

Press Releases: Joint Statements to the Press With Mexican Foreign Secretary Luis Videgaray

Remarks
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

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SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon. Today it is my pleasure and a great honor to welcome the Mexican Foreign Secretary Luis Videgaray to the State Department. Welcome.

We had a great discussion and we had so because Mexico is one of the United States' closest partners. Together we are working to build a more secure,

prosperous, and democratic hemisphere. We are neighbors, allies, and friends.

The conversation, as I said, was forthright. We talked about a range of issues. In particular, we spoke of four vital areas in which we work with Mexico every day: trade; management of our shared border; security; and the shared regional and global priorities of our two countries.

First, it comes as a surprise to no one that our economic interests are deeply intertwined. Mexico is our second largest export market, third largest trading partner. The importance of modernizing NAFTA cannot be overstated, and we will continue to work towards an agreement with Mexico and with Canada.

Second, we manage a couple-thousand-mile border. Every day more than \$1.7 billion in trade crosses that border back and forth, supporting thousands of jobs on both sides of that border. We seek to improve efficiency at our ports of entry to support the legitimate flow of commerce between our two countries.

Third, we work together to enhance our shared security by disrupting transnational criminal organizations. We recognize the demand of – for drugs is principally on the American side of the border, and that this problem is destroying communities and tearing families apart. That is why the President has renewed efforts to prevent and treat addiction here at home and to combat the flow of drugs coming into our country from abroad.

Our security is linked to one another's. It will take our shared resources and commitment to disrupt criminal groups that illegally traffic drugs, weapons, and human beings. Continued cooperation under the Merida Initiative advances our mutual security objectives. We've made some progress through the U.S.-Mexico Strategic Dialogue to disrupt these transnational criminal organizations. We should be proud of that. This will continue to be a priority for the administration.

Fourth, and finally, we work together with Mexico on regional and global challenges. For example, we are working with our partners in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador to reduce insecurity and violence, enhance economic opportunity, and fight corruption. These shared efforts address the underlying conditions driving illegal immigration. We also cooperate with Mexico to build regional consensus on the crisis in Venezuela. Thank you for your leadership, Secretary, on this issue in particular. I echo the message of Vice President Pence from earlier today at the OAS meeting: We urge our entire hemisphere to impose strict accountability on the corrupt and brutal Maduro regime.

We are always looking for new ways to deepen our partnership with Mexico. Today, good news: the signing of the U.S.-Mexico Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement further expands our relationship and will benefit the North American and U.S. suppliers in the nuclear energy industry.

Again, Foreign Secretary, I want to thank you for coming here today to discuss the many pressing issues facing our two countries. I'm deeply

appreciative of having my first press conference here at the State Department with you. Thank you, Foreign Minister.

FOREIGN SECRETARY VIDEGARAY: Thank you very much, Secretary. Although I'll be speaking in Spanish in a moment, I just want to say that I am very, very proud and very honored to have this first conversation with you as Secretary of State, because we've met before, but not in your role as Secretary of State, so I am very, very, very honored. And we had, as you said, a very productive, very frank first conversation as such. Let me switch to Spanish.

(Via interpreter) Since the beginning of the administration of President Trump, the Mexican Government, the government of President Pena Nieto, has promoted and offered an institutional relationship of mutual benefit and mutual respect. We acknowledge that we share threats, that we have opportunities that we can take advantage of together; and we also need to say we also have some differences, some of which are public and well known, but we cannot allow those differences to define this relationship. We need to be able to work for the interest of two neighboring countries and two neighboring peoples who are brothers so as to overcome our differences. Mexico, Mr. Secretary Pompeo, is a large country, a proud country, proud of its history, enthused about its future, and we are a sovereign state. And as a sovereign state, we offer the United States our friendship, the will to work together on the issues that join us to do good things – good things for the people of the United States and of course for the people of Mexico.

The relationship between Mexico and the United States finds itself at a turning point of the decisions made between our governments in the next few months, even in the next few days. Well, this will determine the relationship between our two countries for the next years and even the next few decades. We find ourselves at that crucial moment in the renegotiation and modernization of NAFTA, a renegotiation that Mexico faces in good faith with constructive spirit, convinced that North America can be the most competitive region in the world, and with the belief that we have huge, concrete opportunities for prosperity and well-paid jobs for all of our inhabitants.

We have shared challenges on the issue of security, and moments ago Secretary Pompeo was mentioning the work we've done throughout a new high-level group to fight transnational criminal organizations. We will continue along that path. This is what we have agreed upon on the understanding that the problem does not have to do with supply or demand; the problem is a market at the regional level that needs to be disarticulated so as to be able to fight successfully this phenomenon.

With regards to migration, we face common challenges. Mexico has stopped become – being simply an origin country; we are also becoming a country that receives migrants. We need to continue to think about priority to the fundamental dignity of migrants, whatever their migratory condition. Of course, we will continue to work on the regional issues where we share values and a vision. This is the case with regards to Central America. In particular with the countries of the so-called Northern Triangle – Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras – we will continue to promote development and security. We have agreed upon the fact that in the next few weeks we will

have in the city of Washington the second conference that puts together Mexico and the United States as cohosts with the three governments of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, and other regional partners that will continue to be part of this effort.

With regards to Venezuela, we share to a very large extent the concern given the situation of systematic disruption of democracy. We will continue to call for a solution arising from Venezuelans themselves who can find a peaceful solution to re-establish democracy in their country. Of course, we will continue to work on different causes at multilateral organizations where we share values and purposes.

I'd like to take advantage of this opportunity to underscore the fact that the Government of Mexico is very pleased with the progress made to achieve the denuclearization of the North Korean Peninsula. We recognize the work of Secretary Pompeo in this regards. This is an issue that affects us all around the world.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Department of State, the Department of Energy, and the entirety of the Trump administration who was part of this for the signature of the Cooperation Agreement for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy. This agreement, which will be presented throughout a newsletter in the next few minutes, will allow us to continue strengthening cooperation, specifically in the area of technological transfers so that Mexico can continue to develop its nuclear energy so that the next governments in Mexico can continue to develop the use of nuclear technology for medical purposes, for example, or for the generation of electricity if that is decided in the future.

Thank you, Secretary, for the signature of this agreement which I believe it is important to highlight; beyond everything we see on the media and the differences we might have, this shows we continue to work together, we continue to address specific issues that are useful for our peoples and creating a better future for our region. I wish you the greatest of success. It is an honor for me to be back at the Department of State and to be here with you at your first message to the media in this hall. Thank you, Secretary Pompeo. We are ready to continue working together.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. This is wonderful. Thank you so much.

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