

President Obama Meets with President Peña Nieto of Mexico, January 6, 2015

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, welcome, everybody. *Feliz año nuevo.*

It is a pleasure to welcome once again President Peña Nieto, as well as his delegation. It's appropriate that our first meeting of the year is with one of our closest allies, neighbors and friends.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

Obviously, the bonds between Mexico and the United States are long and deep, not only because of the economic ties and strategic ties between our two countries, but most importantly because of the people-to-people and cultural ties between our two countries.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

And this meeting has given us an opportunity to continue to find ways to deepen those bonds.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

We've discussed something that is uppermost on the minds of most Mexicans and Americans, and that is creating economic growth and jobs and prosperity.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

I've congratulated President Peña Nieto on some of his structural reforms that I think will unleash even further the enormous potential of the Mexican economy. And we also have discussed how we can continue to work on issues like clean energy; scientific and educational exchanges; improving cross-border commerce; and continuing to strengthen the kinds of mutual investment and trade that creates jobs both in Mexico and the United States.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

We also discussed the issues of security. And obviously we've been following here in the United States some of the tragic events surrounding the students whose lives were lost. And President Peña Nieto was able to describe to me the reform programs that he's initiated around these issues. Our commitment is to be a friend and supporter of Mexico in its efforts to eliminate the scourge of violence and the drug cartels that are responsible for so much tragedy inside of Mexico. And we want to be a good partner in that process, recognizing that ultimately it will be up to Mexico and its law enforcement to carry out the key decisions that need to be made.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

I described to President Peña Nieto our efforts to fix our broken immigration system here in the United States and to strengthen our borders as well. I very much appreciate Mexico's efforts in addressing the unaccompanied children who we saw spiking during the summer. In part because of strong efforts by Mexico, including at its southern border, we've seen those numbers reduced back to much more manageable levels. But one of the things that we both agreed on is our continued need to work with Central American governments so that we can address some of the social and economic challenges there that led to that spike in unaccompanied children. And at the same time, we very much appreciate Mexico's commitment to work with us to send a very clear message around the executive actions that I'm taking that we are going to provide a mechanism so that families are not separated who have been here for a long time.

But we're also going to be much more aggressive at the border in ensuring that people come through the system legally. And the Mexican government has been very helpful in how we can process and message that effectively both inside of the United States and in Mexico.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

And finally, we had the chance to discuss -- and we'll continue to discuss during lunch -- some of the regional and international issues in which Mexico has been a very significant leader. I described my initiative to end the 50-year policy with relation to Cuba, to move towards what we hope will be a more constructive policy but one that continues to emphasize human rights and democracy and political freedom. And at the Summit of the Americas, one of the things I informed Peña Nieto is we will participate but we'll insist that those topics are on the agenda.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

And just as Mexico has been helpful on issues like Cuba, Mexico has also been a genuine leader internationally on issues like climate change. And so I very much appreciate the leadership of the Mexican government and President Peña Nieto on these issues. I look forward to our collaboration in 2015, and I wish all the people of Mexico a very happy and healthy and prosperous 2015.

[SPANISH TRANSLATION]

PRESIDENT PENA NIETO (As interpreted): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I first of all want to thank you, President Obama, for your hospitality in this -- my first visit as President of the United Mexican States in the White House.

And this is right at the beginning of this year 2015. And we, of course, both of us share the desire for it to be a great year for North America and the whole world, and very especially for the relationship we've been building between Mexico and the United States -- a relationship which is mainly based on friendship, cordiality, mutual respect, shared interests for prosperity and development for our nations.

First of all, in terms of the topics shared with the press, first of all, I have made acknowledgement of the very intelligent and audacious decision of your administration regarding the executive action for immigration, which is of course an act of justice for people who arrive from other parts of the world but are now part of the U.S. community.

And among the population that will surely be benefitted through your executive action, sir, there's a very big majority of Mexican citizens. And I have shared two fundamental topics on this item.

The first is the support the Mexican government is ready to give to the Mexican population living in the United States so that they can show the documentation that is necessary to prove that they have been in the United States before 2010, and also of course to have all the other requirements that are demanded for the Mexican population to be benefitted through the executive action.

And, first of all, yesterday we announced that Mexican migrants in the United States are going to be able to get their birth certificates without having to go to Mexico. They are going to be able to get this very important document. And, of course, another very important factor that we've discussed is for Mexico to be doing everything it can so that this measure will only be benefitting those people that are supposed to be there, and for it not to generate any misinformation or abuses, especially of the organized crime groups, groups that are doing human trafficking and that they will be encouraging the type of migration which is exactly the type we don't want to have. And we will maintain the greater control of the southern border to continue having orderly migration and to avoid the items that I have just mentioned.

And among the multi-thematic agenda that we have between our two countries, one of the important items is modernizing border crossings between both nations. And this is something we've been working on because we want all these measures to be very visible and very tangible, the results of those measures.

For instance, let me inform you that we've been working on modernizing our border crossings so that we can have faster, more expeditious trade and also crossing of people, that this may take place in a very orderly fashion. And there are different projects. Some of them have already been finished; others are in the process of implementation.

And this, of course, constitutes less crossing time in terms of the transit of people and of goods through our borders. And another very important topic of this multi-thematic agenda is between favoring trade among both nations. We want to continue promoting investments, as it's already happening in our country -- first of all, because we believe that these investments can be so helpful, and we want to continue having American investors in Mexico because this is an example of the way we recognize that Mexico is a trustworthy destination, a place where they can invest.

And this is something we are going to continue to be doing. And as part of this multi-thematic agenda that we have, I wanted to share other results with you -- for instance, the exchange of students. This exchange is increasing students from both countries, and this is very, very important for us.

And the next item would be supporting our entrepreneurs, and this is very important for us to increase trade. I thank you, President Obama, for your willingness to continue working with Mexico in terms of security, especially this clear challenge Mexico has to continue fighting organized crime. And here we've been discussing topics that have to do with security, of course, and the collaboration, the exchange of information and the logistics support that we're already getting. And I want to thank you, President Obama, for offering to continue these very efficient actions, first, to fight insecurity and especially organized crime.

And finally, I have also made an acknowledgement in terms of the very audacious decision that you've made to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba, with President Castro and your countries. And we have offered our desire, our hope to collaborate in this effort so that as soon as possible you can continue with this reestablishment of relations with Cuba and that you can accomplish all the purposes you have set up to accomplish.

And Mexico will be a tireless supporter of the good relationship between two neighbors. This is the neighbor in the Caribbean, the neighbor north of Mexico, Cuba and the United States.

And I would finally like to thank you for your openness, for your willingness, your always very cordial and frank tone, President Obama, to continue to building a relationship between both nations of friendship, mutual respect, to continue promoting the development of our countries.

I've already congratulated you for this happy New Year but this is for your family, President Obama, for your society, and for you, yourself, for this to be a great 2015.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you very much, everybody.