



A CALL TO ACTION

TO MAKE THE MEXICO-U.S. BORDER REGION A MODEL OF BI-NATIONAL COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

To President Ernesto Zedillo
President William J. Clinton
Presidential Candidates, Mexico and the United States
Federal, State, and Border Region Elected Leaders

From The Aspen Institute Border Dialogue
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This call to action comes from a diverse group of representatives from both sides of the Mexico-US Border who met recently to consider how to improve the border's environment and economy through better growth management. The associated report, *The Mexico-US Border Environment and Economy* supports this call to action. The Aspen Border Dialogue agreed on a unifying vision to frame the implementation of our recommendations:

The Vision

A healthy sustainable environment in the Border Region that results from an involved bi-national community ensuring proper resource management as a basis for a border economy that provides all its residents a satisfactory quality of life through enhanced employment, education, social, economic and business opportunities.

WHY IS A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABILITY ALONG THE BORDER IMPORTANT TO YOU? NOW?

- The international border, of necessity, makes growth management in this region unique; it is linked with treaties and agreements that require diplomacy and resources unlike what are necessary to managing growth in either country alone. Though local and regional communities must be involved, managing growth along the border cannot be purely a local or regional matter.
- Cross border trade, regional economic activities, and population increase every year. Both countries share costs and benefits, but consequent harmful effects on the environment and quality of life are felt especially along the border. Again this means that managing growth requires resources beyond local or regional capacities--it requires bold, imaginative, and cooperative national leaders.

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS? THE OPPORTUNITIES?

Bi-national environmental cooperation along the border is on the increase. Progress is being made through border institutions and programs such as NADBank, BECC, SEMARNAP, the Border XXI Program, the Region I Regional Council for Sustainable Development, and the Good Neighbor Environmental Board, which are contributing to significant successes and helping clarify present and future trends and needs. This progress in responding to an existing degraded environment and quality of life at the border, however, will be overwhelmed by growth and increasing economic activity unless the infrastructure is crafted to take more preventive measures. Municipalities on the border increasingly face unprecedented challenges in providing municipal services to achieve economic, environmental, and social goals acceptable to both countries. The dialogue participants agree that the roles and responsibilities of the institutions and public and private sectors of this unique, bi-national border region require the attention of our national leaders. We seek to clarify through this call to action the unique opportunities available to build livable, sustainable border communities; and we make the following recommendations in two areas:

Evaluate and Reform Institutional and Private Sector Roles and Responsibilities

Key elements, among others, are to establish a Border Advisor within both presidential offices; establish a bi-national Presidential Council, and take other actions to assure sustainable development and to protect the border environment and quality of life for border citizens.

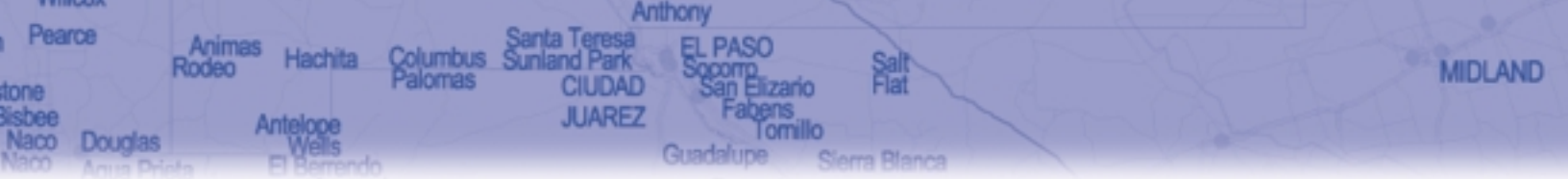
Strengthen Community Capacity and Municipal Authorities

Key elements, in sum, are to strengthen the capabilities, authority, and funding for communities and municipal governments on both sides of the border so that they can responsibly plan for economic growth and provide needed services.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluate and Reform Institutional and Private Sector Roles and Responsibilities

1. Establish a Border Advisor in the Office of each President
 - to advise on and ensure that presidential policy and institutional frameworks foster regional sustainability along the border.
2. Establish and fund a bi-national presidential council (governors, mayors, tribal leaders, non governmental organizations, business and financial leaders) to:
 - define and oversee an action agenda for bi-national cooperation for regional sustainability (economic, social, environmental) with short, medium, and long-term objectives for all border areas, actors, and levels of governments,
 - evaluate relevant programs, agreements, and institutions and suggest reforms,
 - define and monitor progress towards sustainability, including shared goals for development,
 - define indicators of sustainability as they relate to:
 - conserving ground and surface water supply and quality,
 - land use, urban expansion and densification of cities,
 - transportation management within cities and at border crossings including the rate of expansion of public vs. private transportation,
 - promoting accountability, and
 - rewarding environmentally superior behavior;
 - identify and champion economic instruments in favor of the vision and goals of sustainability.
3. Hold public and stakeholder forums and use other mechanisms to inform the bi-national presidential council considerations in #2 above.
4. Appropriate necessary funding to existing border entities, including enforcement authorities, to
 - enforce the laws and regulations to protect public health and the environment, and
 - create a level and predictable playing field within which market incentives and pollution prevention can flourish.



5. Update the LaPaz Agreement and Border XXI workgroups to
 - include all stakeholders, and
 - incorporate and re-emphasize the vision of sustainability.
6. Implement market incentives to
 - motivate environmentally beneficial practices in business,
 - increase competitiveness,
 - improve public services, and
 - conserve natural resources.
7. Support private and other sector participation:
 - explore redefinition of roles and responsibilities;
 - identify levers for change including enforcement, fines, incentives, rewards;
 - explore regional solutions, including market mechanisms and other tools, and develop a water conservation ethic to guide all decisions on water allocation and use;
 - within a context of predictable effective regulation, work with the private sector to serve the risks of raising capital, asset operations, and technology development;
 - develop/support public/private partnerships and public accountability with private sector solutions;
 - set policy priorities designed to protect the environment;
 - establish a regulatory framework that attracts private sector participation and encourages environmental and enterprise stewardship.
8. Establish accurate, fair and predictable polluter-pays and impact fees.
9. Link funding to
 - desirable local reform outcomes, and
 - building local capacity.
10. Increase transparency and public accountability of institutional decisionmaking.
11. Create a collaborative/transboundary regime to conduct environmental impact assessments including assessments of impacts on regional sustainability.

12. Provide market and other incentives that value the true costs of all activities in order to foster sustainable resource use.
13. Determine the carrying capacity of geographical/ ecological regions.
14. Develop indicators and strategies so that carrying capacities are a factor in regional growth management.

Strengthen Community Capacity and Border Municipal Authorities

15. Enhance the ability of municipal authorities to implement the vision and goals of sustainability.
16. Enhance local service deliveries:
 - train local leaders to improve their management skills,
 - assure revenue to provide local services including land, taxes and levees, and impact fees,
 - improve efficiencies and apply appropriate technologies.
17. Improve transparency of decisionmaking:
 - involve and account to the public,
 - empower community members to participate in planning and decision making through ad hoc councils and provide tools to engage and communicate with all parties.
18. Build capacity to enforce and assure compliance with municipal codes and rules of law.
19. Use appropriate conditions on multi-lateral lending to strengthen municipal capacity.
20. Create independent improvement districts on the U.S. side to:
 - build and operate infrastructure facilities, and
 - work with Mexico sister cities and municipalities to improve service deliveries (transborder technical assistance).
21. Equitably re-distribute federal revenues back to state and local entities to help support necessary infrastructure.
22. Implement alternatives including training programs, to help municipal authorities and utility managers assure continuity, professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness.
23. In Mexico, promote the civil service sector to "career" status to assure continuity of professional public service.

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NOTE:

This Call to Action (the Introduction to the report, *The Mexico-US Border Environment and Economy*) is issued on the authority of The Aspen Institute and its Program on Energy, the Environment, and the Economy. It reflects the collective views of the diverse participants in the dialogue and the agreements they reached over three days and, as such, reflects numerous consolidations and compromises. No individual should be presumed to endorse every word; nor should the participation of individuals imply the endorsement of their organizations.