

## **2010: After the Crisis, the Security Challenge**

### **Report of the UN Resident Coordinator in Mexico Magdy Martínez Solimán**

#### **Economic, political and social situation**

2010, the bicentenary of the Independence and the centenary of the Revolution in Mexico, was noted as a year of recovery in the economy and employment after the severe downturn imposed on the country by the global crisis. It was a year in which the true dimension of the security challenge Mexico faces became evident, and also a period in which gubernatorial elections in one third of the states showed the degree of uncertainty in the Mexican political scenario with regards to the 2012 presidential elections.

Even though some of the social strata have not yet perceived the dividends of emerging from the crisis, especially amongst the “new poor” created by rising food prices and the loss of formal-sector jobs, the rekindling of production activity, the creation of more than 700,000 jobs with benefits and growth around 5%, with the likelihood of continuity in the near future, opened up the possibility of restoring poverty levels to figures reported prior to the economic collapse. In short, the current six-year administration in Mexico could end up with good macro figures and a noticeable impact on the more vulnerable social levels.

According to ECLAC, Mexico's real GDP grew 5.3%, after contracting by 6.4% in 2009. This recovery in economic activity is essentially powered by robust exports. Inflation was at 4.2% at the end of the year, which is lower than for the previous year (5.3%) and the unemployment level was the lowest in Latin America (5%). Nevertheless, despite a miniscule public deficit (2% of the GDP, the lowest in the OECD), Mexico's weak fiscal pressure is still one of the major hurdles that have to be overcome in order to finance development. With the exception of Guatemala, Mexico is in the last place in tax collection among the nations in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 9.4% of the Gross Domestic Product versus the regional average of 18.4%. There has been a downward trend in tax revenues over the last two decades, from 11.4% in 1990 to 9.4% in 2010, in the opposite direction to the other great economy – the 35.5% collected in Brazil.

According to data submitted by the National Council for the Assessment of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), in four years the ranks of the poor increased by 8.3 million, to be added to the 44.7 million Mexicans below the poverty line inherited by the current administration in 2006. With 53 million poor people in one of the most open and dynamic economies of the region, and one that generates

capital dividends, Mexico exhibits its duality and social polarization; a good country to do business, but also a country where half the population does not earn enough to afford the package of basic needs, including food, clothing and footwear, decent housing with electricity and clean water. Their earnings are insufficient to support and cover expenses associated with health and education. A comparison of the poverty incidence by income in the general population and the population under the age of 18 reveals that children and adolescents are disproportionately more affected by poverty than the rest of the population and that, additionally, poverty has increased for this population group in recent years at a slightly faster rate than for the total of the underprivileged population. Among the country's children and adolescents, the multidimensional poverty figure totaled 53.3% in 2010, which is equal to 20.8 million people under 18. In the same year, 13.1% of the population from zero to 17 years of age, that is, 5.1 million people were in a state of extreme multidimensional poverty; the figure for the general population was 10.5%.

With programs like Oportunidades, an unprecedented public health drive in Mexico with the Seguro Popular (health insurance for the uninsured), the creation of massive hospital infrastructure and an attempt at educational reform, the Federal and State governments have tried to draw up responses for the less privileged population. Nevertheless, and according to the Research Center of the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, it will take eight to ten years to create the jobs required to provide employment for the sector forced into poverty by the crisis, at the current rate of employment creation. Despite being positive, the job creation rate will not be sufficient to absorb the demographic bonus of young Mexicans appearing every year in the labour market until 2020, who may resort to emigration like their older cohorts or seek other alternatives to prosper.

The second everyday element in Mexico's social life over 2010 was the worsening of the public security situation; this problem is now at the forefront of the population's concerns. The figures speak for themselves. According to the Office of the Presidency, during this administration more than 34,612 deaths have been registered in the fight against drug trafficking, of which 15,273 occurred in 2010. Additionally, approximately 1,066 deaths of under-18 year olds have been reported since the start of the crackdown on organized crime. The legacy of violent crime already existed in Mexico, with some 9,000 deaths related to drug-trafficking during the preceding Fox administration. Nevertheless, the escalating violence combined with rising police efficiency in the capture of drug lords and in seizing drugs shipments, money and precursors used by drug traffickers, have created a public image inside and outside the country, of a nation marred by violence. In a similar vein, it should be noted that the crimes happen in cities and distribution and shipment corridors currently being disputed by the drug cartels, with the additional appearance of new confrontation and killing scenarios like Acapulco. There is no widespread violence nationwide.

Although the Mexican government is actively fighting impunity as part of the combat against drug trafficking and organized crime, other manifestations of violence have started to spread to the less-protected sectors of society and to political activities. The population groups most vulnerable to violence are the same groups facing the greatest challenges in terms of development. This year there have been dramatic cases of violence perpetrated by hit men working for the drug traffickers targeting youths in rehabilitation centers, attacking migrant groups unwilling to pay extortion to “coyotes” and other human traffickers. This is related to and part of the organized crime’s diversification strategies. Other frequent victims have been human rights defenders, bystanders caught in the crossfire, political leaders like the kidnapping (followed by release after a supposed payment of the ransom) of a former presidential candidate of the ruling party and the relatives of victims who proactively demand justice given the inefficiency of the local judicial system. Terrifying cases like the 72 migrants murdered in Tamaulipas, the young assassin aged 14 with a resume of three years in organized crime and the confession to at least 4 slit-throat killings and the murder of the human rights activist Marisela Escobedo are flagrant examples of drug-related violence extending beyond organized crime circles, and now leaving its scars on other scenarios of national life.

Crimes against female human rights defenders are becoming more frequent given the absence of due legal process and the vulnerability of being geographically located in far-away states. In contrast with the positions of a responsible segment of public officials, judicial authorities and news media, some continue uttering misogynist messages about the victims that resurrect gender stereotypes and make the activists share alleged guilt in the attacks they have been victims of. Unfortunately, femicide is making a comeback in Mexico. The frequency of murders targeting women is accompanied by culturally permissive and exculpatory discourses; the same reaction can be seen in recurrent incidents of women being raped that have become more common in some of the country’s states. In 2010, Mexico also witnessed a series of political assassinations (various local candidates, a gubernatorial candidate for the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), a former governor, the aforementioned kidnapping of the former presidential candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos and the first impeachment of a federal deputy under investigation for drug ties).

Despite the apparent gap between the three most important political forces; the ruling center-right PAN, the leading opposition party PRI, and the left (and fragmented) PRD, there is no clearly defined alternative to the economic and social policy model proposed by the federal government. This is illustrated by their joint effort in the 2011 budget that was passed by a congress where the president’s party does not hold a majority. The combination of market policies, cautious spending, macroeconomic balance, unfettered trade, subsidies for traditional sectors (water,

farming, oil) and low tax rates (the second lowest in the region) is padded by conditioned cash transfers to the poor and the tolerance of the mighty trade union establishment (teachers, oil and mine workers). Notwithstanding their traditional power, the Government decided to dissolve the second largest state-owned electricity company that operated in the capital and center of the country, and witnessed the bankruptcy of Mexico's second most important airline. While in socioeconomic matters there is no fundamental alternative proposed by the major opposition parties, neither is there a consensus on security policy and strategies. On the contrary, such parties have voiced their disagreement with the use of the country's armed forces to fight drug trafficking, and prevented President Calderon's efforts from succeeding, to unify the more than 2,000 police corps, many of which are local, under a single command in each state of the country. Dialogues with civil society have not had the desired results either, beyond opening the debate to the public opinion.

There were 12 gubernatorial elections in 2010. The PRI recovered three governments (Zacatecas, Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala) and lost another three (Oaxaca, Puebla and Sinaloa). The left and right (anti-PRI) coalition, PRD and PAN, proved to be a successful strategy to dislodge the PRI in states that were traditionally governed by it and where there had been no political transition since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The PRI labeled these alliances "unnatural" and predicted much greater difficulties in the future when it would come to implementing coherent government action and composing cabinets from diametrically opposed political positions. The parties that make up the alliance will try to repeat the formula in those States where they cannot defeat an incumbent PRI by themselves, such as, for example the State of Mexico (Estado de México), the most densely populated state in the country. These alliances could set the electoral strategy for the presidential elections in 2012.

For Mexico, the year 2010 also marked the commemoration of the Independence Bicentenary and the Centenary of the Revolution, which were discreetly celebrated by the government without major expenditure, in deference to the scenario of budget austerity and the economic crisis. Various public works planned to mark this celebration were not completed but should be finished during the course of 2011, or were plainly discarded. Some spaces for reflection on the future of Mexico were taken up at an academic, intellectual and political level, without triggering a wide scale national debate.

## **Progress on the United Nations reform**

The United Nations reform seeks to preserve the balance between various UN entities in order to reach common goals, such as peace and international security, the promotion of economic and social development, disarmament and respect for human rights, among others. Additionally, there is an effort to harmonize and simplify the Organization's activities by clearly defining each office or agency's mandate within the UN System. This effort is called "United in Action": it should enable the Member States to receive an integrated and valuable service from the agencies resident in each country, and the conformation of a true United Nations "System". Various initiatives in Mexico have progressed in this direction.

Move to UN Common Premises in Mexico (8 Agencies and Departments).

Consolidation and coordinated work of 10 UN agencies in the UN Office in the State of Chiapas.

Support to Mexico in holding the World Youth Conference and the International Youth Year celebrations.

Support in holding the World Forum on Migration and Development.

Coordination of security benchmark practices amongst UN agencies.

Celebration of International days with the coordinated participation of System Agencies (besides other days celebrated individually by the corresponding Agencies):

- UN Day 2010
- Event of the Presidency of the Republic to celebrate the International Woman's Day in the city of Tlaxcala and the UN's own International Woman's Day event
- International Democracy Day
- Peacekeeping Personnel Day
- International Tolerance Day
- World Environment Day
- World AIDS Day
- World Day against Homophobia
- World Food Day
- Commemoration of Holocaust Victims
- World Water Day at the Presidential Compound "Los Pinos"
- National Day against Discrimination at the Presidential Compound "Los Pinos"

Publication of the book on the Visits made by the United Nations Secretary-General to Mexico

Design and launch of the new UN System's Internet site in Mexico

Presentation of the Secretary-General's report on International Migration and Development

Forum on Food Security Strategies

Organization of the Exhibition on "Mexico, the United Nations and the Environment" (MUNEEEX)

Response by Mexico and the Agencies to the Haitian crisis

Designation of Mexico City as Latin American Culture Capital for 2010.

Funeral mass for María Antonieta Castillo, a Mexican official at the UN who died in the Haiti earthquake, and the posthumous awarding of the Dag Hammarskjöld medal by the Secretary-General

Arrival briefing for Mr. Roberto Albisetti, IFC representative in Mexico, and Mr. Heitor Matallo, UNCCD representative in Mexico

Attendance to the Conference titled "International Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" given by Mr. Carl Bildt, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden and the International Seminar on European Union Cooperation with the presence of the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs

Monthly coordination with OECD, Iberoamerican Secretariat and OAS

Support the launching of the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking

Participation in the first National Rotary Conference on Human Development

Presentation by Foreign Ministry officers of the Mexican International Cooperation System for Development (SIMEXCID)

Support for the visit of the following UN Senior Managers:

Ms Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General

Mr. Antonio María Costa, Director General of UNODC

Ms Inés Alberdi, Executive Director of UNIFEM

Mr. Joan Clos i Matheu, Executive Director of UN HABITAT

Mr. Kandeh K. Yumkella, Director General of UNIDO  
Ms Gladys Acosta, Head of UNIFEM for Latin America and the Caribbean  
Ms Margarita Astrágala, Regional Director of the UNEP for Latin America and the Caribbean  
Ms Martha Juárez, UNHCR Director for the Americas.  
Ms Dagmar Schumacher, UNV Division Head of Alliances and Communication.

Opening the new ILO offices with the presence of Mr. Jean Maninat, Regional Director of the ILO for Latin America and the Caribbean

Development of the study of the United Nations' role in middle income countries

Seminary on Climate Change with Ambassadors of the European Union and Resident Coordinators of the United Nations in Latin America and the Caribbean

Independence Declaration Ceremony at the National Palace

Ceremony to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1985 earthquake

Presence in the delivery of the government's fourth national address in the National Palace

### **Progress concerning the UNDAF**

Regarding the UNDAF, work is being done on various fronts in order to comply with the goals and results established in the priorities and objectives set forth in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The following activities had an impact on the results foreseen in the UNDAF:

#### *Joint Programs*

In 2010, the United Nations System in Mexico continued to implement the two joint programs of the MDG Fund and the joint program involving UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Ministry of Public Education titled "Construye-T". Additionally, the implementation of the following joint programs was started:

"Construction and Assessment of an Integral Model to Prevent Gender Violence in Indigenous Communities in Mexico with an Intercultural Approach" financed by the MDTF to eradicate violence against women (a fund administered by UNIFEM)

"Strengthening of the preparation process for REDD+ in Mexico and to promote South-South Cooperation" financed by the Norwegian government and executed by the National Forestry Commission CONAFOR (SEMARNAT, Ministry of Environment), FAO and UNDP.

## *UNAIDS*

In 2010, under the Presidency of UNDP, the UNAIDS Task Force in Mexico worked in coordination with governmental counterparts and civil society organizations. It currently takes part in CONASIDA (National Council for the Prevention and Control of AIDS). UNFPA took over the Presidency of the Group at the beginning of 2011.

### *Interagency Human Rights Group*

The Interagency Human Rights Group (GIDH) presided by UNHCHR and the Indigenous Peoples subgroup presided by UNDP, focused their activities on the following issues:

- 1) Promotion of the Basic Human Rights Course for UN officers (on interactive CD) in UN-Mexico. It was distributed to all UN agencies and the Interactive CD was presented to 13 agencies, departments and programmes of the UNS.
- 2) A website on Indigenous Peoples and the work done by GIDH in this regard was activated and has been kept up-to-date
- 3) At the request of the RC and the GIDH, links were established with the State Employees Social Security Institute (ISSSTE) to provide input for a documentary prepared by this institution to disseminate human rights among its personnel. The script of the documentary was modified in accordance with the GIDH observations.

### *Maternal Mortality Observatory*

The MMO dates back to May 2009, when the Mexican government under the leadership of the Health Ministry presented a new strategy to reduce maternal mortality rates, declaring its commitment with Goal #5 of the Millennium Development Goals. Public institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society, academic and research institutions and international organizations agreed on the need to increase efforts to reach the goals proposed. In 2010 the MMO started operations and was publicly presented in the first semester of 2011.

### *Interagency Gender Group*

The Gender Interagency Group (GIG) presided by ECLAC was later coordinated by UN-Habitat at the end of 2010. During the year, this group's work focused on the following activities:

1) The maternal mortality Task Force's activities were supervised, especially as regards the establishment of the Maternal Mortality Observatory in Mexico.

2) Funds were raised through contributions made by UNHCR, ECLAC, the Coordination Office, IOM, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF and UNODC in order to finance the "Strategy to strengthen implementation capacities of the gender approach in the work environment of the United Nations in Mexico".

3) Progress was made in starting the project titled *Construction and Assessment of an Integral Model to Prevent Gender Violence in Indigenous Communities in Mexico from an Intercultural Approach*.

4) The United Nations System in Mexico voiced a common position concerning access to legal pregnancy termination

5) There was a round table on indicators of violence against women organized by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in order to discuss the feasibility of a single system of indicators

#### *Interagency Communications Group (ComGroup)*

The Interagency Communications Group (ComGroup) presided by UNIC (DPI) made significant progress during 2010 in the consolidation of interagency work regarding communications allowing the Country Team to make more coherent and efficient collective use of the numerous communication opportunities that arose during the year for the UN System.

#### *Disasters and Risk Reduction*

In 2010, with the support of the National Disaster Risk Advisor (NDRA) of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), contributions were made from the Resident Coordinator's Office, the UNETT group coordinated by ECLAC and the Country Team in terms of timely assistance concerning preparation for disasters, the establishment of humanitarian partnerships at the country level and participation in international humanitarian missions, as in the case of the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010.

### *International Conference on Localising MDGs*

In 2010, as part of the MDG strategy, UNCDF and UNDP staged the International Conference on Localising the Millennium Development Goals, “Local Agendas for Human Development” which took place in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. This Conference was chaired by Ms Rebeca Grynspan, Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Associate Administrator of the UNDP and Mr. Juan Sabines Guerrero, Governor of the State of Chiapas. The results of this conference were used as an input for discussions in the World Summit on the Millennium Goals held in September 2010, as well as for national and regional reports on compliance with the MDG and for the UNDP-UNCDF global program.

### *Cooperation between UNOPS and the Government of Chiapas*

In December 2010, at the request of the State Government of Chiapas and after holding a series of conversations with representatives of the state government, the UN Resident Coordinator in Mexico and the Regional Director of the United Nations Office for Projects Services (UNOPS) signed a project to foster quality and transparency in public health construction works in the State of Chiapas.

### *UN Country Team meetings*

In 2010, 10 monthly meetings of the UN Country Team were held with an average attendance of 19 agency representatives. Ten monthly meetings of the Security Management Team were also held in which MOSS and MORSS were approved, a zone warden system established and the new system of security levels endorsed.

### **Key aspects of the 2011 work plan**

Key aspects of the 2011 Work Plan will allow the Country Team to do its work more efficiently and have greater impact as a harmonized United Nations System. This includes:

As regards the Millennium Declaration’s implementation and support:

1. Supervision of the Chiapas-UN agenda in order to attain the MDGs
2. Implementation of the Maternal Mortality Observatory
3. Establishment of relationships with new State Governments to accelerate the MDGs locally and to open cooperation frameworks for UN agencies

In terms of the design, implementation and assessment of joint programs:

1. Supervision and participation in the implementation of the joint project titled “Construction and Assessment of an Integral Model to Prevent Gender Violence in Indigenous Communities in Mexico from an Intercultural Approach”.

2. Monitoring and participation in the implementation of the joint Water and Sanitation (MDG-F) program.
3. Monitoring and participation in the implementation of the joint program on peace construction for displaced communities in the State of Chiapas (MDG-F).
4. Monitoring and participation in the implementation of the second phase of the joint program to support youths studying in high school to develop their life projects and to prevent drug use; Construye-T.

Undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of the 2011 work plan is the start of the country programming process. The final assessment of the current UNDAF is scheduled for 2011 along with the formulation of a new Common Country Assessment (CCA), which, depending on the political cycle and the programming of agencies, may also be implemented in 2012. The establishment of a jointly-agreed and correctly focused integral CCA will mark the work of the Coordination Office for 2011 and take the first step towards building a UNDAF for the period 2013-2018.

The role of interagency groups and the support for such groups' working plans is another key point in the coordination office's 2011 work plan. Concerning the United Nations Reform, the support for the smooth operation of the new Joint Offices of the United Nations Agencies in Mexico, will undoubtedly be one of the other key aspects in 2011. Additionally, with the support of the NDRA and the UNETT Group, work of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) will continue.

Finally, it is important to emphasize the design and implementation of the communication and visibility strategies. In this regard, the following points will be key factors in the Resident Coordinator Office's work.

1. Maintenance of the website for the United Nations System in Mexico.
2. Publications concerning the United Nations System in Mexico
3. Organization of press conferences and events related to international UN days.
4. Support to Non-Resident Agencies in their work in Mexico