



# PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF MEXICAN PRESIDENT SALINAS  
CANBERRA - 22 JUNE 1990**

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It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Canberra today, Mr President, on this the first visit to Australia by a President of Mexico.

That fact alone makes this a most significant occasion for us. We hope that you will take home with you a warm and positive impression of Australia from your first hand experience here, and that your visit will open a new chapter in the friendly relations between us.

You and your distinguished party are very welcome guests to Canberra and to Australia.

Mr President, it is now nearly a quarter of a century since diplomatic relations were established between Australia and Mexico in 1966.

It is true to say, Mr President, and appropriate to acknowledge, that relations between our two countries since then have not lived up to their potential - whether that be measured by the exchange of goods and services between us, visits by tourists and business leaders, or contacts in the fields of culture, scholarship, or entertainment.

Yet there is much that we have in common that should form the basis not just of a friendly relationship but of a more profitable and productive one than in the past.

Not least of those things that we have in common, Mr President, is a long Pacific coastline. And we are increasingly recognising that this fact of our geography must become a central element in our economic life.

Mexico of course has had a Pacific orientation for several centuries, even in that long-gone era when your country, Mr President, went by the Eurocentric name of New Spain and my country was a little known continent called New Holland.

But in our own time the Asia-Pacific region is seeing a surge in economic activity that is dramatic in its intensity and unprecedented in its scope. That has brought with it new prosperity - and also the new challenges of managing and fostering that activity, including through closer policy co-ordination and greater policy flexibility in our domestic and international arrangements.

This visit of yours then, Mr President, comes at a very important time. The many positive moves you have taken to bring about stable economic growth in Mexico are beginning to pay dividends, and Mexico is showing a heightened interest in the Pacific.

Let me say, Mr President, that your program of liberalising, modernising and restructuring the Mexican economy is one we applaud and support. Mexico is already the largest and strongest of the Latin American economies bordering the Pacific and, from Australia's vantage point on this side of the ocean, your reform program presents exciting and encouraging opportunities.

So as this reform process continues, we may look forward to the day when new and strong economic ties span the Pacific and link Mexico more closely to this region - opening the way for a more active involvement by Mexico in the political and economic affairs of this region.

Mr President, you have rightly insisted that developing countries must accept responsibility for stimulating their own economic growth.

At the same time, Mexico has shown a readiness to engage in the hard but constructive work of multilateral dialogue - and indeed not simply a readiness but a positive and energetic capacity. This is apparent in a number of fields; let me refer to three of them.

I refer first to Mexico's supportive contribution to the painstaking work of regional and international arms control and disarmament - particularly relating to chemical weapons. Your work in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and at the Government and Industry Conference Against Chemical Weapons that we hosted here in Canberra last year, was both welcome and valuable.

I refer too to Mexico's involvement in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in the establishment of which Australia too has played a part. Following the breathtaking revolutions in Eastern Europe last year, it is encouraging that we are demonstrating in a tangible way, through this new Bank, our shared commitment to assisting the East Europeans in the restoration of democratic processes and the rehabilitation and expansion of economic activity.

And perhaps even more importantly, Mr President, I consider Mexico's decision back in 1986 to become a contracting party to the GATT - the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade - and the steps taken since then to open the Mexican economy to foreign imports and foreign investment to have been highly significant and welcome developments.

Like Mexico, Australia is a firm believer in the GATT. We have made numerous representations in recent years to encourage the lowering of subsidies for farm production and exports by the world's leading trading nations, both through the Uruguay Round and particularly through our chairmanship of the Cairns Group of fair trading nations.

We have welcomed Mexico's positive approach to these negotiations. Your speech to the GATT last February, Mr President, was a significant political contribution to the success of the Round. You described the Uruguay Round as, and let me quote, "the best opportunity this century to promote and defend a system of trade that offers benefits that can be shared by the entire international trading community."

I cannot overstate the extent to which those words find support here in Australia. Your emphasis on our global interdependence gives a totally accurate perspective on an issue that too often is considered by the major trading nations in a blinkered, sectoral and shortsighted fashion.

Mr President, we hope, as we know you do, that one of the major results of your visit will be a boost to the trading opportunities between our two countries. Although modest by world standards, our two-way trade has increased substantially in the past five years.

Efforts to restructure both our economies should create further opportunities for trade and investment in the years ahead. Australia has the expertise to assist you to develop and modernise Mexico's priority sectors such as agriculture, mining, power generation, transport and communications.

Your visit, Mr President, together with the contacts made by the senior business people who have accompanied you on this occasion, will play an important part in this process.

We have also today seen the signing of an Extradition Treaty, the first Australia has had with any Latin American country, and testimony, I believe, to our cooperative working relationship.

Mr President, I have mentioned many of our shared interests and values but I have failed so far to mention our shared achievements in the sporting world. Both Australia and Mexico have proud sporting traditions and we have both been successful hosts of modern Olympic Games - in Melbourne in 1956 and in Mexico City in 1968. Australia is, as you know, currently pursuing our bid for Melbourne once again to host the Games in 1996, because we believe we can provide world class facilities, a secure environment and a warm welcome from a community totally committed to this bid and fully dedicated to furthering the Olympic ideal.

Mr President,

Both our countries are blessed with rich resources, not least with two great peoples. And, ultimately, it is the people-to-people links between Australia and Mexico which will replenish and renew our relationship providing us with the best possible foundation for an even better and brighter future.

I wish you, Mr President, every success in continuing to meet the challenges of government in Mexico, and in further developing Mexico's important and constructive role in the world.

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