Chapter 11

Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation

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Sending countries are generally unconcerned about the impact their migrants may be having on receiving countries. They often view emigration as a necessary escape valve. There have been few bilateral discussions on this issue between the United States and sending countries in Central America and the Caribbean. The United States has not pressed for such talks and sending countries, for reasons including remittance flows, have had little interest in curtailing emigration.

The Mexican government has consistently maintained that its sizable emigration is attributable, in large part, to U.S. demand for workers and has focussed its concern on the treatment of those workers while they are in the United States. Prior to the passage of employer sanctions, the Mexican government was reluctant to tamper with the status quo. Following passage of IRCA and the creation of this Commission, Mexico has cooperated with the Commission and its input is reflected in this Report. An additional factor has sensitized Mexico to migration problems and made it more open to discussions with the United States and the international community: the large number of unauthorized Central American migrants it has received in recent years.

The only other recent example of bilateral cooperation on migration has been provided by Haiti, with its 1981 agreement to allow the United States to interdict Haitian emigrants at sea. On the multi-

lateral side, the international community, through UNHCR and UNDP, is attempting to lessen the political tensions and economic problems associated with the migration of Salvadorans and Nicaraguans into neighboring Honduras and Costa Rica. These migration problems are also receiving special attention in the context of efforts to end the civil strife in the region.

It remains true, however, that neither the United Nations nor the international community as a whole has paid much attention to the issue of international migration, except in the context of refugee or refugee-like movements. Likewise, the United States has not made this issue a high priority and has been reluctant to raise it in bilateral discussions with sending countries. In many cases, migration has been viewed by both sending and receiving countries merely as a foreign policy irritant. In others, it is simply not deemed important enough to be on bilateral agendas.

The Commission is troubled by the low priority given to the issues of international migration and unauthorized migration. **It recommends that the International Organization for Migration facilitate an expanded dialogue on Western Hemisphere migration matters by convening a meeting (followed by regional seminars) with high-level participation from the United States and Latin American member governments.**

The international community should also address the problem of forced migration under political duress. The actions of the Vietnamese government in expelling its ethnic Chinese citizens in 1978-1979 and of the Cuban government during the Mariel boat-lift in 1980 demonstrate the need for a concerted international response. **The United States should initiate discussions with other receiving countries and within the international community regarding the need for an international agreement to curtail the deliberate migration-generating policies of certain countries and to encourage greater cooperation on the part of transit countries.** The Commission hopes that, in light of its recent cooperation on migration matters, the Mexican government would join the United States in pursuing these diplomatic initiatives.

Further, the United States should give higher priority to the issue of unauthorized migration and seek greater cooperation by sending countries regarding certain enforcement measures (for example, to curtail smuggling rings or fraudulent document activities).

Another area where increased cooperation is urgently needed is in the curtailment of narcotics production, processing and trafficking. The United States, which consumes 60 percent of the world's illegal drugs, is located near some significant drug-producing countries. Mexico is a key producer of heroin and marijuana consumed in the United States as well as a major transit country for cocaine entering this country. Guatemala has also become a significant heroin source.

Marijuana comes from Jamaica, also an important narcotics transit point, as are Haiti, Panama and, to a lesser extent, other migrant-sending countries in the area.

Experience has proven that the narcotics trade is potentially disruptive to migrant-sending country economies and could seriously distort their development processes, increasing pressures for emigration. The control of narcotic substances is also a matter of highest U.S. priority. The United States and sending countries should increase their cooperation in the area of narcotics control, through bilateral, regional and international efforts.

In order to encourage improvement of the administration of justice in migrant-sending countries and to provide support for the general trend in Latin America toward democracy, the Commission endorses international programs to enhance basic judicial skills and improve the court systems of such countries.

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The Commission considered suggestions that the United States propose bilateral labor agreements to governments of major sending countries, or unilateral expansion of the H-2 program, as ways to force potential unauthorized immigrants into legal channels. It also considered proposals to end all bilateral labor arrangements currently in effect, as well as phasing out the H-2 and H-2A programs. (See discussion of H-2 and H-2A in Box 2.3 on page 24.) The Commission as a whole did not support either position.

The Commission believes that the general experience with bilateral temporary labor programs has shown rather conclusively that they encourage permanent immigration, except where they are rigidly controlled by authoritarian governments. This was true of the Mexican Bracero Program and the European migrant labor programs of 1950-74. While workers contracted under the Bracero Program generally returned home, the existence of the program itself served as a magnet for others, as well as for many of those whose contracts were not renewed. Pressures for family reunification added to the number seeking unauthorized entry into the United States. In Europe, many immigrant workers had by the end of the 1960s begun to establish large enclaves in their host countries, even in nations whose controls were supposedly the most effective. Exceptions to this general rule have been the closely-regulated H-2 programs for temporary Jamaican and other West Indian workers.

In view of this history, the Commission firmly rejects suggestions for an expanded temporary worker program, as well as the large scale importation of guest workers in any occupational category. There is a need, however, to make the H-2 labor certification process more efficient and less time-consuming. If American labor needs are to be satisfied by foreign workers, such workers should be admitted under the current H-2 program with appropriate labor protections, or as permanent immigrants.

Promoting Human Resources

Many of the problems Mexico and other migrant-sending countries face are aggravated by high population growth rates. To address this issue, almost all such countries have fostered voluntary family planning programs, either through the public or the private sector. A secondary but equally important objective of these programs is to promote maternal and child health.

Not only do family planning programs enjoy a considerable degree of official acceptance in their own countries, they also claim extensive bipartisan support in the United States. **The Commission endorses the continued financing of voluntary family planning efforts, including those which promote natural family planning.** Such efforts, if they are to be effective, must take into account the Latin American moral and cultural atmosphere in which they are implemented in any effort to foster responsible parenthood.

Mexican public health and family planning authorities, as well as Mexican nongovernmental organizations, could share their considerable family planning and demographic expertise with their counterparts in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean Basin nations, which could benefit significantly from Mexico's experiences in these areas.

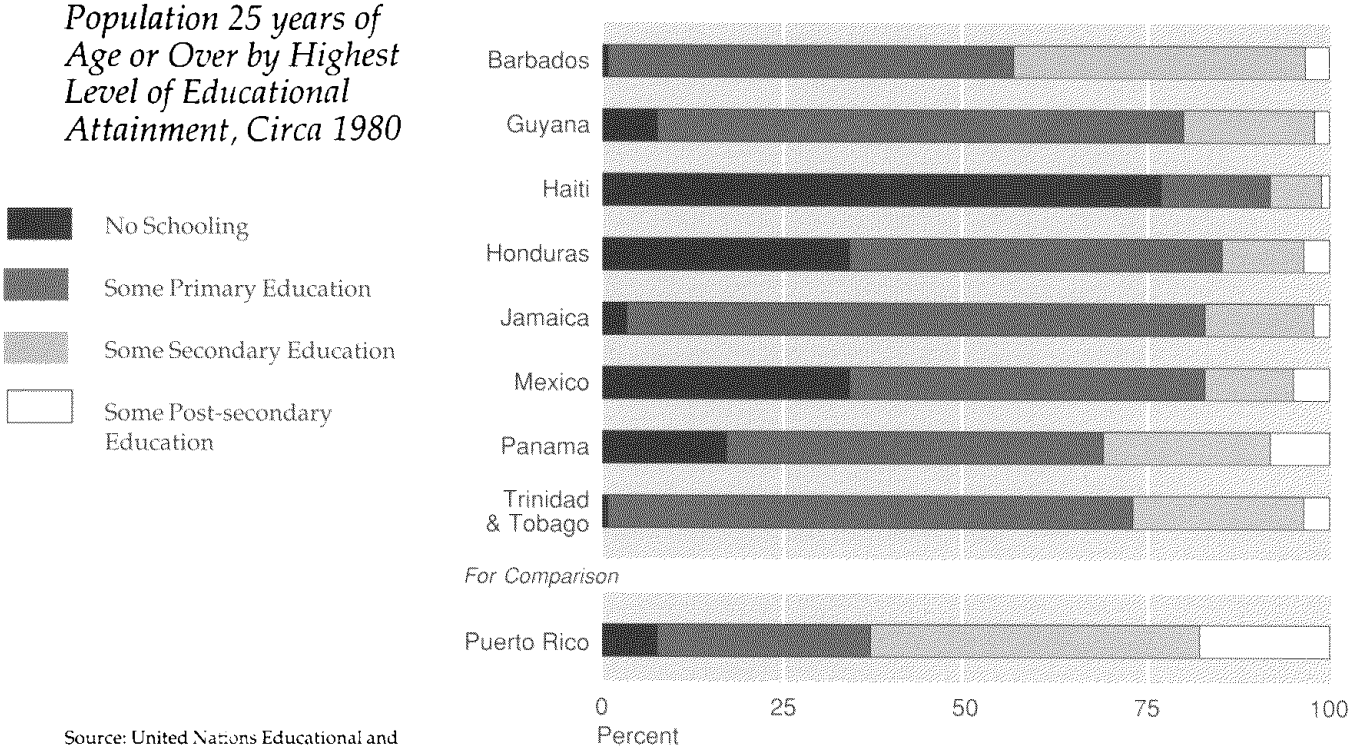
Raising educational levels is essential to the achievement of socioeconomic development.

Raising educational levels is essential to the achievement of socioeconomic development. Better education has its own rewards and an educated population is necessary to raise productivity. Improved educational levels also contribute to development in indirect ways; for example, they are correlated with declining fertility and improved nutritional standards. But the demand for higher levels of education by society often outstrips a nation's capacity to offer appropriate employment opportunities.

Better access to education is one of the forces behind increased population mobility. Parents want better opportunities for their children. Emigration, particularly of skilled persons, stems from limited domestic opportunities and more attractive employment prospects abroad. Education is the primary factor that permits people to seek out these new options. Migrant-sending countries must bear the costs of skilled emigration and many have serious brain drain problems.

The brain-drain dilemma can be resolved only over time, as internal economic development enhances domestic career opportunities. In the meantime, sending countries should continue to promote advances ranging from basic literacy to higher education. The emphasis depends on each country's needs, resources and level of development. Some educational efforts, however, could hasten development and simultaneously contribute to the reduction of emigration pressures. University-level technical education is crucial for development even if it leads to some skilled emigration. Vocational

FIGURE 11.1
Population 25 years of Age or Over by Highest Level of Educational Attainment, Circa 1980



Source: United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization.

education is another prime example. Better paid skilled manual workers—badly in need in migrant-sending economies—are not as prone to emigrate as less trained workers earning lower wages. (See Figure 11.1, p. 99.)

Educational programs in localities with high migration rates could place emphasis on the development of skills, vocational and white collar, for which there is a relatively high demand in the broader economic region. This would entail assessing prospective labor demands by skill levels and gearing regional school systems to provide students with appropriate training. This goal is attainable in a large country such as Mexico, which has a well-developed system of rapidly growing secondary cities. Given the proper economic circumstances, these cities can serve as labor magnets to help channel migrants away from the Mexico City megalopolis and other large Mexican cities, as well as from the United States.

The Commission urges the Mexican authorities to consider expanding Mexico's relatively well-developed national system of vocational education. Expanded efforts should be tailored to the special needs of Mexico's diverse economic regions, as assessed in

the City Systems studies conducted by the National Population Council (CONAPO), and be congruent with Mexico's objective of promoting balanced regional development.*

Promoting technical and vocational education in the smaller Central American and Caribbean countries is compatible with their own development objectives and with a concerted long-term strategy to minimize undocumented migratory pressures. One way to overcome the shortcomings of the limited resources and relatively small populations found in these areas is to create or strengthen existing regional training institutions to serve the needs of more than one country. The latter have already been effective in helping reduce shortages of highly educated workers.

The Congress and AID should program assistance funds for increased vocational education in migrant-sending areas—in particular for regional training centers—which realize economies of scale. The United States should work with the governments of sending countries to fashion regional vocational training programs similar to those used in higher education, such as the joint programs of the University of the West Indies and the Central American Management Institute (Instituto Centro Americano de Administración de Empresas—INCAE). These vocational training programs should ideally be modelled after the very successful Western European training centers, where technical training begins in a formal work setting before the students graduate. U.S. training institutions should be encouraged to assist in curriculum development and teacher training.

In the area of agriculture, there should be increases in ongoing technical assistance for sending-country efforts to raise agriculture, agro-industry and non-agricultural employment in rural areas. These include advisory, lending and training programs. Cooperative efforts should be made to assist farmers in migrant-sending areas to grow fruit and produce during seasons when they are not in direct competition with U.S. producers.

Seeking resources from the private sector may be one way to overcome the cost constraint of providing training. The principal beneficiaries of a more skilled labor force are the businesses—national as well as foreign—active in these regions. Migrant-sending countries could provide incentives for businesses to cooperate with governments in training. Costs may also be contained by engaging U.S. universities in regional training programs in partnership with local universities.

* The City Systems studies were conducted by CONAPO with the partial support of AID. They assess the development potential of different Mexican economic regions in terms of the national urban grid.

The Commission supports U.S. government-sponsored scholarships for Central American and Caribbean students seeking to study in the United States. Following the 1984 recommendations of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America (Kissinger Commission), the United States provided funding to develop programs that provide educational opportunities for disadvantaged populations from Central American and Caribbean countries. The Caribbean and Latin American Scholarships Program, financed by AID, and the Central American Program of Undergraduate Scholarships, sponsored by the United States Information Agency, for example, not only enhance educational opportunities and employment potential when students return to their home countries, but expose them to the culture and democratic ideals of the United States.

Some 250 U.S. educational institutions participate in these programs. Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. administers a program in association with U.S. community colleges. Limited to two years, this program has been successful in encouraging students to return home upon completion of their studies. Programs of this nature build lasting links between the United States and student-sending nations. **For these reasons, the Commission recommends continued Congressional funding of these programs and urges the inclusion of Mexico.** Consideration should also be given to expanding their scope in order to provide appropriate technical training opportunities in high-quality community colleges and technical training centers in the United States.

Efforts to Save Natural Resources and the Environment

Rapid population growth and economic development...have often led to considerable environmental degradation...

The Commission has taken special note that rapid population growth in migrant-sending countries and measures leading to economic development have often led to considerable environmental degradation and erosion of the natural resource base. This has accompanied both agricultural and industrial development. As available natural resources have diminished, competition for them has intensified pressures for people to migrate across borders. The Commission is particularly concerned with conditions along the U.S.-Mexico border and in Mexico City; massive deforestation and attendant soil erosion in Haiti; and deteriorating conditions in Guatemala and El Salvador. Rapid industrialization of the U.S.-Mexico border has created serious concern for environmental degradation. The use of toxic chemicals and the expanded transportation networks created by border development pose serious new environmental and regulatory problems. There is generalized concern in all border states over inadequate enforcement of existing statutes and international treaties. Specifically, regulations regarding hazardous waste generated by maquiladoras have not been properly monitored to determine compliance. To address current environmental practice along the border, there should be closer

cooperation between U.S. border states and federal agencies responsible for compliance, especially with regard to the identification and tracking of hazardous waste.

The Mexican side of the border is an area of booming economic growth, but is also characterized by poverty and severe pollution. With migration from Mexico's interior, population along the border is projected to reach 30 million by the turn of the century. Poor water quality, untreated sewage, agricultural runoffs damaging to local water supplies, severe air pollution, and improper disposal of hazardous and toxic substances are of particular concern to Mexico. The availability of Mexican resources to correct some of these problems has been severely limited. As border industrialization proceeds, the area's very rapid rate of population increase carries with it the potential for significantly greater damage. The Commission urges a concerted effort by both governments to improve the quality of life in border areas.

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With a population of 19.4 million, Mexico City dramatically illustrates the phenomenon of explosive urban growth. Mexico's capital is well known as one of the most severely polluted cities in the world. While not quite as daunting, the ecological problems of other large Mexican and Caribbean Basin cities are proportionately severe.

Haiti qualifies as the most environmentally devastated country in the Western Hemisphere. In particular, its forest cover now seems to be largely a matter of history. While forests accounted for 50 percent of national territory in 1950, they declined to only eight percent in 1970 and a mere two percent by the early 1980s. Haiti features one of the highest ratios of population to arable land in the Hemisphere, thus accentuating pressures to farm on steeply sloping terrain. Deforestation has led to widespread soil erosion and loss of watershed services, as well as massive shortages of forest products such as fuelwood and construction timber.

Guatemala provides another of the region's most troublesome examples of soil erosion. El Salvador is now among those countries in the world with the lowest percentage of forest land. Agriculture is the predominant means of livelihood in most Caribbean Basin countries. Agricultural exports account for about 70 percent of Central America's export revenues. Yet in most migrant-sending countries food production does not keep pace with population growth and a critical constraint is soil erosion. In Guatemala, some 35 percent of total farmland is seriously eroded.

The recent upsurge in the export of beef to North America for the fast-food industry has led to the clearing of large areas of tropical forest in Central America, leaving soils vulnerable to erosion. Crowded farmers overworking their tiny holdings, often on steep hillsides, also contribute to soil erosion.

Box 11.1 - Ecologically Sustainable Rural Development

Environmentally fragile tropical and semi-tropical regions can sustain a number of economic activities capable of both generating employment and preserving or even restoring natural ecosystems. **Agroecosystems** are sustainable systems of farming practiced at the subsistence level in formerly forested regions. They are based on the combined use of multiple species, including basic staples and plants that serve as natural fertilizers, pesticides, and other purposes. Practiced by many traditional farmers, they help preserve the environment by replicating the biotic diversity of natural forests. **Agroforestry** involves the planting of trees and shrubs and their use as cash crops (e.g., lumber, charcoal) by individual farmers, as well as providing for enrichment of the soil, providing a shaded and protected environment (e.g., for coffee, cacao), as windbreakers, and as fodder for livestock. This is a promising strategy for both increasing rural incomes and reforestation. Even in Haiti, agroforestry projects have had very promising results. **Ecotourism**, or nature-oriented travel, is tourism involving natural areas and outdoor recreation. It is a growing industry, attracting an increasing volume of international travelers and generating substantial amounts of foreign exchange for countries able to protect their natural habitats.

Although the damage is already severe, some of the patterns of destruction could be reversed by sustainable agricultural practices and measures to preserve natural ecosystems. These would include more ecologically sound applications of modern agricultural technologies, and effective management of existing pastures and forest resources. There is a pressing need for watershed management in many countries.

The preservation of natural ecosystems is not incompatible with economic growth as long as development activities are consistent with sustainable resource management. Environmentally-sound development projects that generate employment include agroforestry, agricultural practices based on traditional agroecosystems, and multipurpose use of the forest, including ecotourism. Ecotourism is a promising activity for Mexico, Costa Rica, Honduras and other Caribbean Basin destinations with significant forest resources and with an existing or potential tourist industry. (See Box 11.1, p. 103.)

Cooperative environmental protection efforts between the United States and migrant-sending countries are patently in the best interests of all concerned. The urgency of the global environmental problem was one of the key issues discussed by the leaders of the industrial countries at their summit in Paris in July 1989. Measures to reverse current trends towards environmental destruction need to be taken by migrant-sending countries. Equally important will be the efforts of receiving countries to reverse their own environmentally damaging practices. Both objectives could be served by the establishment of high-level institutions with appropriate enforcement powers.

In order to enhance environmental awareness by international development assistance agencies, the Commission strongly endorses the current practice of requiring environmental impact statements for all projects funded by these agencies. Further, regional

centers cooperating with the existing international agricultural research networks should be established to encourage the development of techniques to minimize ecological damage in the promotion of sustainable agricultural production. Methods should be devised to facilitate the development and transfer of affordable, ecologically sound technology appropriate to conditions in sending countries.

Establishing a Border Development and Cooperation Commission

The Commission has been impressed in the course of its visits to both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border that a unique culture has developed there, one quite distrustful of initiatives coming from either Washington or Mexico City. Mexican and U.S. border communities are economically interdependent. Hundreds of millions of legal border crossings take place each year—for shopping, work, entertainment or medical treatment—creating an amalgam of U.S. and Mexican society. Extended families often live on both sides of the border. To further facilitate such cultural interactions and encourage economic growth, the Commission specifically recommends the creation of more border-crossing points and expedited action on those now under consideration.

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Economically, border areas are highly diverse. They include some of the richest localities in the United States, such as San Diego county in California, and some of the poorest, such as Hidalgo and Starr counties in Texas. The border is one of the fastest growing areas in Mexico, in large part because of the expansion of maquiladora production. However, public and private infrastructure is deficient in the poorer border communities on both sides. Both Mexico and the United States, as well as their border states and communities, should continue to forge economic and cultural linkages in their mutual interest.

Many common border problems are now addressed by joint commissions or other bodies. The most significant of these has been the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), which operates quietly and efficiently to deal with boundary disagreements, and the quality, quantity and sharing of surface water. The agreement signed between Mexico and the United States in 1983 in La Paz, Baja California Sur, has established a mechanism for solving environmental problems involving water, air quality and waste disposal. The environmental agencies of the two countries—the Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología (SEDUE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—chair meetings and work together successfully throughout the year.

Yet some border issues are handled only in ad hoc fashion. Funds for border infrastructure and economic development are lacking in both countries. The governors of the six Mexican and the four U.S.

border states meet periodically, but they frequently lack authority to deal with issues that fall under federal jurisdiction, such as building bridges, facilitating customs procedures, simplifying and unifying trucking regulations, and protecting underground water resources. Mayors of sister cities cooperate with each other, as when emergency fire services are needed, but the extent of authority assumed by mayors and governors varies in the two countries.

The United States should establish and fund educational exchange programs for border area residents. This would help people on both sides develop a better understanding of their common culture, needs and problems. The Texas program which provides that in-state tuition is applicable for Mexicans studying in border universities is a model other border states should consider. While both countries have created positions in their foreign affairs establishments to address border issues specifically, the Commission believes further efforts are required.

The perennial issues dealing with border development, development funding, cross-border commerce, cultural exchange and emergency needs should be assigned to a new Border Development and Cooperation Commission (BDCC). Unlike earlier efforts, such as the now disbanded U.S. Southwest Regional Border Commission, the new Commission should be a cooperative, bilateral body. It should be designed along the model of the IBWC to address relevant issues on a continuing basis. The Commission examined the structural model of the U.S.-Mexico Commission for Border Development and Friendship, which operated from 1966 to 1969. This Commission achieved some successes during its brief life, including an agreement to facilitate border cooperation in case of natural disasters, programs to raise the skill levels of border inhabitants, and tourism development. This model, while feasible, was not the Commission's first choice because it centers the authority in Washington, D.C. and Mexico City, rather than at the border where the problems are best known. However, cooperation of the two federal governments will be needed if the BDCC is to succeed. The mandate of the BDCC should be broad, and defined to permit flexibility to address emergency and emerging issues, but specifically excluding those that fall within the jurisdiction of other border entities such as the IBWC or the joint SEDUE-EPA arrangement.

The BDCC should have federal co-chairs accountable to the Presidents of each country. It must be provided with sufficient resources and authorities to address the above issues and it should include representation from each of the states on both sides of the border. In carrying out its mandate, the new Commission should develop a mechanism for receiving input from the private sector and from state and regional organizations. It should also examine the feasibility of a border development financing entity, such as the establishment of a Border Development Bank.

Overall U.S.-Mexico Policy Coordination

This Report deals with economic cooperation between the United States and migrant-sending countries in the Western Hemisphere. Yet the official U.S. structure for cooperative consultation is rudimentary, even with Mexico. Moreover, the attention devoted to U.S.-Mexican issues at the upper reaches of the U.S. government is sporadic, driven more by the crises of the moment than long-term interests. The Commission has given much thought to this question because of its conviction that U.S. relations with Mexico are more important in economic and strategic terms than with most other countries with which well-developed consultative arrangements exist, either bilaterally or within the framework of organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The ambassadorial-level position of Coordinator of Mexican Affairs was created in the Department of State during the Administration of President Jimmy Carter. The experiment did not work; there was constant confusion over whether the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico was in Mexico City or Washington. Another proposal regularly made is to create the position of Assistant Secretary of State for North American Affairs, to include Mexico and Canada. The Commission supports the objectives of the latter proposal.

The Commission believes, however, that correction of the on-again off-again U.S. attention span requires more profound changes. As Mexico recovers, as its economic weight increases, the required attention will be given. If a U.S.-Mexico free trade agreement is concluded, or a North American free trade agreement including Canada develops, the question of structure should be addressed in the negotiations and be part of the agreement.