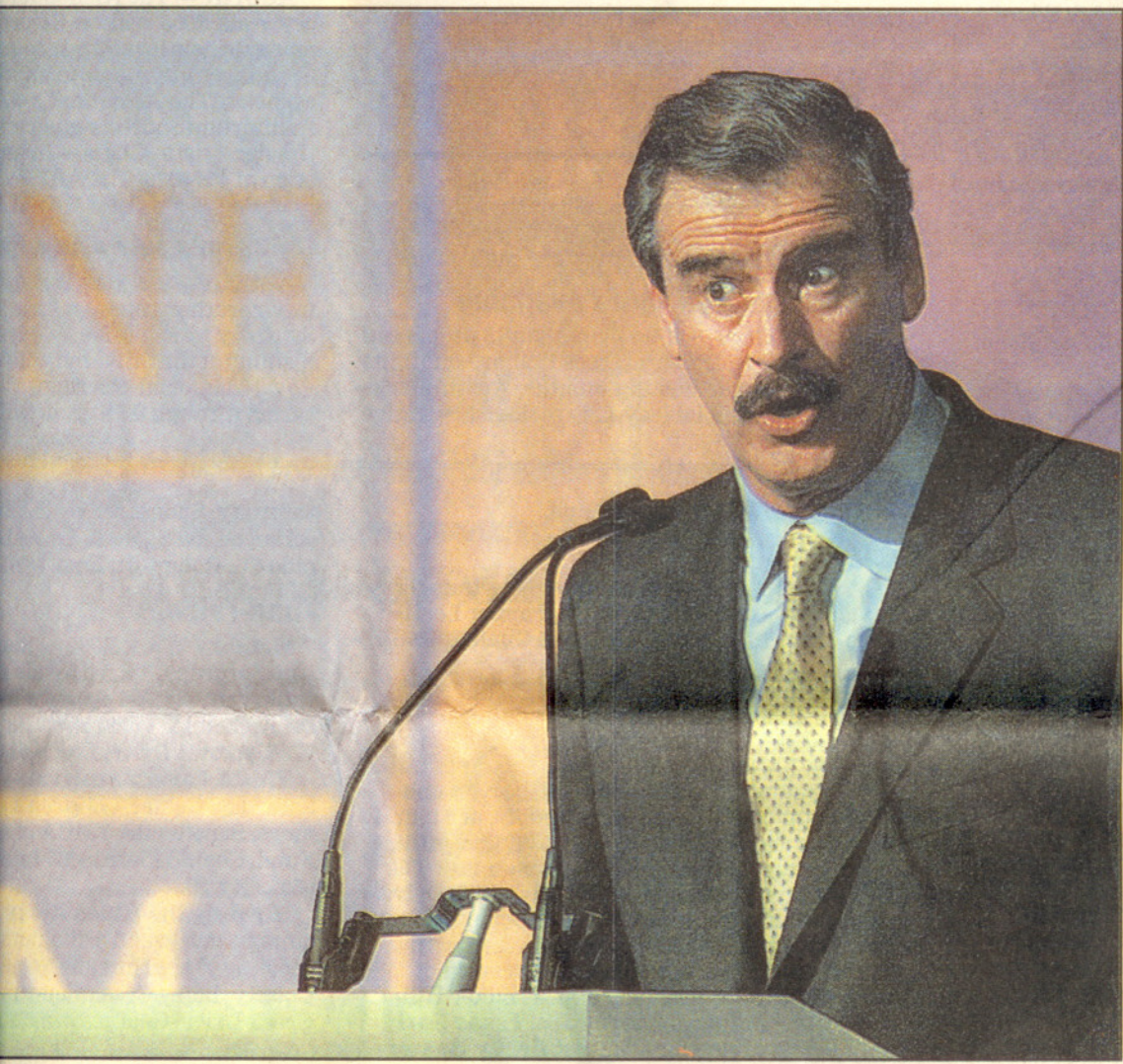


... the moment for a new American hemisphere and a new era of prosperity between our nations.'

VICENTE FOX, president-elect of Mexico

courts U.S. business



Brian K. Diggs/AA-S

Mexico's next chief outlines his agenda for prosperity

By DAVE HARMON
American-Statesman Staff

Mexican President-elect Vicente Fox was all business Thursday during a stop in Austin to address the Fortune 500 Forum, where he rolled out a rhetorical red carpet for the assembled U.S. corporate powers.

"Tonight, I am here not to talk about politics or foreign policy," Fox told the audience on the University of Texas campus as protesters chanted nearby. "I am here to do business."

Fox, who three months ago ended the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party's 71-year lock on power in what was hailed as Mexico's cleanest election ever, used his speech to lay out his vision to build a better Mexico and invited U.S. businesses to jump on for the ride.

"This is our moment, the Mexican moment, the moment for a new American hemisphere and a new era of prosperity between our nations," said Fox, whose National Action Party has long been seen as Mexico's most conservative and pro-business.

"We are a business government," he said. "We know what business is all about. We know what investors expect."

Fox said his government must cut red tape that hampers foreign investment, "demonopolize the Mexican economy" and encourage competition.

"The Mexican economy is wide open for investment," he said. "Any remaining bottleneck will be removed."

Fox, who will take office Dec. 1, has been on a whirlwind world tour since the July 2 election, visiting Europe, South America and Cuba this month alone.

In Austin, he was saluted by Lt. Gov. Rick Perry — w

... Fox knows barriers must be broken for U.S. businesses to take place. 'Any remaining bottleneck will be removed,' he assured corporate chiefs gathered at the Fortune 500 Forum at UT on Thursday.

Protesters at forum in downtown Austin

... cause maximum exposure. The coalition is made up of various activist groups with causes ranging from animal rights to corporate influence in government. All are marching in opposition to the Fortune 500 Forum being held in Austin through Saturday.

Although protesters do not have a parade permit for 4:30 p.m. — police issued a 6 p.m. permit — officers will not



Rodolfo Gonzalez/AA-S

Protesters gathered at the University of Texas to rail against the

Change is about to come to Mexico, Fox says

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called him "one of the most dynamic new leaders in the world today" — and protected by U.S. Secret Service agents and layers of Austin and university police.

Police put up barricades to keep protesters well away from Fox and the forum participants, who sat in a lavishly decorated tent at the foot of the UT Tower.

The three-day forum, which celebrated its 10th year, kicked off Thursday, bringing many of the country's top executives to Austin to talk business.

By the time Fox arrived, about 200 protesters, many wearing

bandanas over their faces, gathered behind the barriers. For more than two hours, they chanted in support of the Zapatista rebels in Mexico and in opposition to the corporations represented by the Fortune 500 group.

A few scaled trees on the West Mall, but the protest remained peaceful.

A former president of Coca-Cola Co. in Mexico and former governor of Guanajuato, Fox has laid out a bold agenda, pushing for open borders with the United States and vowing to end the government corruption that seems as entrenched as the ruling party once was.

Fox's announcement Wednesday that he will appoint an anti-corruption czar came on the heels of yet another national scandal. In a tape-recorded conversation broadcast nationally, Raul Salinas, the jailed brother of former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, claimed his brother moved tens of millions of dollars in public money to private accounts during his presidency.

Fox said things are about to change dramatically.

"On the first of December, the Mexican people will begin a great crusade against poverty, corruption, crime and despair," he said. "On the first of December, the

Mexican people will begin a great crusade in favor of free markets, jobs, opportunities, the environment, education and hope."

In recent years, robberies and kidnapping of tourists and foreign executives have clouded Mexico's reputation, but Fox stressed security several times in his speech, promising that U.S. investments, executives and employees would be safe during his six-year term in office.

Fox also said his administration will put more emphasis on education and give Mexican citizens

access to 12 years of schooling.

"Yes, Mexico must change," Fox said. "Change our economy, change our educational system, change our government, change our culture."

"For those of you with the courage and the vision to change with us, to roll up your sleeves and come help us build a new nation and a new hemisphere, we can work together to create the world's next success story."

Staff writer Jason Spencer contributed to this report.

Seeing is Believing!