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Mexican Political Parties Reach Accord On Campaign Reforms

by LADB Staff

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On Jan. 27, eight Mexican political parties reached an agreement to implement major reforms to the country's electoral process. The agreement dubbed the "Twenty Commitments" was drafted by representatives of civic coalitions, business organizations, and other sectors. The accord was signed by high-level representatives of the eight parties and endorsed by presidential candidates Luis Donaldo Colosio of the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Cuauhtemoc Cardenas of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD), and Diego Fernandez de Cevallos of the National Action Party (PAN). Popular Socialist Party (PPS) leaders declined to sign the accord, citing a lack of support for the agreement among the party's members.

The "Twenty Commitments" consist of pledges to undertake reforms, and do not carry the force of law. Still, analysts say the agreement represents a historic commitment by the key political parties to support clean and fair elections. "Recent national political events and the preservation of domestic peace make a political accord for guaranteeing clean elections next Aug. 21 even more urgent today," reads the opening text of the pact.

First on the list of 20 commitments is a pledge to conduct a "legitimate and transparent" election in which the vote is respected. Another key proposal is to seek a commitment from Mexican newspapers and television to cover electoral campaigns in a more balanced manner. This proposal also requests that news media clearly identify "paid" political advertisements. Among other measures, the accord proposes greater autonomy for the government-funded National Human Rights Commission (Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CNDH) to investigate allegations of abuses committed in connection with electoral campaigns. In announcing the agreement, Interior (Gobernacion) Secretary Jorge Carpizo MacGregor said the Mexican Chamber of Deputies and Senate might be called on to codify the reforms into law.

For "a just and lasting peace...a necessary condition is that democracy advances with an impartial [presidential] election in 1994, one that is accepted by the citizens and the political forces of Mexico," Carpizo said. On a related matter, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari put an end to widespread speculation that the PRI would seek to replace its current presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, with Manuel Camacho Solis, who has gained prominence in his role as chief government negotiator in the conflict in Chiapas. Salinas described Colosio as the candidate that will bring a "democratic victory" to the PRI in the Aug. 21 presidential election. On the other hand, he also praised Camacho for his "loyalty" to the presidency and to Mexico.

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