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## News Release

### **\*\*Remarks of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former Bolivia President Sanchez de Lozada on behalf of The Carter Center Delegation to the 2000 Mexico Elections\*\***

**PRESS CONFERENCE  
HOTEL SHERATON MARIA ISABEL  
MEXICO CITY; JULY 3, 2000, 9:30 a.m.**

### **FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER**

**Contact: Deanna Congileo, 404-420-5108  
For Immediate Release: Monday, July 3, 2000**

This election was a historic turning point of the most profound significance for all who love freedom and democracy in Mexico and throughout this hemisphere and the world. For countries that are searching for a way to give people control over their affairs and to give them a sense of self-worth and importance in their own countries, this is an extremely significant election in many ways.

I'd like, first of all, to express my admiration and gratitude to President Zedillo, the head of the government and also the leader of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). He was willing to reach out to the other major party leaders and institute laws that set up a completely independent election commission, which we know as IFE, and which guaranteed the parties would have reasonably equal access to the news media and also a fairly responsible way to finance campaigns. These election reforms were profound and worked out yesterday to be almost superb in their application.

Secondly, I think there is a great deal of credit due to IFE, which had the well-deserved confidence not only of the PRI, but also of PRD and PAN. There were never any doubts about the complete integrity of and the competence of the election commission in charge of the process yesterday and last night. This is a rare event in countries whose elections we have monitored, particularly in those making a major transition to democracy or making the first real demonstration of democracy.

Another two people I would like to mention are the opposition candidates for president and the parties that they led. Obviously, candidate Cardenas and the victorious candidate, Vicente Fox, both had a lot at stake.

When we arrived in Mexico, they made numerous allegations of improprieties prior to the election day, and they deliberately promulgated many news stories casting doubt on the conduct of the election.

Before the elections began, however, both of those candidates agreed with us and permitted us to make a statement that, regardless of what had occurred prior to the election with alleged favors offered or punishments threatened, they would base their acceptance just on what happened during election day and on the handling of ballots and returns afterwards. I thought this was a major degree of statesmanship.

The major credit, however, should go to the people of Mexico, who have now witnessed 71 years of government by one party, where, in many people's minds, the PRI and the government were one and the same. They made a judgment yesterday; it was not just a choice between candidates, but also a choice between parties and a choice for change. I think this shows great maturity on their part. Although in the past in Mexico, as many of you know, there have been many flagrant instances or even violence at the polls, there was a remarkable degree of harmony peace and goodwill among those who voted, in almost every case.

Out of more than 113,000 casillas, or voting places, only about a dozen or so didn't go through with their final returns last night, which is a remarkable degree of assurance. I have some figures here I will quote very briefly.

There were 3,043 improprieties reported, 2964 of them, which is almost all of them, were successfully resolved yesterday. Most of these were minor in their tone.

One thing that we shouldn't assume is that the election is over, although it's very clear that Fox is now the president elect; although this is not official, the others have accepted this. There are still a number of contests that are being very narrowly decided—for members of Congress and for local and state offices throughout the country. So the candidates who are in those races will exercise their rights to file complaints and allegations that will be decided through the laws that have been set up for the election courts.

I might say that the only real problem that we saw yesterday, that obviously did not effect the outcome of the election, was the lack of a proper estimate of people who would be voting in the special casillas. These were for transient Mexicans who were outside their own home voting area, and also those who came from the United States into Mexico and perhaps from Guatemala as well to vote at the border. There was a gross underestimation of the need for large numbers of ballots.

At the end of election day, in some cases there were several hundreds of people who wanted to vote who were not given that opportunity because there was an underestimation of the number of them.

In closing, let me say that I thought last evening's speeches, first by President Zedillo and then by candidates Cardenas and Labastida, were extremely gracious, and I think the victory statement by Vicente Fox was also very gracious. I think this will set a tone for the next five months of transition that will be very beneficial for Mexico.

Those are my opening comments. Now, I'd like to call on my friend and delegation co-leader Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, to make remarks.

**GONZALO SANCHEZ DE LOZADA, former President of Bolivia:**

The only thing I want to say is that the health of democracy depends on a small detail, which is the electoral process. Yesterday was the best electoral process I've ever seen. I wish we could take the electoral institute, IFE, to other countries. They have covered everything. No expense has been spared, and the Mexican people responded. Every place we went, except for the special casillas, it was a magnificent election and the people were there. We saw no pressure. It was a process that will give legitimacy to Mexican democracy, whoever wins and whatever happens, and which will make Mexico like it is in so many things, an example for our hemisphere. I'm really impressed. I think it was a great election. And, I hope that on the legitimacy of this election, you can build a truly democratic society for a great country. #####



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