
Message from the Mexican Foreign Affairs Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez



It is no coincidence that OECD Forum 2004 will address some of the top issues on the international agenda: the health of the world economy, of multilateral co-operation and of our citizens, all of which affect the health of our nations. Countries, enterprises, international institutions and citizens alike depend directly and indirectly upon them in one way or another.

There is ample and strong evidence that the world economy is strengthening anew. Our job is to maintain the momentum and to make it sustainable through an appropriate mix of suitable public policies in every nation. In this regard, both at the Forum and the OECD Ministerial Council it feeds into, we will have the opportunity to discuss how to translate economic growth into more jobs, since so far the recovery has not created the expected number of employment opportunities. Besides, we will have to put into perspective the impact of fiscal and external imbalances of some countries on exchange rates, interest rates and ultimately on world economic growth.

There cannot be economic growth without market confidence based upon, among other things, transparent and reliable disclosure mechanisms for corporate governance. A proper corporate governance system accompanied by stringent regulations can prevent financial market disruptions. Participants at the Forum will discuss how corporate governance can be improved and strengthened as a foundation for the world economy.

As many know, Mexico hosted the Fifth World Trade Organization Ministerial in Cancún in September 2003 to discuss and evaluate the advances in the Doha Development Agenda. For some it was an unsuccessful meeting but for others – a great many – just a temporary pause in multilateral trade negotiations. Beyond the critical problems still being discussed, such as agricultural subsidies or the so-called Singapore issues on investment, competition policy, procurement, etc., the most crucial point is to reconfirm all countries' commitment to the multilateral trade system as the only way to achieve not only the culmination of negotiations, but also the beginning of a system that will foster improved conditions for world growth.

Mexico has always been a practitioner of open regionalism, namely, linking our 11 bilateral and regional trade agreements with a strong commitment to the rules and practices of the multilateral trade system. At the Forum and Ministerial, discussants will be able to analyse the advantages and challenges posed by such a parallel trade structure and, at the same time, introduce the new paradigm of outsourcing and its consequences for the world trade system. As mentioned at the outset, the health of our nations depends upon the health of our citizens, supported by proper health systems. Besides treatment of traditional diseases, both developed and developing countries are facing new health risks combined with increasingly ageing societies. We should be able to implement adequate policies for the health of our people. The Forum needs to address this issue.

The OECD Forum gives us all – representatives of civil society, business, academics and labour – a great opportunity to share and discuss collectively our own experiences and, as a result, to enrich our perspectives for the benefit of our nations and for the health of our societies. I look forward to an enriching exchange of views and perspectives, which will be invaluable not just to discussions at the OECD ministerial meeting, but to our national policymaking efforts as well.