

Talking Points for Kermit Moh's Remarks at the Pillar IV Panel
Thursday, March 17th, 2011, 9:15 – 11:00
Woodrow Wilson Center, Fifth Floor Conference Room

Let me start by saying that I'd like to thank the Wilson Center for hosting such a timely panel on building strong and resilient communities able to withstand the pressures of crime and violence in Mexico or Pillar IV of the Merida Initiative. I'd also like to thank the other panelists, who are with me this morning. .

I'm very pleased to be here representing USAID at this event. Secretary Clinton recently said that the US-Mexico relationship is "one of the most important relationships that exist between any two countries in the world." There is no bilateral relationship in the world that affects Americans on a daily basis more than U.S.-Mexico.

Cooperation between our countries is of paramount importance to both countries' national interests. Our two countries are inextricably linked by a 2,000 mile border that is crossed every day by a million people and with daily cross border trade that is over a billion dollars'.. The border is of mutual benefit and it is in both of our interests to ensure that Mexican communities in general but border communities in particular, are strong and resilient.

Thus, our work at USAID is for the benefit of the Mexican people and the American people.

Recently, as you well know however, some border communities have come under attack from transnational criminal organizations, introducing unprecedented levels of violence.

USAID is working in two key areas to strengthen the U.S.-Mexico border, with Mexico in the lead, through the Beyond Merida Initiative. This is an unprecedented partnership between the U.S. and Mexico to fight organized criminal groups and associated violence that affect both sides of the border.

Of course, USAID is one part of a larger effort. Effective law enforcement, with support from the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement and the Department of Justice, is key to our success.

The first area in which we're working is supporting efforts of the Mexican government, civil society and private sector to promote a more fair and more transparent justice system in accordance with Mexico's constitutional reform of 2008. USAID focuses primarily at the state level, where political will and local financial support for reforms has enhanced the potential for success of programs.

Second, USAID supports programs to address the social and economic needs of Mexican communities under threat by criminal organizations. These programs are aimed at ensuring that communities see and feel a net concrete benefit from efforts designed to reduce crime and violence, and increase the confidence of the Mexican people in their government.

Before I jump into some details, let me say a few words about the link between these two areas: the Rule of Law and Building Strong and Resilient Communities: The success of community programming is closely linked to rule of law. Rule of Law programs are intended to usher in a new, more efficient and effective justice system - increasing the likelihood that violent criminals will be convicted.

Community programming seeks to address the social and economic needs of communities in Mexico under threat by criminal organizations. Together, these efforts address the impunity that feeds the spiral of criminality and violence, and helps the Mexican state address citizen needs to break this cycle.

Now let me get into some more detail about the Rule of Law work: the program works comprehensively with seven select states, including the border states of Baja California, Chihuahua, and Nuevo Leon (others are Morelos, Oaxaca (wa-HA-ka), Hidalgo, and Durango) and we anticipate providing assistance to additional states as resources become available.

This program helps transition from an old style inquisitorial system, where judges consider evidence in chambers and the accused don't often have the right to confront witnesses, to a modern accusatorial system.

The experiences of Chile, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic have shown that this transition improves the efficiency of the judicial system, clearing out the backlog and allowing the judiciary to focus on serious cases. The transition

also enhances human rights because it is a more transparent system, less subject to corruption.

Justice sector activities in these states are already yielding results. For example, in the state of Chihuahua, where reforms have advanced to the stage that the new system is operating, criminal investigations are completed at a higher rate than in any other state.

Turning to building Strong and Resilient Communities, this past summer, USAID began two programs in Ciudad Juarez to assist communities in mapping crime and violence as well as providing viable, licit and healthy alternatives for youth.

One of our initial efforts is crime mapping. This is a USAID project implemented by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) in collaboration with the Ciudad Juarez Crime Observatory. The project recently completed a comprehensive baseline evaluation on the existing demographic, health, economic and social conditions in Juarez. As we develop this further, we will support Ciudad Juarez in identifying those specific neighborhoods and blocks particularly subject to crime and violence. The data have been shared with the GOM and posted online for use by the general public.

The program is now working with the Observatory to conduct awareness campaigns for the government and citizens at large, based on the information collected during the mapping exercise. At the same time, the program continues to strengthen the Observatory's data collection techniques and methodologies to ensure that they have the ability to continue this work after USAID's program ends. Drawing on lessons from U.S. cities, this crime mapping activity will help the government and civil society organizations of Ciudad Juarez prioritize where to target social and other investments to respond effectively to the risk factors identified by the Observatory.

Youth: Also in Juarez, USAID supports the International Youth Foundation (IYF), [who you'll hear from directly later on,] to provide safe spaces for disadvantaged young people, strengthening and expanding after school and summer programs, and preparing Mexican youth for viable futures through self or salaried employment.

For instance, in Ciudad Juarez, we're preparing youth for the 21st century by conducting skills training based on a market labor assessment. Our target is

that by the end of the project in September 2012, at least 500 at-risk youth aged 16-28, who were previously unemployed, will have obtained a full-time job. This was just kicked off by IYF on April 7th.

IYF has an active partnership with the Chihuahua Business Foundation, a philanthropic organization made up of businesses across the state of Chihuahua. IYF also partners with local organizations that implement the summer camp and after school programs. For every dollar USAID invests in this program, approximately \$3.4 dollars are leveraged from the Mexican Government (Public Education Secretary), private donors, foundations, and the local IYF implementing partners. This is a concrete demonstration of the political will in Mexico.

These activities of crime mapping and youth programming are an initial investment by USAID. We recently received additional funds focused specifically on strengthening communities. We're in the process of developing new programs as part of a broader bilateral effort to build stronger and more resilient communities that can withstand the pressures of crime and violence.

USAID will be working at the federal, state and local levels, with an initial focus on Ciudad Juarez, to support Mexican initiatives. The new activities will be in three broad areas:

(1) First, we want to work on increasing the capacity of federal institutions to develop policies, support local implementation and engage in strategic communications and outreach. This means supporting Mexicans in defining appropriate roles for federal versus state and local governments. One example would be helping the federal government carry out robust monitoring and evaluation to identify what works best in one region and should be scaled up elsewhere. It could also include dialogue with key stakeholders on crime and violence issues; technical studies; and targeted communications plans to support crime prevention.

(2) Second, we want to support state and local governments in responding to citizen needs regarding crime and violence. A fundamental part of this work is building on the crime mapping we've started, which will allow state and local government institutions to understand better where to target their resources so they can be effective in crime prevention and start to build greater citizen confidence in government. Activities include urban and municipal planning to identify challenges and opportunities; creation of a seed capital fund to support

crime prevention programs that address identified risk factors (lack of economic opportunity, domestic violence, lack of education, etc.); and a bond issuance program to help ensure sustainability.

(3) And third, recognizing the critical importance of specifically addressing at-risk youth who lack opportunities and are prey to gangs, we will develop focused investments to create alternatives for at-risk youth and prevent their involvement in criminal activity.

As I've noted, we've begun some of this work with youth already. To jumpstart these efforts in Mexico, USAID awarded 18 small grants totaling approximately \$1 million to local non-governmental organizations focusing on justice and security, trafficking in persons, human rights, and initiatives that address the violence and security issues in Ciudad Juarez.

As we expand on these initial efforts, we want to work with communities and local government and non-government institutions to create alternatives for at-risk youth. Activities may include expanding out-of-school programs; improving access to services for youth including mental health, education, and family planning; and providing technical and vocational educational services.

Even with all of these plans and strong commitment, we have to recognize that the challenges are formidable and won't be overcome overnight. They involve institutional change, strengthening communities, creating economic opportunities and above all, perseverance. The U.S. and USAID are committed to stay the course with Mexico to overcome these challenges because we know it will strengthen both nations.

In closing, I'd like to once again thank the Wilson Center for the opportunity to participate in this event..