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Joint Statement by President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, and President Vicente Fox of Mexico—The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Next Steps

March 31, 2006

The three leaders of North America agreed to advance the agenda of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) by focusing on five high priority initiatives:

The North American Competitiveness Council. Increasing private sector engagement in the SPP by adding high-level business input will assist governments in enhancing North America's competitive position and engage the private sector as partners in finding solutions. The Council will:

- Consider issues that could be addressed trilaterally or bilaterally, as improvements in our bilateral relationships enhance North American competitiveness.
- Address issues of immediate importance and provide strategic medium and long-term advice.
- Provide input on the compatibility of our security and prosperity agendas, given the linkages between security and prosperity in a global marketplace.
- Offer ideas on the private sector's role in promoting North American competitiveness.

Advancing Cooperation on Avian and Pandemic Influenza. Leaders agreed to the following principles to guide collaboration on all stages of avian or pandemic influenza management:

- Share information among our governments in an open, timely and transparent manner.
- Adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach that incorporates animal and public health aspects in managing avian influenza and influenza pandemics.
- Ensure coordination within our respective national governments on all aspects of emergency management for an avian

influenza outbreak or a human influenza pandemic, by building on existing mechanisms of cooperation and strengthening them as required.

- Coordinate our actions and leverage our respective capacities to ensure rapid and effective steps are taken to deal with avian influenza outbreaks or a human influenza pandemic in North America.
- Advise one another in advance of making any decision that could seriously affect the other countries.
- Base our actions on the best available science and evidence-based decision-making.
- Agree that the imposition and removal of veterinary or public health measures on the movement of people, animals, and goods, under our national laws and international obligations, will not be more restrictive or maintained longer than necessary to achieve the veterinary or public health objective so as to avoid unnecessary interference with the movement of people and goods within North America.
- Ensure that the business continuity plans of our respective governments consider the highly interconnected nature of our economies.
- Strive to utilize clear and consistent messaging to the public and international organizations that is proactive, timely and accurate.

North American Energy Security Initiative. A secure and sustainable energy supply is essential for our economic prosperity in North America. To advance our energy agenda we have agreed to:

- Enhance the development of a diverse energy resource base in North America by increasing collaboration on research, development and commercialization of clean energy-related technologies, and
- Strengthen the North American energy market by improving transparency and regulatory compatibility, promoting the development of resources and infrastructure, increasing cooperation on energy efficiency standards, and supporting other efforts aimed at addressing challenges on the demand side.

North American Emergency Management. The commitments made in the SPP recognize that a disaster—whether natural or man-made—in one North American country can have consequences across national borders, and may demand a common approach to all aspects of emergency management. Recent experience with hurricanes, ice storms, industrial accidents and the like demonstrate our interdependencies, as well as the need for coordination and mutual assistance in protecting and safekeeping our populations. Moving forward we will:

- Develop a common approach to critical infrastructure protection, and response to cross border terrorist incidents and natural disasters, across a number of different sectors including, but not limited to, transportation, energy, and telecommunications.
- Develop and implement joint plans for cooperation for incident response, as well as conduct coordinated training and exercises in emergency response.

Smart, Secure Borders. Leaders agreed to complete the following activities, to contribute to smart and secure borders, over the next twenty-four months:

- Collaborate to establish risk-based screening standards for goods and people that rely on technology, information sharing and biometrics.
- Develop and implement compatible electronic processes for supply chain security that use advanced electronic cargo information to analyze risk and ensure quick and efficient processing at the border;
- Develop standards and options for secure documents to facilitate cross-border travel;
- Exchange additional law enforcement liaison officers to assist in criminal and security investigations; and,
- Develop coordinated business resumption plans at border crossings to ensure legitimate trade continues.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America Key Accomplishments since June 2005

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), launched by the lead-

ers of Mexico, Canada and the United States in March 2005, aims to promote growth and economic opportunity, increase security, and improve the quality of life of our peoples. In June 2005, lead Ministers issued a joint report outlining steps to achieve these goals. Since then, highlights of accomplishments include:

- To enhance growth and competitiveness in a key sector, the North American Steel Trade Committee developed a new strategy aimed at reducing market distortions, facilitating trade and promoting overall competitiveness through innovation and market development.
- To adapt to changes in sourcing and production methods, the three countries have analyzed ways to liberalize requirements for obtaining NAFTA duty-free treatment. Changes to the rules of origin have been implemented successfully and technical teams are working on additional changes.
- To speed up response times when managing infectious disease outbreaks, save lives, and reduce health care costs, the United States and Canada signed an agreement to enable simultaneous exchange of information between virtual national laboratory networks (PulseNet).
- To make consumer goods safer, save lives, and prevent injuries, the United States and Mexico signed an agreement for advance notifications when consumer goods violate one country's safety standards or pose a danger to consumers. Canada and the United States signed a similar agreement in June.
- The United States and Canada signed an agreement, which is a milestone in pipeline regulatory cooperation, to allow increased compliance data sharing, staff exchanges and joint training. The sharing of best practices will lead to a more uniform regulatory approach for cross border pipelines.
- The United States and Canada reached a full Open-Skies aviation agreement, removing all economic restrictions on air service to, from, and beyond one another's territory by the airlines of both

- countries. The agreement will encourage new markets development, lower prices and greater competition.
- The United States and Mexico expanded air service in specific markets by increasing the number of designated passenger airlines per city-pair, and opening cooperative marketing arrangements (code-sharing) to airlines of either country and carriers of third countries.
 - In order to increase navigational accuracy across the region, five Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) stations were installed in Canada and Mexico in 2005.
 - To promote prosperity by reducing the costs of trade, the United States and Canada decreased transit times at the Detroit/Windsor gateway, our largest border crossing point, by 50 percent.
 - To support increased trade and expedite secure processing of cross-border trade and travel between Mexico and the United States, six FAST/Express lanes are operating at the US-Mexico border, a new lane in Nogales will open soon, and we are working on a project for a lane in Matamoros. Exclusive lines and schedules will be implemented at nine crossings.
 - To allow more efficient examination of rail cargo for hazardous materials and illicit flows of goods, the United States and Mexico have installed gamma ray equipment at key border crossings.
 - To speed cargo shipping, the three countries are developing uniform in-advance electronic exchange of cargo manifest data for maritime, railroad and motor carriers.
 - To improve air quality and promote a more competitive automotive industry, Mexico implemented an official standard to reduce sulfur in fuels. This will increase supply of low-sulfur fuels in Mexico.
 - To increase border security, Mexican and U.S. agencies are harmonizing risk assessment mechanisms, exchanging information, and establishing protocols to facilitate detection of fraud and smuggling.
 - To strengthen the integrity and security of asylum and refugee status determination systems, the United States and Canada launched a pilot project to share information on refugee and asylum claimants based on a comparison of fingerprint records.
 - To address border violence, United States and Mexico signed an Action Plan to Combat Border Violence and Improve Public Safety. Officials of the two countries in Nogales, AZ-Nogales, Sonora and Laredo, TX-Nuevo Laredo completed protocols on border security and public safety.
 - Under the United States-Mexico Voluntary Repatriation Program, more than 35,000 persons, including 20,500 in 2005, were returned to their home in a secure, legal, and humanitarian way.
 - To increase maritime security, the United States and Canada completed joint exercises on the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers in September and in February during Super Bowl XL. Officers, who were cross-designated on vessels of the other nation, could authorize pursuit of suspect vessels crossing jurisdictions.
 - To advance preparedness to address a cyber incident affecting critical infrastructure, authorities from the United States and Canada completed a multinational exercise, Cyberstorm, in February 2006.
 - To enhance aviation security, the United States, Canada, and Mexico completed training on principles to protect aircraft from terrorism threats, on marksmanship skills, and on emergency procedures.
 - To enhance port security, Canada and the United States concluded port facility visits at Oakland, CA and Vancouver, BC in October 2005 to facilitate the development of benchmark security standards.
 - To ensure food safety while facilitating trade, a Food Safety Coordinating Task Force was formed and is developing a prioritized list of standards to compare for similarities, differences, and scientific bases for the differences. These

efforts will facilitate the development of North American standards and, as appropriate, the removal of differences in standards.

- To enhance clarity and compatibility of energy regulation, Canadian, U.S. and Mexican regulators began regular meetings to exchange information on regulatory standards and energy market developments and to discuss bringing gas from Alaska to the North American market.
- To reduce marine air pollution, Canada and the United States have coordinated data collection, marine inventory development and air quality monitoring. The two countries are preparing to approach the International Maritime Organization to designate special areas for controlling sulfur emissions from marine vessels.
- Canada and the United States are developing Mutual Assistance Arrangements, which will enhance our preparedness for cross-border public health emergencies; Mexico has been invited to participate.

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Statement on the Earthquakes in Iran

March 31, 2006

On behalf of the American people, Laura and I express our sincere condolences for the loss of life and suffering caused by the series of earthquakes in the Iranian province of Luristan. Our thoughts and prayers are with families and individuals who have lost loved ones. The United States stands ready to assist the people of Iran, and we hereby extend an offer of humanitarian assistance.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD.

March 26

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

March 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ronald S. Cooper to be General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Harry R. Hoglander and Peter W. Tredick to be members of the National Mediation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Molly A. O'Neill to be Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency for Environmental Information.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: John Nau (General Public); D. Franklin Arey III (General Public); Alan Autry; and Matt Blunt.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marilyn Castor Machon Pattillo and Frank Jao as members of the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Education Foundation.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities: Ricardo Barraza, Jr.; Herbert Bartlett; Sharman Word Dennis; Carmela Vargas Gonzales; Harris N. Hollin; Casey Patrick O'Halloran; Thomas J. Reilly;