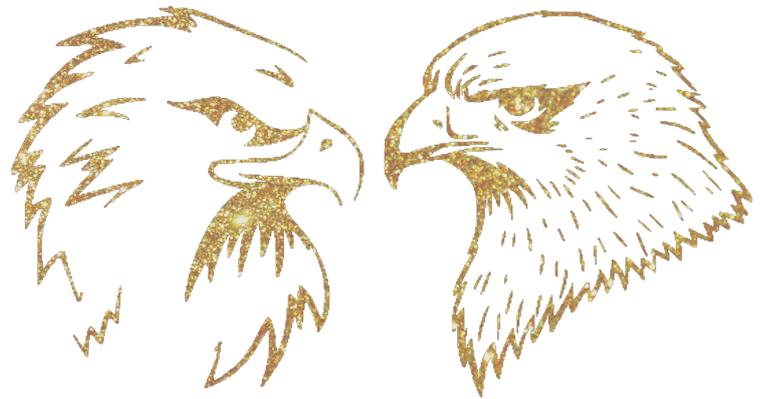


MARCH 2022

CON VOCA TION 2.0



THE REPORT



U.S.-MEXICO
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The opinions expressed in this publication are representative of the discussions that took place between the former ambassadors during Convocation 2.0. They do not reflect the opinions or views of the U.S.-Mexico Foundation, the Mexico Institute, individual ambassadors, or other special guests.



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ABOUT CONVOCATION

Convocation is a program led by the U.S. Mexico Foundation and the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center that brings together more than a dozen former ambassadors from the United States to Mexico and from Mexico to the United States, to discuss key elements of the present and the future of the bilateral relationship.

In January 2020, twelve former ambassadors convened for the first time in San Antonio, Texas, to discuss a wide array of components of the bilateral relationship such as economics and trade, migration, security, and soft power. The main takeaways from the discussion were published in “Convocation: A Vision for a Stronger U.S. Mexico Partnership” and presented to bilateral stakeholders and interest groups, including cabinet level officials in both countries.

In December 2021, the distinguished group convened once again, for three days of working sessions in Tequila, Jalisco. During these sessions, the former ambassadors discussed the areas of opportunity for the bilateral relationship including **strategic alignment of North American economies, workforce development and labor mobility, public security, and soft power**. Aiming to have a more comprehensive discussion, on day two of the retreat, the ambassadors were joined by 10 business leaders and two universities representatives from both countries, who shared their insights on the shared challenges in the region. The ambassadors, business leaders, and members of the academia discussed how ongoing difficulties such as the COVID-19 pandemic have further compounded existing issues for the region. Ambassador Kenneth Salazar, current U.S. Ambassador to Mexico; and Esteban Moctezuma, current Mexican Ambassador to the United States, also traveled to Tequila to participate in the closing sessions of Convocation.

Three days of uninterrupted work yielded a series of recommendations that build on past and present experiences. While the relationship between the United States and Mexico encompasses a plethora of topics, actors, and institutions, the ambassadors present the recommendations encapsulated in this report as actionable strategies to bolster existing efforts and advance future cooperation to exploit the potential of North American integration.



ABOUT U.S.-MEXICO FOUNDATION

The U.S. Mexico Foundation (USMF) is a binational non-profit organization dedicated to fostering cooperation and bilateral understanding between the United States and Mexico. Rooted in the North America Free Trade Agreement and launched in 2009 with seed funds from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, and the Business Foundation in Mexico (Fundemex), the USMF is governed by a bi-national board of business and civic leaders with extensive networks in the U.S. and Mexico.

The USMF started a new chapter with a compelling agenda focused on policy and advocacy, creating new strategic alliances, educating important stakeholders and providing a voice on the most relevant issues pertaining the U.S.-Mexico relationship.

ABOUT MEXICO INSTITUTE

Chartered by Congress in 1968, The Wilson Center is the nation's key non-partisan policy forum. The Wilson Center tackles global issues through independent research and open dialogue to inform actionable ideas for the policy community. The Wilson Center's Mexico Institute seeks to improve understanding, communication, and cooperation between Mexico and the United States by promoting original research, encouraging public discussion, and proposing policy options for enhancing the bilateral relationship.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an increasingly complex and competitive international sphere, the importance of a strong bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico is evident.

The negotiation and entry into force of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) bolstered the countries' commitment to advance economic integration in the region. Other mechanisms including the High-Level Economic Dialogue, the High-Level Security Dialogue and the North American Leaders Summit have shown the common ground that exists for Washington D.C. and Mexico City. However, discrepancies in criteria of essential economic sectors; credentialing, training, and hiring of workers; strategies to tackle public security threats; and perceptions, highlight the need to revitalize current efforts to deepen cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the depth of interdependence and some weaknesses of the economic interconnectedness of the U.S. and Mexico as some productive sectors halted operations. The ambassadors recommend reaching consensus on both sides of the border on what is deemed as essential value chains and operations. They emphasize involving the private sector in these conversations. Response to cybersecurity threats should be prioritized as technology and connectivity are fundamental components for better alignment of both countries' economies. This will only increase as companies across North America increasingly digitalize. Supply chains will also benefit from the introduction of better technology, in particular as it is applied to border infrastructure and border crossing procedures.

To meet the labor needs in the United States, both countries should take advantage of the existing legal frameworks, including the USMCA. They should expand the criteria of current visa categories to attract highly skilled migrants, but also migrants with technical skills to fill vacancies in the agricultural and manufacturing sector. In addition to fostering educational exchange programs, the ambassadors propose to streamline the





process to validate and recognize Mexican degrees and diplomas in the United States. They also recommend taking action to promote work visas in Mexico for American nationals working remotely in Mexico. Moreover, universities and higher education institutions should join forces to promote the creation of regional mechanisms that address cross-border challenges and development of the workforce in both countries in ways that promote employment and inclusion.

Public security is a key component of the bilateral agenda. The shift in nature of organized crime demands a comprehensive approach from both countries. Considering the fragmentation of organized crime groups and the complexity of their activities, it is important to complete a joint assessment of the regional landscape. A bilateral approach requires trust, which should be built through close collaboration in training and sharing information. Coupled with the high-level summits of public security officials and justice ministers, regular meetings of mid-level officials could outline metrics and criteria to evaluate progress, ensuring accountability.

Mexico faces the challenge of perception in the United States that could be improved through the use of soft power. Supporting public diplomacy programs could allow American policymakers to gain a better understanding of their counterparts and enhance decision-making processes. In addition to the promotion and expansion of academic exchanges and scholarships by universities in both countries, the private sector could promote cultural understanding by fostering language-learning programs. These programs could be funded by companies within certain productive sectors where bilingual skills are particularly advantageous.

The bilateral agenda and pressing priorities will evolve regularly impacted by events and developments in the United States, Mexico, and in the rest of the world. There were a number of issues not included in the Convocation agenda due to limited resources; therefore, the four topics in this report were selected to be discussed in depth because of their overriding importance. These recommendations offer stepping-stones for upcoming work in and by both countries to advance the interests and prosperity of the United States, Mexico and the region.



PART 1: ALIGNMENT OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ECONOMIES

In recent years, continuous dialogue and collaborative efforts from both Mexico and the United States have significantly aligned the North American economies. The entry into force of the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement (USMCA) in 2020 showed a strong commitment to the bilateral and trilateral relationships that has since been strengthened.

The year 2021 marked a time of renovation and reinvigoration of the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. The restoration of the High-Level Economic Dialogue (HLED), the High-Level Security Dialogue (HLSL) and the North American Leaders Summit (NALS) established a wide range of commitments to address shared challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and enhance North American competitiveness. Common interests by the Biden and López Obrador administrations in more progressive and inclusive economic policies show an ideological alignment not seen as strongly in recent administrations.

Attempts to further align the economies and better facilitate trade, both before and after the entry into force of the USMCA, have had measurable results. For example, trade between the United States and Mexico supported nearly 5 million jobs in the United States between 2014 and 2018 (the latest for which data is available). Mexico and the U.S. were each other's largest trading partners in 2021 following the latest census data, with total trade with Mexico representing 14.5% of the United States' total foreign trade.

While these accomplishments are noteworthy, there are still points of contention. The United States' Proposed Buy American Rule and its interpretation of USMCA's Rules of Origin, and Mexico's proposed electricity reform and biotech policies, for example, have not only caused concern for investors and businesspeople, but have also raised questions of potential violations of the USMCA.





The events of recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have also highlighted many economic vulnerabilities that the North American region must address. For example, supply chain, infrastructure, and cybersecurity issues, highlighted by a lack of coordination between Mexico City and Washington D.C., could diminish the region's economic competitiveness if not addressed in a prompt and cooperative manner. China has surpassed the United States as a trading partner in many Latin American countries and will remain a major economic competitor.

Finally, while the bilateral relationship currently benefits from the relative socioeconomic policy alignment of the Biden and López Obrador administrations, the two nations face pressure to find ways to build economies that can collaborate well into the foreseeable future. With midterm elections in the United States this year, and coincidental presidential elections in Mexico and the United States in 2024, and the first review of the USMCA by the three member nations in 2026, there will be pressure to build institutions that survive electoral cycles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, production in some strategic sectors stopped. A bilateral consensus on which sectors are “essential” must be urgently developed. Pharmaceuticals, medical devices, chemicals, semiconductors, energy, and electric vehicles were acknowledged to be essential in the United States. A bilateral- or even trilateral, including Canada- working group with participation from the private sector should be established to facilitate this discussion and to produce specific criteria and operational protocols.



- Enhanced cybersecurity should be considered as fundamental by both governments. In the first half of 2020, Mexico was one of the countries with most cyberattacks in Latin America. Mexico, the U.S., and Canada, should create a trilateral cybersecurity mechanism to address cybersecurity threats by coordinating protocols, protective measures, and response to possible attacks. The mechanism could integrate similar reporting requirements from the private sector and a common legal framework to prosecute cyber criminals. The private sector could be a key player in aligning efforts in this regard, and in creating public awareness of this issue.
- Notwithstanding the right narrative, neither the private sector nor governments have developed a clear program regarding the reshoring of supply chains back to North America. This should be a priority objective for the High-Level Economic Dialogue with strong participation from the private sector.
- The efficiency of supply chains could be enhanced through the implementation of technology deployed at the borders and related to customs processes. Big companies already use this technology to get ensure proper traceability and a smooth flow of information; however, the government border processes should take advantage of the newer technology and agree on uniform processes. Blockchain and digital credentialization, among other technologies, could be used to see what is behind exports and, thus, have a more transparent and efficient border.
- Modern and sufficient port of entry infrastructure is a key element for regional competitiveness. Long waiting times at the different ports of entry along the border result in significant costs for both countries. Governments should coordinate better in the design, construction and operations of international ports of entry, including the use of reversible lanes and extended hours of operation. This becomes even more pressing with the U.S. infrastructure spending package.



- Over the years, governments have developed important pre-clearance programs for both goods and people. It would be extremely useful to have an assessment of where these programs stand, the problems they face, and how they should be reformed and improved to move forward.
- Beyond supply chains, economic alignment should be established through coordination of digital infrastructure. There is a lack of coordinated vision regarding technological improvements. Both countries should embrace connectivity, 5G, cloud computing and Internet of Things (IoT).
- Both governments are working together in addressing root causes of migration from Central America. An assessment of the feasibility and benefits of the integration of Central American countries into USMCA could be worth exploring.
- Sustainable water management along the border region is becoming an increasingly important challenge for both governments. The 1944 Water Treaty, the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC and CILA in U.S. and Mexico, respectively), and the North American Development Bank have been important tools in addressing the challenge. Nevertheless, an innovative study on ways to build on the current practices to better ensure water sustainability could be beneficial.
- The Biden administration has established climate change as one of its priorities. Meanwhile the López Obrador administration has championed fossil fuel energy. For example, the proposed energy reform could have adverse effects on the environment, and could have a negative impact on Mexico's foreign direct investment opportunities. It is important to address the effects of climate as a region to affect positive change. While USMCA has an environmental chapter which may be helpful, further institutionalized mechanisms to hold governments accountable for their environmental responsibilities must be established. A regional paradigm for common energy efficiency, independence, security, and mitigation of climate change should be considered.



PART 2: LABOR MOBILITY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

As the economies of the United States and Mexico become more aligned, the workforces of each country have become increasingly interconnected. Just how connected the economies are on a person to person level is increasingly evident; however, labor mobility and workforce development, from the perspective of individual nations and as a region, are major challenges.

In 2020, there were over 11 million Mexican-born individuals living in the United States; In Mexico, there were at least 1.6 million U.S.-born individuals. These migrants from Mexico and the United States have become an integral part of each nation's workforce across multiple sectors. In the U.S. agricultural sector alone - a sector in which many of those employed are foreign born - Mexican-born individuals represented 93% of the 213,394 H2-A visas issued in 2020 to temporary workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has both highlighted and further exacerbated existing challenges related to the credentialing, training, and hiring of workers in both countries. Many of the challenges seen in the United States and Mexico can be tackled as distinct but complementary. In the United States for example, the pandemic has further demonstrated the growing demand for healthcare workers that can look after an aging population. The TN visa category considers some health care professions such as dentists, nurses, and physicians (teaching or research only), however the requirements are very specific, and the accreditation could be complex. Thus, there is a need to update and expand the categories of TN workers. There is also a great need for more trained workers to fill vacancies in the manufacturing and service sector, particularly in the United States; however, most credentials have yet to be recognized on the binational level.

Current national workforce development agendas have had limited success to date. Minimal public expenditures on labor market programs in the United States, and the difficulties in securing a more comprehensive investment in the workforce





through the Build Back Better Act have helped. In Mexico, President López Obrador's Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro (Youth Building the Future) program - with the objective of creating meaningful employment through training opportunities for 2.3 million young Mexicans aged 18-29 who are not studying or employed - has had limited success and there is little evidence of increased investment in training or retraining Mexicans to assume jobs of the future. Critics of current workforce development agendas also cite the need to better incorporate the voices of businesspeople and universities into conversations on training in the most needed skills, as they have the best insight on the needs of employers and the abilities of students.

Finally, both countries face challenges in terms of fully incorporating foreign born residents and workers into the legal systems and institutions that support their economies. Complex and outdated visa systems in the United States continue to be a barrier to entry for qualified Mexican workers. Mexico has become an increasingly attractive destination for remote workers; however, many of these people are not incorporated into Mexico's tax and social security systems. USMCA did not update the NAFTA visa provisions (TN visas), which means missing an opportunity for a potentially and very beneficial worker mobility across North America.

As with the challenge of economic alignment, current legislation regarding visas of both countries could take a long time to be modified. Hence, institutionalized dialogues that carry from administration to administration must be sought.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Addressing workforce development and labor mobility challenges requires a multi-sectoral approach, including voices within the government, private sector, and other institutions such as universities, as well as cooperation across North America. This approach will allow for a more holistic and actionable assessment of challenges and opportunities within the current labor landscape.
- The minimum qualification accepted to receive many U.S. visas is a bachelor's degree, however today's economies demand technical skills that can be certified without a bachelor's degree and there are shortages of such technical skills in the U.S. Therefore, the U.S. should assess the possibility of issuing TN visas, a nonimmigrant visa that allows Mexican and Canadian citizens to work as professionals of the North America Free Trade Agreement, to individuals with the technical educational qualifications that are in short supply. This could allow Mexican workers to fill jobs within the manufacturing sector, for example, that do not require a bachelor's degree, such as mechanical welding. Additionally, the validity of the TN visa should be extended from 1 year to 3 years.
- To meet the needs of the U.S. agricultural sector, the H2A visa program should be streamlined. This visa category is demand driven; however, the existing application process is complex and expensive. A digital information platform that allows matching demand and supply of temporary workers would benefit both economies.
- Based on the benefits that the Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Work Program (SWAP) brought to Canada and Mexico, the United States and Mexico could determine goals and parameters and institutionalize a dialogue through a Memorandum of Understanding. This mechanism should involve labor and immigration agencies from both countries aiming to improve labor mobility, taking advantage of existing non-immigrant work-oriented visa categories such as H-1B, H-2A, H-2B and TN.



- Due to the pandemic and the possibilities of working remotely, more U.S. citizens have started to live in Mexico for extended periods of time. However, many are apparently staying on a tourist visa status. Mexico should explore the possibility of revising and simplifying the criteria for the entrepreneur visa, so that such U.S. workers could better integrate into the Mexican economy. While mobility is happening de facto, the governments should establish a legal framework to take advantage of the situation.
- The U.S. does not recognize diplomas for many Mexican medical professionals; however, there are many instances of medical tourism along the border because of lower costs in Mexico. There are Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance programs which cover medical bills in some places in Mexico such as Baja California. Both countries should work to amplify and strengthen these programs to facilitate medical assistance that is both affordable and of high quality.
- Increasing significantly mutual recognition of academic degrees and certificates should be a priority. A good starting point would be to recognize workers' credentials among different states and along the U.S.-Mexico border. Community colleges and training programs are key players in the workforce and mobility framework because they could promote the technical skills needed.
- Special permissions to allow cross-border training programs should also be a priority, so workers can better build connectivity with sectors important to the bilateral relationship. Both educational institutions and the private sector are essential partners to promote and fund these exchange programs that would benefit communities on both sides of the border.



- There is a shortage of technical skills for a range of jobs in the U.S., especially for jobs in the manufacturing sector. The role of U.S. unions could be critical in encouraging guest working programs for Mexican workers; hence, the Mexican government, the private sector, U.S. unions and subnational governments on both sides of the border could create collaborative agreements to create training programs that help overcome skill gaps in the U.S., while incorporating members of the Mexican workforce.
- Academic exchanges are crucial to expand labor mobility and strengthening global competitiveness and the interconnection between both countries. Nonetheless, there has been a decrease in exchanges and scholarship for over a decade. For example, the U.S.-Mexico Fulbright-Garcia Robles program (which includes English Teaching Assistants in Mexico, and a private sector internship program), has not had a budget increase in a decade or more. The private sector must financially engage in academic exchanges to help maximize educational and post-study opportunities for students. Short-term exchanges, such as a one-week or one-month trips, should also be considered for funding as they too offer educational and employment opportunities.
- A binational summit between U.S. and Mexican universities should be established to promote understanding of the most current needs in the workforce and identify steps to bridge existing or emerging gaps. By bringing together presidents from public and private institutions, with the private sector, the key needs of industries on both sides of the border can be better identified and met. The academic summits can be accompanied by meetings with representatives from governments, companies, and foundations.
- Key to understanding labor mobility in the North American region is to consider cooperation beyond the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. Cooperation between the U.S., Mexico, Canada, and Central America should be explored to address needs within the workforce of the three interconnected economies.



- Amending existing legislation regarding visas of both countries will likely take a long time. Hence, an institutionalized dialogue relying on the existing laws should be established in the interim.
- Regarding corporate partnerships, the former ambassadors and the university representatives have agreed they should join forces and encourage the universities' innovating vision to establish a regional laboratory to address Mexican and U.S. problems in supply chains, with special focus on electronics and technology. Taking as an example the cooperation and development fund established between the U.S. and Israel, a similar fund should be created. Additionally, the joint research resulting from the integration should be done in Mexican institutions so as to integrate both countries in multiple sectors and levels.



PART 3: PUBLIC SECURITY

Public security cooperation and the threats posed by organized crime have continued to be major issues on the bilateral agenda. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement institutions, intelligence sharing, and investments in violence prevention programs have been a centerpiece of the bilateral agenda.

While past efforts such as the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America and the Mérida Initiative have been criticized, they have provided valuable lessons for the future of security collaboration.

2021 brought the High-Level Security Dialogue (HLSD), coupled with the announcement of the U.S.-Mexico Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health, and Safe Communities (Bicentennial Framework). An implementation plan for the Bicentennial Framework is still underway. Both governments indicate that the plan will take a more comprehensive, long-term approach.

The announcement of the Bicentennial Framework came at a contentious moment regarding the bilateral security relationship for the two governments. During many months preceding the announcement, the United States and Mexico clashed over a number of concerns, including an increase of undocumented migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, the arrest of former Mexican Defense Secretary Salvador Cienfuegos, the reform of Mexico's National Security Law to restrict the activities of foreign law-enforcement agents and the continued rise of fentanyl trafficking from Mexico into the U.S.

As these tensions have played out, citizens in both nations have been deeply impacted by the effects of organized crime and instability. Over the past year, the government of Mexico registered 28,160 homicides and 14,897 disappearances. Both countries also face high levels of overdoses as the smuggling and production of synthetic opiates skyrockets, with over





100,000 deaths in the United States from drug overdoses, mostly from synthetic opioids like fentanyl, between May 2020 and April 2021.

Security analysts have noted that the nature of organized crime has shifted greatly in recent years. For example, established transnational crime organizations (TCOs) have become more fragmented, and new organizations have emerged; synthetic drugs have dominated the drug trafficking market; some TCOs have incorporated new revenue generating activities apart from drug trafficking; and criminal groups have also modified their internal organization. Policymakers continue to recognize the importance of addressing these problems, however there is an ongoing debate and negotiation about how to best address these issues individually and collectively. Failures to address organized crime will further complicate bilateral security cooperation and endanger vulnerable communities in both countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The first step regarding the U.S.-Mexico bilateral security cooperation should be developing a shared analysis of the security landscape. Due to the diversity of the forms of contraband, and the establishment of new criminal organizations, the first objective should be mapping the security landscape, including mapping the organizations' value chain in order to understand how product enters the country, how it is transformed and shipped, and what revenues are generated from these sales.

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- Once a common diagnosis has been reached, it is important that security agencies within the U.S. and Mexican government work to build trust and create a set of shared goals. Joint training of personnel in various agencies could help establish this. Additionally, there should be a greater sharing of intelligence, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border. Without trust and means to ensure protection of information however, there will not and should not be increased sharing of information.
- Using newer technology should be a vital component of the bilateral trade. For example, digital trackers could make shipment routes safer and could be promoted by the private sector. Scanners at border crossings can facilitate checking of vehicles moving in both directions for drugs, arms, money, and other contraband.
- There are three levels of cooperation within the bilateral security agenda: at the top stands the cabinet level at which the highest-level officials meet to establish strategic agreements and monitor progress. However, at the mid-level within various agencies, collaboration could be improved by creating additional mechanisms for discussion.
- In conjunction with the Bicentennial Framework, regular bilateral meetings to address public security must be established. During these meetings, common metrics to measure security should be determined, and reports on these metrics should be evaluated. The results of these evaluations should be shared and reviewed at the highest levels of both governments. This will create a greater understanding of the security landscape within the public and will encourage accountability.



PART 4: SOFT POWER

Soft power is much more than diplomacy; it is the ability of countries to attract other countries and their societies. Attractiveness is built on curiosity towards each other, and it is accomplished through connectivity. While soft power tends to be associated with culture, institutions and infrastructure are also a way of promoting the attractiveness of a country. As a country's attractiveness increases, its appeal as an ally and business partner subsequently tends to increase.

Mexico is a nation with a huge reservoir of soft power however, it has faced challenges in terms of its perception. On the one hand, Mexico is very attractive due to its gastronomy, culture, traditions, touristic offering, and cinematography; but on the other hand, when many Americans think of Mexicans, the first things that come to mind are drugs, corruption, violence and poverty.

Exchange and interaction between citizens of different nations is key to building soft power. Two of the greatest ways to do this is through tourism and education. Tourism is a very powerful tool to create curiosity towards a country, and art is essential when promoting a country's offerings. However, tourism usually promotes recognized museums and renowned artists in the capitals of a country, rather than promoting more rural communities or more local artists. Education is also key in promoting soft power, however educational collaboration and exchanges between the United States and Mexico have been limited, especially when compared to other Latin American countries (e.g. more Americans study in Costa Rica than in Mexico).





RECOMMENDATIONS

- Current ambassadors and policymakers should advance with their counterparts in the other country institutional support for public diplomacy programs that enable acknowledgment and a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges within each country.
- The promotion of academic exchanges and partnerships established between corporations and educational institutions is fundamental to improve the image of both countries. The private sector and academia should assess current partnerships and form new alliances with peer organizations in the other country.
- The promotion of special scholarships such as the Fulbright-Garcia Robles program should continue, and be expanded if possible.
- Language is a way of linking two countries. Many former ambassadors believe the Mexican Embassy and Consulates in the U.S. must promote bilingual education. Spanish language skills are becoming more essential in the U.S. The private sector could also fund these efforts to make certain sectors more bilingual and partnerships more feasible.
- The Mexican government, private sector, and institutions, such as universities, must work to highlight positive elements of perception and combat negative stereotypes about Mexico and Mexicans through a variety of media.
- The World Cup 2026 will provide an important platform to showcase North America as a region. Trilateral planning committees should be established, with a subcommittee to focus on the messaging of the tournament, and on common public diplomacy initiatives in the three host countries.

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- Tourist boards in established tourist and prospective destinations must draw attention to local artists. This will help generate soft power that is representative of diverse communities across Mexico and the United States. Tourist boards in Chicago and New York City have done a good job doing this for their cities.
- The Mexican government should highlight investment opportunities in the manufacturing and technology sectors.
- To further promote the tourist industry, Mexico should highlight the country's competitive advantages. The wide variety of touristic destinations for all interests, hospitality, infrastructure, and affordability, draws individuals and companies to travel to Mexico, experience the culture and contribute to the economy.



LOOKING FORWARD

While Alignment of the North American Economies, Labor Mobility and Workforce Development, Public Security, and Soft Power were the primary areas of discussion at Convocation, the participants recognize that the bilateral relationship extends far beyond these four topics. Due to time constraints, the four matters addressed in this report, were treated as priority. The ambassadors' recommendations have been crafted in the hope that current officials can address ongoing and emerging challenges in a manner that is attuned to the previous challenges and achievements of the bilateral relationship.

Since the U.S.-Mexico Foundation, the Mexico Institute, and the ambassadors gathered in December, multiple events have occurred, which have had national and international impact. An increase in the killing of Mexican journalists, the Russia-Ukraine crisis, the discussion in Congress on Mexico's energy reform, and other events will have lasting effects on national politics and the bilateral relationship.

Of particular relevance to this report have been the visits of cabinet-level officials of the United States government to Mexico in the context of the energy reform debate. On January 21st 2022, U.S. Energy Secretary, Jennifer Granholm, met with President López Obrador and Energy Minister, Rocío Nahle in Mexico City. Secretary Granholm expressed concern toward the proposed bill and the potential negative effects on clean energy and climate initiatives. On February 9th, in his visit to Mexico City, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Change, John Kerry, joined by Ambassador Salazar, highlighted the relevance of investment in renewal energy to fight climate threats and the difficulties that the energy bill might create regarding economic competitiveness and the implementation of the USMCA.

Although the stated recommendations are non-exhaustive among the myriad of issues facing Mexico and its relationship with the U.S., they nonetheless provide a firm foundation for charting the future of U.S.-Mexico collaboration.

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In an increasingly competitive geopolitical landscape, commitment to the strength of the relationship between the United States and Mexico is now more important than ever. Through further efforts to understand each other and cooperate, both national and bilateral prosperity can be achieved. The U.S.-Mexico Foundation, the Mexico Institute, and the ambassadors look forward to supporting this understanding and cooperation.

March 2022



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