

## Joint Statement of the Mérida Initiative High-Level Consultative Group on Bilateral Cooperation against Transnational Organized Crime

Office of the Spokesman  
Washington, DC  
March 23, 2010

Following is the joint statement issued by Secretary of State Clinton and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Espinosa who together with other senior government officials of the United States and Mexico met March 23, 2010 in Mexico City as the Merida Initiative High-Level Consultative Group:

1. As friends, neighbors and strategic partners, the Governments of Mexico and the United States of America are committed to a future of development, security and well-being for our people. In this spirit, we renew our long-term efforts to create the conditions that allow us to achieve the great potential between our nations in all areas and to confront common challenges.
2. In 2007, the Governments of Mexico and the United States decided on the implementation of an ambitious multi-year initiative to broaden and deepen bilateral cooperation against transnational drug trafficking organizations and organized crime. The Mérida Initiative includes actions that each country would implement in its territory, with its own resources, to confront organized crime. It also includes enhanced bilateral cooperation, in areas such as information exchange and technical assistance and equipment transfers, technology and training to strengthen the capacities of the Mexican security and law enforcement agencies.
3. The Mérida Initiative represents a paradigmatic change in our bilateral cooperation against transnational organized crime. It is based on the principles of shared responsibility, mutual trust, respect for each country's jurisdiction, and the complementarity of national efforts and regional cooperation.
4. Meeting in August 2009, Presidents Felipe Calderón and Barack Obama noted the progress achieved within this framework. They reiterated the importance of its full implementation, and the need to continue and to expand and institutionalize our cooperation against the regional threat presented by organized crime.
5. We act with a shared vision of our common threats and with the conviction that the appropriate way to confront transnational organized crime and related security concerns, in particular drug trafficking and related criminal activities such as the traffic of weapons and bulk cash, is through cooperation, consultation and the timely exchange of information.
6. We now open a new phase in our cooperation in which the common goal for both countries will be to prevent and combat this scourge in an even more efficient and coordinated manner.
7. In this context, we have consolidated a strategic vision for the coming years to ensure continuity of bilateral actions already in place and advance new opportunities and areas of cooperation, with full respect for the legal framework and sovereignty of each country. Our vision is comprehensive and balanced, encompassing actions in four strategic areas:
  - A. Disruption of the capacity of criminal organizations that act in both countries, through the systematic weakening of their operational, logistical and financial structures and capabilities.
  - B. Mutual support for the continuous improvement of the framework for security and justice and the strengthening of public institutions of both countries that are responsible for

combating organized crime, including the promotion of the full observance of human rights and active civil society participation.

- C. Development of a secure and competitive border for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, based on a bilateral and comprehensive approach, that increases our global competitiveness through efficient and secure flows of legitimate commerce and travel while ensuring citizen safety and disrupting the illicit trade of drugs, weapons, bulk cash and other goods.
  - D. Building strong and resilient communities which includes supporting efforts to address the root causes of crime and violence, promote the culture of legality, reduce illicit drug use, promote a broader perception of the links between drug use and crime and violence, and stem the flow of potential recruits for the cartels by promoting constructive, legal alternatives for young people.
8. Our work in each of the four strategic areas must draw on the full capabilities of both governments and, through strong and effective coordination, leverage the skills and resources available at all levels of government and in civil society. Mexico and the United States recognize the key roles of our respective executive, legislative and judicial powers in the efforts to effectively combat transnational organized crime. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen dialogue and coordination among branches of government, within our respective jurisdictions. We underscore the importance of continuing consultation and engagement with civil society organizations.
  9. We intend to formulate comprehensive plans, based on the four strategic areas that have been identified, to combat the violence that exists in areas of our common border, seeking to guarantee the security of our citizens. We intend to implement pilot programs in a coordinated manner in the Tijuana – San Diego and Ciudad Juárez – El Paso regions. Through the strengthening of their information exchange mechanisms, agencies from both countries will undertake operations in their respective territories to apprehend criminals, and will promote the social and economic development of the communities that have most suffered the effects of violence.
  10. Recognizing that Mexico and the United States have unparalleled opportunities as neighbors to advance joint and national interests in a global environment, we have committed to develop and implement, in line with our four strategic priorities, a plan for a comprehensive vision of how to manage our common border to increase the security and economic competitiveness of both our countries. Our plan will be based on the principles of coordinated management and permanent consultations, co-responsibility for cross-border criminal activity, shared interest in reducing the costs of doing business, and partnership with communities, including the private sector and other stakeholders, along the border that are most intimately affected by federal policies.
  11. Drug use is a serious public health problem, and we are therefore committed to improve and strengthen efforts in the areas of prevention, rehabilitation and demand reduction. The fight against production and drug trafficking will not be effective until the issue of demand is addressed through a comprehensive approach incorporating health and education policies.
  12. Equally, Mexico and the United States intend to prioritize our bilateral and national efforts to investigate, arrest, and punish individuals linked to money laundering, by improving the exchange of financial intelligence, law enforcement coordination and the use of all technical means available to detect and prevent financial crimes.
  13. Our governments intend to establish a bilateral work program to combat illegal weapons and illicit financial flows, crimes that contribute to spread violence and corruption. This scheme will have concrete objectives and progress indicators that will be periodically reviewed. It will seek to identify new areas of cooperation and actions that each State can take within its jurisdiction.

14. Furthermore, aware that the causes and effects of drug trafficking do not respect boundaries, the United States is further intensifying its efforts to combat criminal organizations that introduce and distribute illicit drugs in its territory.
15. For its part, the Government of Mexico will continue to confront resolutely organized crime and to advance the legal reforms needed to modernize its judicial and police structures, combat impunity and strengthen the rule of law. In order to guarantee the security and tranquility its citizens are entitled to, it intends to continue to commit the necessary resources to meet its responsibilities in this area.
16. In the context of strengthening bilateral cooperation and reinforcing mutual trust, both governments are committed to redoubling their respective efforts to combat corruption.
17. Convinced that no State can by itself and with its own resources successfully face these criminal organizations, both governments are committed to deepening regional cooperation and coordination in North America and, likewise, with the countries of Central America and the Caribbean.
18. Our two countries reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the effective mechanisms we have created to confront these challenges. Our efforts are genuinely bilateral and reflect the level of trust and understanding attained through our political dialogue and intensive technical exchanges. Likewise, we will continue to evaluate jointly our measures against transnational organized crime.
19. With these actions, Mexico and the United States reiterate their friendship, mutual trust and a firm commitment with the security and welfare of their populations, so that our children and future generations live free from violence caused by organized crime, and free from the destructive effects of drug use.

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