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## **U.S.-mexico Free Trade Agreement Debate: Recent Expressions Of Optimism, Support**

*by Steven Ranieri*

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In statements to reporters on Nov. 7, American Association of Bankers chief Mark Paden predicted that trade between Mexico and the US will double in two years following the implementation of the free trade agreement. He said, "free trade between these countries is inevitable, not only because it is convenient for both, but because there are positive elements on both sides that permit it and require it." Tomas Tarnoz, president of the Mexican shoe manufacturers association, recently told reporters that a US-Mexico accord would resolve problems currently limiting footwear exports. In the past eight years, footwear sales abroad have dropped from 350 million pairs to 100 million. Tarnoz said the major causes of the industry's export problems are smuggling, underinvoicing by competitors, and illegal trade practices by potential importer nations. The national government's accelerated trade liberalization policies have negatively impacted on the footwear industry. Leather and footwear industry output in the second quarter of 1990 was down 30.1% compared to fourth quarter 1989. According to a recent report by Business Week, the pros for a free trade accord with Mexico are providing the US with a reliable source of oil, and providing Washington with greater influence in Mexican political stability. Other positive aspects are US access to cheap labor, and the rapidly expanding Mexican market, both for investments and exports. (Sources: El Financiero, 11/06/90, 11/08/90; El Nacional, 10/11/90, 10/15/90, 11/06/90, 11/08/90)

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