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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OPENS THREE-WEEK HEADQUARTERS SESSION,

BEGINS CONSIDERATION OF MEXICO'S FIFTH PERIODIC REPORT

Mexico's Delegation Describes Enormous Transformation since 1999 Report, Says Country Still Faces Challenges in Consolidating Modern Democratic State

While Mexico was working to build a participatory democracy that protected fundamental freedoms, the Government faced complex challenges in closing gaps in human rights legislation and reforming the laws, policies, and practices that gave rise to them, a senior official in Mexico's Interior Ministry told the Human Rights Committee today as it began its ninety-sixth session.

"Today we can speak of a democratic Mexico. And building human rights is central to that," said Blanca Heredia Rubio, Secretaria de Gobernacion, Comisionada para el Desarrollo Politico, as she introduced Mexico's fifth periodic report on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. She highlighted the "enormous transformation" her country had undergone over the past decade as the Government sought to ensure political plurality and build a State based on the rule of law.

Addressing the 18-member Human Rights Committee, the expert body charged with monitoring compliance with the Covenant, she said that since 1999, the changes in Mexico were characterized by three essential elements: the move towards political openness and plurality; building a modern democratic State; and addressing the increased threat of transnational organized crime. She also highlighted the establishment of independent electoral institutions that promoted equity in the polls and encouraged broader participation.

She said that the 2008-2012 Programme on Human Rights sought to

ensure that each federal body, as well as the Armed Forces, acted within the framework of human rights. She also noted the creation of separate commissions on defending the human rights of indigenous people, and persons with disabilities, as well as on eradicating violence against women.

Continuing, she said that the Mexican Government had moved to overturn capital punishment and had embarked on a deep transformation of its criminal justice and public security systems. Such reform measures had led to the creation of a system that was characterized by openness and one which better recognized victims' rights. Mexico had also ratified all key international human rights instruments, including those against torture and on forced disappearance.

However, she said that, despite those and other signs of progress, Mexico still faced challenges when it came to consolidating a democratic State. "Mexico is taking the steps it must take" to strengthen individual security and bolster participation of citizens in public affairs. Reform and modification of human rights processes were under way, as well as reform of the criminal justice system.

Current proposals for political reform suggested changes in the relationship between the branches of Government and citizens. All such proposals respected and promoted human rights norms. Finally, she said that Mexico believed that frank and open dialogue with the Committee would certainly bolster its efforts to build a modern State, as well as to address challenges tied to fighting organized crime and ensuring public security, while promoting human rights.

Responding to the experts' written questions was Alejandro Negrin Munoz, Director General de Derechos Humanos y Democracia, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, who was joined later in the meeting by Laura Carrera Lugo, National Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women, Interior Ministry. The delegation was introduced by Ambassador Claude Heller, the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations.

When the Committee's experts responded, several were concerned about the status of the Covenant in Mexican law and they wondered when and under what circumstances the treaty was applied, especially in light of what appeared to be a raft of constitutional changes that had taken place in the country since 1999. Others expressed concerns that laudable progress at the federal level to protect and promote human rights was not being replicated throughout the country, especially regarding anti-torture norms, violence against women, and integrating human rights and State security into a coherent agenda.

Ms. Neuwirth said eight States parties had submitted their periodic reports since the Committee's last session: Turkmenistan, Maldives and Angola submitted their initial reports; Guatemala and Iran, their third; the Dominican Republic and

Yemen, their fifth; and Norway, its sixth. She was also pleased to report that, as of 8 February, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had launched her Strategic Management Plan for 2010-2011.

Background

The Human Rights Committee, the 18-member expert body which monitors global implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, began its ninety-eighth session today, taking up the fifth periodic report Mexico on that country's compliance with the treaty (document CCPR/C/MEX/5).

According to the introduction and overview submitted by the Government -- Mexico's delegation is expected to provide detailed information on its compliance with the Convention over the next two days -- the report covers advances achieved since August 2000, measures taken to implement the Committee's observations and recommendations, as well as the major challenges faced to that end.

The report was distributed to the participants in the Sub-commission on Civil and Political Rights of the Commission on Government Policy on Human Rights, which comprises representatives of governmental forums and civil society, at a meeting held on 8 July 2008. The views expressed or later conveyed by participants at that meeting were subsequently incorporated into the document.

Since the submission of the last periodic report, Mexico has been pursuing a process of consolidation of democracy with significant structural, normative and political changes that have an impact on the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

Consideration of Mexico's Report

The Mexican delegation, headed by Ambassador Claude Heller, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations, featured 30 delegates. He said his Government had sent a large delegation that included experts from all ministries. That spoke to the importance with which the Mexican Government held the Covenant and the recommendations of the Committee, he said.

Introducing the report, BLANCA HEREDIA RUBIO, Secretaria de Gobernacion, Comisionada para el Desarrollo Politico, in Mexico's Ministry of the Interior, said her country had undergone an enormous transformation since the last time it had submitted a report in 1999. Indeed, with its elections at the beginning of the new century, Mexico had moved to ensure political plurality and build a

democratic State based on the rule of law. "Today we can speak of a democratic Mexico. And building human rights is central to that," she said.

While pleased to report on such changes, she regretted that all the documents pertaining to today's presentation, especially those prepared by Mexican civil society groups, had not been translated into all the Committee's working languages. She was also disappointed that the Mexican Human Rights Commission had not been able to make a presentation.

She went on to say that, since 1999, the changes in her country had been characterized by three essential elements: the move towards political openness and plurality; building a democratic State based on modern law; and addressing the increased threat of transnational organized crime. Mexico had made progress on those fronts, but still faced challenges.

As for ongoing political progress, she highlighted the establishment of independent electoral institutions that promoted equity in the polls and encouraged broader participation. That move had also boosted the participation in the polls of the numbers of Mexicans living abroad. She said that gender quotas now existed, and an Electoral Tribunal now governed protection of all political rights. Voting and the dissemination of results were now generally to be completed within 19 days. All those efforts had been helped by the Government's move towards more open dissemination of information.

She also highlighted the Federal law of transparency as a key step forward, and noted that, now, 32 states in Mexico had adopted rules on access to information. Currently, any person had the right to access public information from the various federal, municipal and national levels. By 2003, the Government had also moved to strengthen civil society. Also in 2003, it had adopted legislation on the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination aimed at ensuring equality between all people. The Government had set up a relevant national Council that promoted and ensured that equality. That Council also received and resolved complaints of discrimination against federal authorities in the exercise of their duties.

She said that the 2008-2012 Programme on Human Rights sought to ensure that each federal body, as well as the Armed Forces, acted within the framework of human rights. She also noted the creation of separate commissions on defending the human rights of indigenous people, and persons with disabilities, as well as on eradicating violence against women.

She said that the Mexican Government had moved to overturn capital punishment and had embarked on a deep transformation of its criminal justice and public security systems. Such reform measures had led to the creation of a system that was characterized by openness and one which better recognized victims' rights. Mexico had also ratified all key international human rights instruments, including those against torture and on forced disappearance. It had also joined the

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Importantly, Mexico had also recognized the jurisdiction of the various United Nations treaty bodies to receive individual complaints and in-country visits.

She was pleased to say that Mexico had issued open and ongoing invitations to special mechanisms and procedures of the United Nations, as well as the Inter-American human rights system. Further, Mexico hosted an office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that worked with various Government ministries. It also complied with the rules of the Inter-American Court and had taken other actions to strengthen individual rights, including freedom of expression with, for example, the establishment of a Special Prosecutors Office for investigating crimes committed against journalists.

Currently, torture and other degrading treatment were prohibited under the law in all 32 states, in compliance with the anti-torture Convention and its Optional Protocol. On trafficking in persons, she highlighted the creation of a specialized prosecutor's office, as well as of a national programme, to prevent and punish such trafficking.

However, she said that, despite those and other signs of progress, Mexico still faced challenges when it came to consolidating a democratic State. Indeed, "Mexico is taking the steps in must take" in order to strength individual security and bolster participation of citizens in public affairs. Reform and modification of human rights processes were under way, as well as reform of the criminal justice system. She said current proposals for political reform suggested changes in the relationship between the branches of Government and citizens. All such proposals respected and promoted human rights norms.

Finally, she said that Mexico believed that frank and open dialogue with the Committee would certainly bolster its efforts to build a modern democratic State, as well as to address challenges tied to fighting organized crime and ensuring public security, while promoting human rights.

Replies to Experts' Written Questions

Noting the Committee's schedule for considering Mexico's fifth periodic report, the Chair said the Committee would take up questions 1 to 13 today. He then turned the floor over to the Mexican delegation.

ALEJANDRO NEGRIN MUNOZ, Director General de Derechos Humanos y Democracia, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, stressed that in most of the issues raised by the Committee, Mexico had seen very significant progress. He hoped the Committee would recognize that progress.

On article 2 (legal remedy), he noted the Committee's questions about the content of the draft of amendments to Mexico's national Constitution and said that,

in the last few years, Mexico had ratified nearly all of the international human rights instruments. Notably, since its last appearance before the Committee, Mexico had ratified the two Optional Protocols of the Covenant. As a result, it was modifying its constitutional framework. Among other things, the amendments changed the term “individual guarantees”, replacing it with “human rights”. The list of basic rights had also been broadened to include those elaborated in the international treaties. Among other things, the amendments established the guarantee of a hearing prior to any application of article 33 of the Constitution, which referred to the expulsion of aliens.

He further stressed how important it was that all players agreed to the need for these reforms, noting that the reform measures had already been considered in the senate and that the executive power remained committed to moving forward with the reform process.

Turning to the importance of international treaties, he said those treaties had a hierarchical ranking just below the national Constitution and above state laws. With respect to judicial trials in which the provisions of the international covenants were applied, he said the delegation had provided extensive information in its written response, including a list of verdicts in which these instruments had been applied. Moreover, he noted that the Supreme Court, as well as the electoral tribunal, used these covenants, and detailed information on those fronts had also been included in the delegation’s written report.

With respect to articles 3 and 26 (non-discrimination) of the Covenant, he said the Committee had posed five questions, including on the powers and work of the special prosecutor to deal with crimes of violence against women, as well as the state of the investigations into the killings of women in Ciudad Juarez. He added that, within the special prosecutor’s ambit, there had been progress in the institutional, legislative and budgetary areas. These comprised some of the State’s most important developments in the last decade. Nevertheless, there had been a number of murders of women in Juarez. In relation to these cases, several hundred people were tried, with a percentage of the cases involving a trial before a judicial body, while the others remained in the investigation phase.

He noted that the office of the prosecutor cooperated with the Attorney General of Mexico. There was also a system that mobilized all authorities in the case of a child’s disappearance. Further, an assistance fund existed for the families of children who had disappeared.

He went on to say that, between January and February 2009, the attorney general of Chihuahua had received a total of 36 reports of missing persons, of which 32 were resolved through the discovery of the missing women. Four were not located. With respect to killings during the same period, the prosecutor had received one case, while a special crime unit in the northern zone had begun investigating several cases of homicide.

With respect to violence against women in the *maquiladora* industries, he said the Department of Labour had been working to carry out reforms that prevented the exploitation of workers in all sectors. In April 2002, the State had signed a convention with industry leaders that moved towards the adoption of better working conditions.

He further stated that over the last decade Mexico had made significant efforts to prevent violence against women. There were now 70 shelters throughout the country, as well as a help hotline. A bill that called for the establishment of “justice houses” for women throughout the country had been drafted, and a pilot programme was already under way. This initiative sought to provide a new model for women’s justice.

Moreover, a general law entitled “women’s access to a life free of violence” had also been promulgated, he said. The 32 federal entities had the same law and 18 of them had published their regulations. He hoped the Committee would appreciate the impact of this general law, which created a gender violence alert to combat extreme violence against women through emergency government action under the national system. It was adopted in two cases: common law cases and in events whereby women were prevented from fully exercising their human rights. Several entities in the country were considering local mechanisms that were similar to the federal mechanism.

On abortion, he said that, as a result of the decision by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, health centres must provide assistance to interrupt a pregnancy at a woman’s request or, in the case of a minor, at the request of their parents. In August 2008, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that upheld the constitutionality of the law decriminalizing abortion before 12 weeks.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had also recently issued a sentence that ordered that the protocols be standardized in investigating crimes of sexual violence. Further, these protocols must be adapted according to a set of guidelines the Commission established. It also ordered that a DNA databank be set up to identify missing women and girls. Mexico considered that the enforcement of this court’s decision would strengthen its own practices, in this regard.

Turning next to the experts’ questions on article 4 (state of emergency), Mr. Negrin Munoz said Mexico had never repealed the rights recognized by the International Covenant. The Government’s measures aimed at reforming security laws respected individual rights. Such draft reforms had been submitted last April, and had proposed, among other things, the creation of a declaration which would allow the Armed Forces to tackle acts against the State, as well as against municipalities or any form of government authority. That declaration could be used in situations that might lead to the disruption of public order. At no time would its actions abrogate individual rights; it was fully compatible with the Covenant.

To address the “terrible threat” posed by organized crime, the army

provided a timely response to requests for assistance by civil authorities. He said that various courts had ruled in favour of Armed Forces acting in support of such entities. Still, nowhere in Mexico had the rights recognized by the International Covenant been repealed; the fight against organized crime was carried out with full respect for human rights.

He said it was also important to underscore that Mexico's Armed Forces had made public all pending cases and charges of human rights abuses against its personnel. After review of the 3,430 cases, the National Commission on Human Rights had thus far handed down 51 recommendations. Those recommendations had been accepted by the military authorities, and criminal investigations were under way. Thus far, eight individuals had been sentenced by military tribunals. The other cases were still under investigation. At the same time, the Government had undertaken an ambitious and extensive human rights training programme among all branches of the Armed Forces.

On article 6 (right to life), he said the Criminal Code in several municipalities now incorporated laws against forced disappearance. Further, a Special Committee for Social Movements and Political Movements of the Past in the Special Prosecutors Office, and an Inter-Disciplinary Committee for Reparations in the Interior Ministry had been created. The Inter-American Court had recently ordered Mexico to modify its Criminal Code to bring that legislation into step with international norms.

Turning to article 7 of the Covenant (prohibition of torture), Mr. Negrin Munoz highlighted prosecutions under way for individuals charged in the armed services. The Government's swift action to that end was emblematic of many steps under way to address torture. There were still serious challenges in the fight against torture, but it was worth underscoring that constitutional reforms of the criminal justice system made null and void confessions that were obtained by force or under duress.

Also, ambitious institutional training was under way. Mexico had ratified the optional protocol to the Convention on Torture. Other challenges included difficulties in standardizing the Criminal Code throughout the country, as well as in codifying the definition of torture. It was also proving difficult to evaluate the training that had been received under the Istanbul Protocol on Torture. With all that in mind, he said Mexico was making progress on creating a national registry to establish reliable parameters to investigate charges of torture or other inhumane or degrading treatment.

Experts Comments and Questions

Opening the discussion of the report, NIGEL RODLEY, expert from the United Kingdom, expressed appreciation for the important role Mexico played in the international arena in addressing the issue of torture. Speaking generally, he suggested that Mexico's so-called "organized" crime operated with a level of

barbarity that made it difficult to read reports of their activity. He was also very interested in the move towards an adversarial form of justice.

On the issue of implementing the Inter-American Court's decision, he said it was good to hear the delegation's commitment to give effect to that judgement, including its requirement that the system of military justice be amended so that human rights cases no longer fell within the purview of military justice. Indeed, it was hard to understand why the military should be treated differently from police forces in the cases of internal violence, particularly when they were fighting the same enemy with -- in some cases -- the same means.

Noting that he would address issues 1 and 2, as well as 12 and 13, he said the delegation's response on question 1 relating to the proposed amendments implied that it was up to the executive power to take the decision on the question of expelling an alien. His understanding was that it was still not possible to challenge the executive's decision. Had he misunderstood that change? Moreover, once these reforms were adopted by Mexico's senate, this change would have to be approved by two thirds of the states. Could the delegation provide any kind of prediction as to the timing of this process? Could it also provide further clarification on what kind of "instruments for their protection" could be used by aliens?

He said he understood the hierarchy of norms, in which the international treaty norms were secondary to the national Constitution. Yet, Mexico's Supreme Court had recently issued a decision expressly indicating that international treaties did not have automatic force of law in Mexico. Did he understand correctly that the president of the national human rights commission had expressed regret regarding that decision, and could more details on the decision be provided?

On issue 12, which involved torture, he said the small number of cases cited by the delegation made it hard to suggest a serious legal will or ability to enforce the prohibition of torture existed. Indeed, six cases involved penalties being served. In military cases, there were only three cases that had worked their way through the system. Further, this citation wasn't terribly convincing when one bore in mind that there would always be officials who behaved badly, despite what their offices expected.

He appreciated the delegation's statement that the State still faced a challenge with respect to the fight against torture. Yet, he wondered if there was any movement on the burden of proof. At one time, the burden to prove that torture had taken place had been on the victim. What about the move of Mexico City to tape interrogations? Was this being replicated in other parts of the country?

On the issue of torture's definition, he noted there was no problem on the federal level. A number of states had followed it. But, while others had the international definition in their legislation, they did not necessarily follow it. This could pose a problem, he suggested, in determining what was admissible in court.

FABIÁN OMAR SALVIOLI, expert from Argentina, said he was particularly surprised at the size of Mexico's delegation. He recalled that in the country's previous report, submitted in 1999, officials had explained that violence against women in Mexico was no different from the violence women experienced around the world. Today's report showed that the delegation's previous assessment had been mistaken.

Noting that there were no mandatory standards for Mexico's 32 states, he wondered how that situation coexisted with the Covenant's indication that its standards were applicable throughout a nation's entire territory? Given how some states had modified their constitutions to recognize life from the moment of conception, there were differences in federal-level and state-level approaches to abortion. Could more information be provided? He also expressed concern over local state laws in the realm of harmonizing the law to ensure women lived a "life free of violence", noting that a few states did not recognize the gender alert mechanism.

He expressed further concern at the Supreme Court's ruling a week ago on the application of international human rights treaties. He requested more information on the programmes in Ciudad Juarez that sought to reduce violence against women. Also, could more information be provided on the experience of women in prison? He had heard that, in some places, women resided with men in prison. Such a situation raised the possibility of violence.

RAFAEL RIVAS POSADA, expert from Colombia, said the Committee's concern with the state of exception was based clearly on the drafting of article 4. It must be limited over time and protected by certain guarantees. While the national security law and the reform being studied did not imply a state of emergency -- and this helped allay some concerns -- he was still struck that a national security law did not in any way refer to the dangers of limiting the rights enshrined in the Covenant. The State quoted a series of internal guidelines that, while designed to strengthen human rights, still showed the possibility that those rights could be restricted. Indeed, the powers of the State's forces -- mainly the military -- were being strengthened in Mexico; this raised concerns on the effect that could have on the full respect of human rights throughout the country.

He said the Committee was clearly interested in having the most specific idea possible on how far this strengthening of the military's power could go. Would it be time-bound? Once there was the possibility of regaining public order, could the situation revert to the prior state of affairs?

Moreover, the Committee had information that what existed today in Chihuahua was a state of emergency. Along those lines, he would appreciate more information on the state of affairs in Chihuahua. He was also concerned about human rights violations within the framework of the fight against organized crime, and particularly with the fact that there was non-uniform information on such violations from the States. He asked for the delegation to explain discrepancies

between the allegations and the complaints from the citizens, and the explanations made by the authorities in this area.

Speaking next, CHRISTINE CHANET, expert from France, said that, while the Mexican delegation's written and oral responses had been quite comprehensive, she was concerned that the word "programmes" had cropped up so frequently. Perhaps it was better, when a delegation was before the Committee, for it to focus more on specificities and implementation, rather than on generalities. Turning to Mexico's reservations and interpretive statements on application of the tenets of the Covenant in national legislation, she wondered if the Government would avail itself of the opportunity provided by ongoing constitutional reforms to remove all its reservations.

Continuing, she also expressed concern about the nature of the Government's commitment to tackling forced disappearances, especially towards implementing international human rights norms to that end. She was also intrigued by the reasons for closing, in 2006, the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Past Social and Political Movements. Many of those "past crimes" remained unaddressed and many of the perpetrators were still in the country. She reminded the delegation that, when it had subjected itself to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, that body had asked a similar question.

RAJSOOMER LALLAH, expert from Mauritius, said the Committee had last examined a compliance report from Mexico some 10 years ago. That meant that the current report was not on time. Further, he did not see that the Committee's decade-old concluding observations had been addressed. Had the Government lost interest? Had too much time passed? He felt that such a late submission allowed Mexico to escape examination by the Committee's special rapporteur on concluding observations, and he suggested that, in the future, that delegation should stick to the reporting schedule. He said that he shared Mexico's frustration that all the documents before the Committee had not been translated ahead of today's meeting. But, at the same time, he wondered if Mexico had brought the matter to the attention of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)?

Following that intervention, ABDELFATTAH AMOR, expert from Tunisia, said that, while he welcomed the delegation's thorough presentation, he was perplexed by several issues, including the placement of tenets of the Covenant in Mexico's national system. He asked the delegation to expand on the matter, including under what circumstances the Covenant had been invoked in national courts and what the outcome had been. He added that such further explanation was especially important, since the documents before the Committee had not been translated into all official working languages.

He went on to say that the Committee had the impression that not all municipalities throughout the country were participating in broader human rights reforms that were being promoted at the federal level. On other matters, he had

the feeling that discrimination against women continued in Mexico, especially in social and economic matters. While he praised the legislation that had been introduced to address that problem, he said it was clear that, unfortunately, society was not moving at the same pace and that Mexico remained a misogynist society.

JOSÉ LUIS PEREZ SANCHEZ-CERRO, expert from Peru, recalled that the Committee had received information on the killing of at least three journalists. Those cases had seemingly gone unaddressed. Could the delegation provide more information on the status of those cases? He was also concerned by information from civil society actors of some 128 attacks against human rights defenders in the last three years. Those persons had been subjected to harassment and other abuses. There had been at least 10 deaths, and the Government had also detained several human rights defenders, apparently without sufficient evidence. Could the delegation provide more information? On violence against women, he said that, despite valiant efforts to eradicate such violence, it was nevertheless clear that gaps existed, especially in ensuring that women's rights were protected in prison. What was being done to address that issue?

HELLEN KELLER, expert from Switzerland, was also concerned about the situation of women in prison. She understood that women were being kept in so-called "mixed" prisons. That was a clear violation of the Covenant. What was Mexico doing to address that situation? What steps were being taken to protect them against harassment?

Also echoing sentiments expressed by others, IULIA ANTOANELLA MOTOC, expert from Romania, was concerned about the status of the International Covenant in Mexico, especially in light of what appeared to be many constitutional changes under way in the country. Moreover, did Mexico hold international treaties to different standards? She was also concerned about gender equality, especially in indigenous communities. How was the Government moving forward to empower indigenous women, while protecting their unique cultures?

The final expert speaking today, MICHAEL O'FLAHERTY, expert from Ireland, said he was one of the experts that had been handicapped by the fact that Mexico's written responses had not been translated into the Committees' written languages. Continuing, he praised the leadership of the National Human Rights Commission. On the other hand, he was struck by the disparity in law and practice regarding sexual orientation. Indeed, civil society activists had informed the committee that there was no mention of gender identity in anti-discrimination laws. Was there any intention to address that gap? Was there any attempt to change societal attitudes so that people belonging to sexual minorities would not be subjected to abuse and harassment? On other matters, he wondered if the ambit of the national Human Rights Commission would be extended to cover labour issues.

Delegation's Responses

LAURA CARRERA LUGO, National Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women, Interior Ministry, recalled that there was not a great deal of information on violence against women in many countries, including in Mexico, in the 1990s. After the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Mexican Government undertook to learn more. In 2006, the Government realized that women were experiencing violence in many areas and, above all, in family relations.

But despite all that the Government had done to reduce and eliminate this violence by implementing programmes and policies, it had enjoyed very little success, she said. One reason for this was that its original approach had been formulated more as a criminal policy. As a result, the influence of the social environment had been underestimated and work was now needed on the cultural factors that resulted in violence against women.

With that in mind, it had become clear that the violence in Juarez and other northern areas was not the same as the violence seen in other regions. With respect to Ciudad Juarez, it was important to acknowledge the series of conflicts there. Also, 36 different nationalities, representing nearly all the states of Mexico, lived there in migrant communities. Thus, the Government had changed its responses to the violence, as well as to the arrival of migrants. The federal Government had decided that interventions in Juarez must unfold on the three levels.

She stressed that this intervention aimed to change social behaviours and patterns. This required thorough policies that deepened the sense of belonging among the city's citizens, so as to strengthen and restore the social fabric. As a result, Mexico believed that efforts to combat organized crime must be combined with social intervention. This required reducing the social dynamics that had led to a context in which violence flourished. The current efforts included a vision of women as protagonists and aimed at promoting civic participation.

She said that to improve women's access to justice, especially in Juarez, women's justice centres were being promoted, she said. These centres were modelled on centres that already existed around the world, including in San Diego in the United States. They sought to provide women with justice services in one location, so they did not have to go knocking on doors. There was also a proposal to harmonize the penal codes and, on this front, contact with local municipalities had already begun.

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