

## OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

In March 2005, the Leaders of Canada, Mexico, and the United States launched the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) as a trilateral effort to increase security and enhance prosperity among the three countries through greater cooperation and information sharing while respecting the sovereignty, laws, unique heritage, and culture of each country.

At their 2006 Summit, the North American Leaders recognized that to accelerate progress under the SPP they would benefit from direct advice from the private sector. So business leaders from all three countries were encouraged to form the North American Competitiveness Council (NACC). In the United States, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Council of the Americas jointly serve as the Secretariat. The Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) serves as the Secretariat in Canada and the Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad (IMCO) serves as the Secretariat in Mexico.

While the NACC was expected to primarily develop recommendations on issues concerning North American competitiveness to be addressed by governments, the NACC was also challenged to provide suggestions on how the private sector might itself be part of the solution.

In February 2007, the trilateral NACC submitted an initial report to security and prosperity ministers, making a total of 51 recommendations for actions in three areas, both within and building upon the SPP: border crossing facilitation; standards and regulatory cooperation; and energy integration. These recommendations were organized into three time frames: those that can be accomplished immediately, those that can be accomplished before the end of 2008, and those that will require additional time to address, with a goal of completion by 2010.

These trilateral recommendations were the product of many months of consultations and deliberations by hundreds of companies, sectoral associations, and chambers of commerce throughout North America.

The NACC met with Prime Minister Harper, President Calderón, and President Bush during the North American Leaders' Summit in Montebello, Quebec in August 2007. The first *Report to Leaders* was presented, outlining progress on the 51 recommendations for action. Several of the NACC's key recommendations were endorsed by the Leaders in Montebello, including the proposals for a Regulatory Cooperation Framework, an Intellectual Property Action Strategy, a Trilateral Agreement for Cooperation in Energy Science and Technology, and a North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza. Additionally, the

Summit produced significant progress across a range of policy areas that are vital to the prosperity and competitiveness of North America.

The NACC met again with security and prosperity ministers in February 2008 in Los Cabos, Mexico, to review progress on the NACC recommendations and the five priorities identified by Leaders in Montebello, including enhancing the global competitiveness of North America; safe food and products; sustainable energy and the environment; smart and secure borders; and emergency management and preparedness. In April 2008, the NACC delivered its second *Report to Leaders* in a meeting with Prime Minister Harper, President Calderón, and President Bush during the North American Leaders' Summit in New Orleans, where they reviewed progress on the recommendations and established priorities for further collaboration.

In August 2008, Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. representatives of the NACC Secretariat organizations met once again with the prosperity ministers responsible for the SPP as part of their Ministerial in Atlanta, on the margins of the Americas Competitiveness Forum. The discussion focused on balancing cross-border security considerations with legitimate international trade that is of vital importance to the economies of our three countries, as well as the path for continued efforts moving forward and making further progress on the recommendations.