



**Remarks by Ms. Louise Arbour,
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Mexico City, 6 February 2008**

Signature of the Agreement between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Mexico

Check Against Delivery

It is with great pleasure that I am once again visiting Mexico and honored by the invitation extended by its Government.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Mexico's commitment to the advancement of human rights standards at the international level. In this regard, I would also like to underscore the leadership role that Mexico played as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, particularly while holding its Presidency, during a delicate but successful period of negotiations on the new working mechanisms and modalities for the functioning of the Council.

I am particularly pleased by the Government's interest and willingness to continue its cooperation with my Office, formalized through the signing of this agreement for the continuation of the presence and activities of my Country Office in Mexico, which was established in 2002. The agreement provides clear definitions and priorities for the continuation of our assistance to national efforts in promoting and protecting human rights.

The cooperation between my Office and Mexico has already produced concrete and encouraging results. Among the most significant ones let me mention the 2003 National Assessment of the Human Rights Situation in Mexico, which served as the basis for the preparation of the National Human Rights Programme for the 2004-2006 period. These exercises are widely considered as two key steps towards the establishment of a State policy based on human rights.

I would also like to highlight the close working relations that my Office has established with the Federal Congress, in order to promote the integration of human rights standards into national legislation, and with the Supreme Court of Justice, which has also requested technical assistance on human rights issues.

Under the framework of the Agreement that we are signing today, my Office will work in close cooperation with all those in Government as well as in civil society, both at the federal and at state levels, who are engaged in the advancement of all human rights for all in this country.

Initiatives under way to strengthen human rights protection in the Constitution, and to reform substantially the criminal justice sector, are very important. Through these and through the development of a new National Human Rights Action Plan, I hope to see the whole range of international human rights standards that Mexico has ratified fully reflected in its Constitution, its federal and state legislation and the day-to-day practice of all State agents. These reforms must also meet the legitimate expectations of the public that democratic institutions will provide justice, in a society truly based on the Rule of Law.

I am very encouraged by the determination expressed by President Calderón to promote the highest human rights standards in Mexico. I look forward to our on-going cooperation, and I reiterate my commitment, and that of my colleagues both in our Mexico office and in Geneva to assist the Government and civil society in addressing challenges and embracing opportunities for a life in security and freedom for all in Mexico.

Thank you.