

Speaking Notes for Arnold Koller on the occasion of the Signing of the Framework Arrangement of Cooperation between the Forum of Federations and the Government of Mexico

January 30, 2006 – Mexico City

Dear Honorable Minister, Senator, ambassadors and distinguished guests.

I am honored to be here today to sign, on behalf of the Forum of Federations, this partnership agreement with the Government of Mexico. This agreement will mean that after many years of working with the Forum of Federations, Mexico is now prepared to become a partner government of the Forum. In collaboration with our six other partner countries - Canada, Switzerland, Austria, Australia, India and Nigeria - Mexico will play a central role in ensuring that the Forum continues to internationalize its governance personality and its programs.

As you know, the old federal idea is since the 90s of the last century in rise again all over the world. 40% of the world population is living nowadays in 25 federations. On this background Canada decided in 1999 to found the Forum of Federations and organized the first international conference on federalism to Mont Tremblant. The leading idea was from the beginning: to learn from each other. Naturally, each federation has its own history and specific character. But the main problems such as distribution of power between the central state and the constituent units, intergovernmental relations, fiscal federalism, and the role of the municipalities in federal systems are mainly the same in all federations. Thus we are convinced that we can learn a lot from each other.

By signing this agreement, Mexico becomes the first Latin American country to join the Forum. Your leadership will hopefully pave the way for the signing of agreements with your federal neighbors to the south.

Having attended the important International Forum on Federalism in Veracruz in 2001, I am very pleased to be back in this beautiful country five years later to celebrate Mexico's joining the Forum of Federations. I also wish to highlight the many projects that have been implemented in Mexico thanks to collaborations between the Forum and a wide range of Mexican partners, including the National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (INAFED), with whom the Forum has developed a strong relationship over the years.

But first, I wish to thank Her Excellency Teresa de Madero, your country's Ambassador to Canada, for her strong commitment and determined efforts in bringing about this important agreement.

As well I am pleased to note that the President of the Federalism Commission of the House of Deputies, Mr. Ramón Galindo Noriega as well as the President of its equivalent in the Senate, Sen. Cesar Camacho Quiroz. I had the pleasure of meeting both gentleman

and to learn a bit about Mexican federalism during the Third International Conference on Federalism in Brussels, Belgium, in March of last year.

Why a Forum on Federalism

- The Forum of Federations wants to serve as a clearing house for information and resources on the practice of federalism.
- The Forum provides partners and stakeholders with programs of good federal governance.
- The forum addresses topical themes, through its Global Dialogue program and its publications, of immediate policy relevance such as managing public health in federations, or the emerging challenge of managing oil and gas resources and revenues in federations.
- The Forum assists in nation building efforts in many regions, particularly those with a troubled history of ethnic and religious conflict, responding to (sometimes urgent) requests for expertise and experience in federalism, like Sri Lanka, Iraq, and Sudan.
- Thus, joining the Forum provides the opportunity to participate in a dynamic NGO, with a tested and mature set of programs and methods to enhance the political dialogue and resultant outcomes in federal systems.

I would like to take a few minutes to highlight some of the projects we have implemented in the last 5 years with Mexico.

2000: The Forum of Federations – at the request of President Fox transition team – held a comparative workshop on intergovernmental affairs, assisting the new Mexican government to assess the merits and relevance of intergovernmental architecture in other federal systems.

2001: The International Forum on Federalism, co-organized by the National Centre for Municipal Development (which later was reorganized as the Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development) and the Forum of Federations, was held in Boca del Río, Veracruz.

2002: The Forum of Federations, in partnership with INAFED and the Federal Ministry of Health, organized several state-level workshops on comparative health decentralization policy (organized in partnership with the state Ministries of Health of Puebla, Baja California Sur, Nuevo Leon).

2003: The Forum of Federations, in cooperation with the National Indigenous Institute, organized a workshop on the reform of indigenous institutions that took place in Oaxaca, Mexico.

2004: The Forum of Federations co-organized a comparative workshop to address the theme of inter-state water conflicts, as well as additional workshops on health decentralization policy.

2005: The “First Meeting of Federal Countries in the Americas” was held in Torreon, Coahila in February 2005. It was organized by the OAS in partnership with the Forum and INAFED, and our then President, the Hon. Bob Rae, addressed the meeting

The agreement we are signing today is thus the culmination of our past cooperation, but it marks at the same time the beginning of a new phase in our relationship. As a partner country of the Forum, Mexico will have a more active role in our governance structure having both a board member, but also being an active participant in our Strategic Council of partner countries. If it is the wish of the national government, all orders of government can offer strategic advice to the Board I have the honor to chair. I would encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity.

I personally look forward to meeting with the Mexican delegation during the next Strategic Council which will be held in the Canton of Schwyz, in the heart of Switzerland June 9-10 of this year.

Muchas Gracias.