



Guadalajara: Obama Backpedals on Change Information Pack on the North American Summit in Guadalajara

During the fifth North American Leaders Summit in Guadalajara, President Obama chose to backpedal on his stated commitment to change. Obama promised during his campaign (February 2008) that his meetings with the leaders of Mexico and Canada, “unlike similar summits under President Bush,” would be “transparent” and would involve “citizens, labor, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in setting the agenda and making progress.” By contrast, not only did the definition of this summit’s agenda not include civil society, the agenda was not even made public beforehand.

The summit’s outcome consistently reflected such disregard for civil society concerns. Mainstream media reported on Obama’s statements that the long-awaited overhaul of the broken U.S. migration system would be further delayed. Less reported was Obama’s suspension of the long-awaited overhaul of a treaty that has forced much migration: NAFTA. Obama’s refusal to even mention NAFTA during the summit is a major disappointment to people in the three countries who expected him to fulfill his campaign commitments to amend this and other free trade agreements. Retracting, two days before the summit Obama said that “given the weakened state of the U.S., Mexican and Canadian economies, this is not the time to reopen the NAFTA treaty for negotiations.” He missed the point: the very economic and financial deregulation policies contained in NAFTA have contributed to the present crisis, particularly in Mexico, whose economy is contracting worse than any other Latin American country. The economic crisis does not overshadow, but accentuates the need to renegotiate NAFTA.

Swine flu, another summit agenda item, also highlights the urgency of NAFTA renegotiation. While the three leaders gave collective pats-on-the-back for the handling of the swine flu outbreak, no mention was made of the epidemic’s causes. Evidence uncovered to date suggests a potential source of the flu: massive U.S.-owned hog raising operations in Mexico. Upon the implementation of NAFTA, the hog companies moved from the U.S. to Mexico so as to evade environmental and public health laws, permitting the large-scale disposal of untreated hog feces. Failing to address the trade model that facilitated this race to the bottom does not bode well for preventing future pandemics.

While saying little on trade, Obama said much on human rights. In a summit press conference, Obama backed Mexican President Calderon’s assertion that the Mexican government has a “strong commitment to protect the human rights of everybody...and anyone who says the contrary certainly would have to prove this -- any case, just one case, where the proper authority has not acted in a correct way.” Obama expressed “great confidence” that in Calderon’s ongoing antinarcotics assault, “human rights will be observed.” It is disappointing that Obama has ignored dozens of Mexican, U.S. and international human rights organizations that have repeatedly denounced the sixfold increase in human rights complaints since Calderon took office. Observing such an alarming upswing in violations amidst ongoing impunity, these organizations have asked the U.S. to withhold Merida Initiative funds destined to strengthen the Mexican military. Obama continued to turn a deaf ear to such concerns at the summit by reaffirming Merida Initiative support for Mexico’s failing “war on drugs.”

The summit did grant one partial victory: the outward failure of the Security and Prosperity Partnership, a failure made evident by the fact that the Presidents did not publicly mention the SPP name during the summit. Yet, SPP logic still persists in the trilateral relations. The Presidents’ joint summit declaration calls for “modern borders to facilitate trade and the smooth operation of supply chains, while protecting our security,” “protection of intellectual property rights,” and a commitment to continue “reducing unnecessary regulatory differences.” As in the SPP, the Presidents try to ameliorate the deregulation agenda with rhetoric like “[we will] ensure that the benefits of our economic relationship are widely shared and sustainable” and “we will seek to promote respect for labor rights and protection of the environment.” And how, we ask, if NAFTA is untouchable?

Given that the mainstream U.S. press decided to pay little attention to the Guadalajara summit, please see the following documentation to become better informed. The information is grouped as: a) input from civil society and legislators prior to the summit; b) official statements; and c) post-summit analysis and declarations.

In solidarity,

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Links to Documentation on Guadalajara Summit

A) INPUT FROM CIVIL SOCIETY AND LEGISLATORS PRIOR TO THE SUMMIT

Legislators' Task Force on Renegotiating NAFTA Seek New Fair Trade Model for North America

<http://peterjulian.ndp.ca/node/826>

Tri-National Union Declaration on the Occasion of the NAFTA Leaders Summit

<http://www.canadianlabour.ca/sites/clc/files/Trinational-Declaration-2009-08-07.pdf>

An Open Letter To Prime Minister Stephen Harper (from Canadian organizations)

http://www.commonfrontiers.ca/Single_Page_Docs/SinglePage_1col_docs/Aug06_09_OpenLetterHarper.html

Letter from more than 100 Mexican organizations to North American leaders (in Spanish), delivered to the US Embassy in Mexico

<http://www.anec.org.mx/publico/noticias/carta-entregada-en-la-embajada-de-estado-unidos>

Letter to Obama re NAFTA and Guadalajara Meeting from North American networks

<http://www.art-us.org/blogs/letter-obama-re-nafta-and-guadalajara-meeting>

B) OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

“Obama says this is not the time to reopen NAFTA”

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N07416487.htm>

Joint Statement by North American Leaders

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Press-Conference-by-President-Obama-President-Calderon-of-Mexico-and-Prime-Minister-Harper-of-Canada/

North America Leaders' Summit: Energy Deliverables

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/North-American-Leaders-Summit-Energy-Deliverables/

North American Leaders' Declaration on H1N1

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/North-American-Leaders-Declaration-on-H1N1/

Transcript to Leaders' Press Conference in Guadalajara

<http://thepage.time.com/transcript-guadalajara-press-conference/>

C) POST-SUMMIT ANALYSIS AND DECLARATIONS

Guadalajara March Against the SPP and NAFTA Part 1 10 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyKSPZxAdfg>

Guadalajara March Against the SPP and NAFTA Part 2 6:68 minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSW7psqJaq0&feature=related>

“Altermundistas: la cumbre de líderes ignoró la agenda del pueblo”

http://www.proceso.com.mx/noticias_articulo.php?articulo=71328

“Same old false solutions and short-sighted North American vision from Guadalajara summit, say Canadian civil society organizations”

<http://www.canadians.org/media/DI/2009/11-Aug-09.html>

“Canada, United States and Mexico Leaders Declaration on Climate Change and Clean Energy falls short on needed changes”

<http://www.canadians.org/media/energy/2009/11-Aug-09.html>

Interview with Amy Goodman in Democracy Now: “Obama reverses campaign pledge to renegotiate NAFTA”

http://i4.democracynow.org/2009/8/11/obama_reverses_campaign_pledge_to_renegotiate