

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2014*

**Remarks With President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada to North American Business, Civil Society, and Education Leaders in Toluca, Mexico**

*February 19, 2014*

*President Peña Nieto.* Your Excellency Barack Obama, President of the United States of America; Your Excellency Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada; ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests: We are here gathered with representatives from the public, the private, and the social sectors. All of you have walked along us in the construction road to a more competitive North America. And by this, we will have a higher level of development for our peoples.

Members of the media, Mexico welcomes you with open arms to celebrate the North America Leaders' Summit, Toluca 2014. Besides being Toluca, my hometown, this is the place where I was entrusted by the citizens to serve as the Governor of this State, the State of Mexico. The State of Mexico is a clear symbol of the productive integration of North America due to its geographic location and its connectivity. Here we have seen the settlement of advanced automobile facilities and very important logistic hubs. Both are a true example of value chains, global value chains, that make North America excel.

That is why, from Toluca, the three leaders of North America confirm today our commitment to position our region as one of the most dynamic and competitive of the whole world.

I celebrate the fact that we have gathered here with prominent representatives from the academia, from the private sector, and from the civil society from North America. Your contribution has been vital to bring Canada, the U.S., and Mexico closer. With a clear vision in mind, all of you pushed from the onset the great idea that gathers us today: an integrated North America with goals and shared efforts.

*[At this point, there was an interruption in the audio feed.]*

Once, the Free Trade Agreement area was the largest free trade area, with an unprecedented push of trade exchanges, regional investment, and the creation of millions of jobs. With the same innovative spirit, two decades after, we are bound to go beyond and enhance all together the progress that each one of our countries has made, because individually, all our countries have moved forward as well.

Therefore, the principal topics of this seventh summit are very clear: first, inclusive and shared prosperity; number two, new opportunity areas; number three, citizen security; and fourth, regional and global topics. It is upon these four topics today we will work together to boost the economic growth of our countries and a generation of quality jobs and, by this, increase the well-being of our societies.

Ladies and gentlemen, Canada, the United States, and Mexico share strengths that make us move forward. We are a community of more than 450 million inhabitants, where talent and creativity of our peoples excel. Trade exchanges from the three countries are over \$1 trillion— in Spanish, we use billions; in English, we use trillions. We have the support and thrive of our

entrepreneurs and the capabilities of technological innovation coming from our universities and large companies.

We have principles, we have institutions that make us be solid democracies. We have natural resources, endless natural resources and new opportunities, so we can take advantage of them sustainably.

All of these are factors that lay a solid groundwork for North America's region, and this is how we will make it a more attractive and competitive region in the world for the upcoming years. I would like to invite you respectfully so that each one of us from the area where you have the responsibility to act, let's make North America a more competitive and a more prosperous region for the sake of the inhabitants of our countries.

Thank you very much.

*[The announcer introduced President Obama.]*

*President Obama.* Well, good afternoon. *Buenas tardes. Bonjour.* I want to thank Enrique for his extraordinary hospitality and for bringing us here to his beautiful home city. I want to thank the people of Toluca and of Mexico for your great hospitality.

We're all here on business, which means I'm not here as long as I'd like. I have not, for example, sampled some of Toluca's legendary chorizo. *[Laughter]* And hopefully, the next time I stop by, I'm going to be able to have some of that.

All of us—Stephen, Enrique, and I—are focused on how we can deepen what are already incredible ties between our three nations. And I appreciate that all of you are here today, because governments cannot do it alone. The strength of the relationship between Canada, Mexico, and the United States is not just a matter of government policy; it's not just a matter of legislation. There is an incredible richness to the relationship that comes from our people, from our businesses, from our commercial ties, from the students who are traveling back and forth, from the cultures that are shared between us.

And that strength is in some ways unique throughout the world. If you think about North America, to have three borders this long in which we share a common set of values, a common set of principles, a commitment to democracy, a commitment to free markets, a commitment to trade, where we are allies and interact peacefully, that is a precious gift. And it's one that I think all three of us are committed to building and nurturing for future generations.

And for me this is very personal. Some of my closest advisers and allies and political friends are the children of Mexican immigrants who have made an extraordinary life and contribution in the United States. My brother-in-law is Canadian, so you know I have to like Canadians—*[laughter]*—although, I will note that I think we are going to have both the men's hockey teams and the women's hockey teams battling it out. *[Laughter]* So for a very brief period of time, I may not feel as warm towards Canadians as I normally do, at least until those matches are over.

But all—each of you experience these connections in very concrete ways. Enrique already spoke about the volume of trade that takes place and the interactions between our businesses and the subsidiaries of companies in each country that are operating in the other. And so much of the cross-border trade that exists is part of an integrated supply chain that allows us, all three of us as countries, to successfully sell our products and services all around the world.

And so we have every incentive to make this work. And so a lot of our conversation has focused on how do we reduce any continuing trade frictions; how do we make sure that our borders are more efficient; how do we make sure that the educational exchanges between our young people are expanded so that our young people understand their opportunities will be brighter and expanded if in fact they've had the opportunity to study in Canada or to study in Mexico, if they know Spanish, if they know French.

And we use these forums to make concrete progress. Our staffs work incredibly hard to make them successful. But frankly, until our leaders come around, until the three of us meet, sometimes, it doesn't all get done. And this becomes a forcing mechanism for us to move forward on commercial progress, joint security progress, progress on educational and scientific exchanges.

But—and this is the last point I want to emphasize—there are always going to be parochial interests in each of our countries, so that's appropriate, and that will express itself politically, and we have to be responsive to our own constituencies. If in fact we're going to continue to build and strengthen the ties between our three countries, then you can't just leave it to politicians alone. All of you are going to have to speak out and speak up on the importance of this relationship.

We want to make sure that we're your partners and allies in this process, but when people understand what this means in terms of job creation in the United States, job creation in Canada, job creation in Mexico, how this relationship enhances our security, how it improves our capacity to heat our homes and grow our food and make sure that young people have opportunities in the future, when they hear that from you, it's that much more persuasive.

And so I would encourage all of you to continue to make your voices heard. You'll have certainly a partner in me, and I'm sure that you'll have a partner in Stephen and Enrique as well.

I thank you for participating here today. And once again, Enrique, thank you for the extraordinary hospitality in this beautiful State and in this beautiful city. *Muchas gracias.*

*[The announcer introduced Prime Minister Harper.]*

*Prime Minister Harper. Bon après-midi. Buenas tardes.* Good afternoon, everybody—*[inaudible]*—wonderful days, and we're delighted to be here in Toluca. And I'm—it's easy to see why you're so proud of your hometown. It's a wonderful spot here.

And, Barack, it's always great to see you. And I like my brothers-in-law too. *[Laughter]* And I'll probably like them no matter who wins the hockey game. *[Laughter]* Anyway.

I want to also thank all of you being here, in particular, obviously, the delegation that has accompanied me from Canada.

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]*

Today we have this opportunity to make this North American market more competitive. You are entrepreneurs, you are job creators, employment creators, and all over this continent.

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in English as follows.]*

—with so many businesspeople here, as well as academics and others, to discuss how to make North America, which is, these three economies combined—which is nearly one-quarter of the world's economy—more prosperous and more competitive.

And it's particularly fitting that it would be you as civil society and business leaders who would lead such a discussion, for although it was NAFTA and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement before it that opened up the opportunities, this is a trade alliance that in fact consists of very little top-down infrastructure. It has been businesses, people on the ground, social interactions, academic interactions, which have advanced relations, particularly economic relations, that go well beyond trade.

Today, Canadian, American, and Mexican companies do much more than sell things to each other. You increasingly make things together through integrated supply chains. Now, for example, we talk about the fact, in Canada obviously, that the Canadian-American trade relationship is the largest in the world; certainly, the U.S. is our largest export market. But Canadian exports to the United States contain an average of 25 percent American content. Likewise, Mexican exports to the United States include an average of 40 percent U.S. content.

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]*

So this is why we want to tighten our relationships and increase the competitiveness in the region. And we call on the entrepreneurs—of course, the Canadian and U.S. companies are grabbing occasions and opportunities in Mexico—throughout the continent and to create employment seedbeds and to—

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in English as follows.]*

Jobs include organizations as diverse as TransCanada, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, and Beef Canada, the Canola Council, Linamar, Scotiabank, and many others that I know are represented with us here today. And they have tremendous growth prospects in fields such as energy, in education, agri-food, information and communications technologies, banking and financial services, and many, many others, particularly when one looks at the—not just the rapid transformation in this country over the past 20 years, but the very aggressive reforms that are being undertaken by President Peña Nieto's administration.

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]*

And having said this, the world, the entire world is not what it used to be in 1994.

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in English as follows.]*

Different realities from 20 years ago are realities we must adapt to today. They include obviously the ongoing uncertainty, market uncertainty that remains from the global recession and also from a global economy that is much more competitive from many other regions.

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]*

We must work together to be able to abate the barriers and for the benefit of our populations.

*[Prime Minister Harper spoke in English as follows.]*

And so, as Canadians, Mexicans, and Americans, we need to look for ways to work together and to look forward.

Thank you for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:03 p.m. in the Salon del Pueblo at the Palacio de Gobierno of the State of Mexico. In his remarks, he referred to his brother-in-law Konrad Ng. President Peña Nieto spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : North American business, civil society, and education leaders, remarks with President Peña Nieto of Mexico and Prime Minister Harper of Canada in Toluca, Mexico.

*Locations:* Toluca, Mexico.

*Names:* Harper, Stephen J.; Ng, Konrad; Peña Nieto, Enrique.

*Subjects:* Canada : Prime Minister; Canada : Student exchanges with U.S.; Canada : Trade with U.S.; Education : Foreign exchange programs; Mexico : President; Mexico : President Obama's visit; Mexico : Student exchanges with U.S.; Mexico : Trade with U.S.; North American Leaders' Summit; Russia : 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi; Sports : Olympic Games.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201400100.