

Looking at 2021: From crisis to opportunities

Timing shown in CST (GMT-6 hours)

Public program as of October 28, 2020

Sunday 08 November	
16:00 - 16:15	<p>Welcoming remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miguel Alemán Velasco, Chairman of the Mexico Business Summit, Mexico • Quirino Ordaz Coppel, Governor of Sinaloa, Mexico
16:15 – 17:00	<p>Keynote Address</p> <p>“Looking at 2021: From crisis management to leveraging opportunities”</p> <p>Keynote Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón, Foreign Affairs Secretary, Mexico <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lorenzo Lazo Margain, Managing Partner, Alemán Velasco y Asociados, Mexico
17:15-18:15	<p>A Post Covid Global economy and the implications for Mexico</p> <p>All outlooks for the global economy are painting quite a dire picture with a long-lasting global recession and the GDP of all significant economies not getting back to the 2019 level before early 2022 for the best performing countries, if not 2023, or even later for many others. In October, the IMF forecasted a 4.4% global economic contraction this year. Debt to GDP ratios are “going through the roof” for most economies, while unemployment is rising and monetary policies are getting into uncharted territory in the US, Europe and Japan. The only country which will register positive growth this year is China with an increase of GDP expected to be in the range of 2-3%. Total uncertainty about the evolution of the pandemic is bearing heavily on expectations about the timing, pace and depth of any sustainable global recovery. In June, the IMF forecasted that Mexico’s GDP would shrink 10.5% this year making it the hardest hit Latin American country, and the most optimist are for a 6% decrease in GDP this year. Some economists worry that emerging markets are descending into stagnation because of the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking into account the latest developments on the pandemic and economic fronts what kind of level of economic activity at the global level can we expect for 2021? • Mexico central Bank is forecasting an optimistic 4.1% GDP growth for 2021, what fundamentals need to be in place for this to happen? • Looking specifically at the US and its importance for Mexico’s economy, what can be realistically expected in 2021? • As the dollar may be losing steam, what are the implications for Mexico?
18:15-18:30	Break
18:30-19:45	What do the results of the US presidential election mean for Mexico
19:45-20:00	Break
20:00-21:00	A status report on the pandemic: A global and Mexico focused outlook. What prospects for a vaccine?

Monday 09 November	
08:30-09:30	<p>Readjusting global supply chains: What “nearshoring” opportunities for Mexico? What actions to extend the country’s role as a major hub in reshaping global supply chains</p> <p>The combined impact of the US-China trade war, the new emphasis on environment concerns and the need to reduce carbon footprint as well as the increasing costs of production in China and the experience of disruptions of supplies during the initial phase of the global pandemic are prompting MNCs to review their supply chains. Notions such as nearshoring and “Just in case...” becoming as important as “Just in time...” are now part of the approach of business leaders. However, this doesn’t mean that American or European MNCs are ready to leave China as a production base or as a market. The country and its gigantic potential remain too crucial for their future. What is happening is rather a diversification of supply chains to reduce the dependency on only one source of supplies. In that respect, the efforts and pressures of the Trump administration on US companies to repatriate their operations to the US are proving unsuccessful, as creating new supply chains in the US where manufacturing activities represent only 12.5% of GDP is very difficult, takes a lot of time and is extremely expensive. Only 6% of US companies which plan to leave China or which are diversifying their supply chains consider relocating in the US. This is where Mexico has a significant card to play as the country offers a number of very important elements and assets which make it a destination of choice for nearshoring to the US.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of production costs Mexico is about at the same level than other Asian countries. It has also the advantage of the USMCA agreement. How to leverage more these assets? • At the same time how to develop even more Mexico as a platform for Chinese and Indian companies looking at getting closer to the US market, while adding to the potentialities of the Mexican market? • Beyond sectors such as the automotive aerospace and medical devices which attract most foreign companies what other sectors could Mexico develop or highlight as very promising for MNCs looking at the country as an important element in their reorganized supply chains?
08:30-09:30	<p>Making AI a full enabler of economic growth and social development</p> <p>Mexico is one of the only two Latin American countries, along with Uruguay, to have developed an AI strategy. Ai adoption has taken place already in a number of industries from financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, at various paces depending on the sectors, with companies having benefited from using AI to perform routine tasks involving language and pattern recognition, automate low judgement, repetitive, back office processes. However, AI development needs to go beyond adoption by companies moving towards Industry 4.0. Last year, Tec de Monterrey launched Mexico’s first AI HUB in the Tec’s campus in Guadalajara to apply AI solutions to social and economic issues in the country. The hub is also developing an ecosystem of private startups leveraging AI in a broad range of activities from fintech to agriculture. However, there are still a number of issues to be addressed before Mexico can fully leverage the potential of AI as a driver for higher productivity and growth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can be done to accelerate the process of skills and human resources building, along with the retraining from traditional skills of the existing workforce to accommodate changes in work patterns brought by AI? • Where does the country stand in terms of the development of its AI strategy and what is the impact of the economic shock created by the pandemic in this respect? • Mexico is one of the founding members of the new OECD Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence. What other partnerships should be developed to support a wider adoption and leveraging of AI in Mexico.

09:30-09:45	Break
09:45-10:45	<p>How to rebuild Tourism as the driver of growth Mexico needs more than ever?</p> <p>Tourism numbers have been steadily increasing from 35 million visitors in 2016 to 45 million in 2019. With the global shutdown brought by the Covid 19 pandemic, numbers fell to 13 million visitors for the first half of 2020. Mexico is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of the pandemic, with 15.5% of its GDP relying on the travel and tourism industry. As of June 8, Mexico began reopening its vacation destinations with resorts and hotels resuming activity. Some major touristic sites such as Teotihuacan have also reopened to visitors. At the moment Mexico is one of very few countries with no health protocols upon entry (no quarantine, no test, no ban on countries considered high risk) and one of the few countries welcoming American travelers. The Tourism Ministry has passed a \$507 million coronavirus stimulus package for hotel, travel agencies and ground transportation companies to provide support in the present situation. However, negative factors impacting tourism activity began to emerge in 2019 and have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. They include economic and socio-political challenges, a lack of federal government resources, increase of criminality, airline and travel intermediary complications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the prospects for the recovery of the tourism sector given the evolution of the pandemic in Mexico as well as in major markets such as the US? The ministry of tourism expects that conditions will not get back to normal until 2023. Is it a fair assessment? • The weak currency and lower credit costs should help make Mexican tourism more attractive. However, what are the prospects for the government to inject more liquidity and provide much-needed resources to the tourism sector? • What can be done to further diversify the industry, polishing the country's image and appeal abroad? • Despite all the present difficulties and urgencies, to what extent should the present crisis be used as an opportunity to re-assess the country's tourism strategy to tap into new markets – for instance the Millennials in search of experiences, or the new generation of wealthy Chinese who – for the foreseeable future – would want to avoid the US?
10:45-11:15	Break
11:15-12:15	<p>Operating in the context of a “live USMCA”: A balance sheet of “business as usual”, the pluses and the minuses for Mexico</p> <p>The United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA), which was signed in November 2018, went into force on July 1st and covers about 1.2 trillion in annual trade. With key changes for the Auto industry, dairy farmers, labor laws and environmental protection, the treaty provides some clear rules and legal protections for investors. In the recent months, the biggest concern with the pandemic has been the interruptions of supply chains caused by an unsynchronized lockdown in the three countries. Mexico and the US' definitions of essential industries were not harmonized leading to production lines in the US closing for lack of parts. Now comes the full implementation part of USMCA and many companies are still struggling to comply with the trade pact's new rules, for instance about the sourcing of their products and the task has been – and is still complicated – by the fact that businesses which were working to enact the changes required by USMCA have seen their work delayed or even stopped because of the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The labor and environment chapters are among the key changes between USMCA and NAFTA creating a new set of enforceable obligations. While this helps position Mexico as a country abiding to high-level international standards as a supplier of goods, are there changes that corporate Mexico have to implement and with what implications? - The new rules of origin in the USMCA should provide greater incentives to source goods and materials in North America. To what extent could they help accelerate the emergence of an integrated North American industrial platform?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to assess the initial enforcement of the rules set by the trade agreement? As the labor provisions helped gain the Democratic Party's support for USMCA would a Biden administration be expected to be especially inquisitive about this aspect and prone to bring cases against suspected violations? - With the predictability it is aimed to promote will USMCA be able to contribute to an increase of FDI and to the positioning of Mexico as a manufacturing hub
11:15-12:15	Getting rid of the obstacles for an efficient and highly profitable agribusiness
12:15-12:30	Break
12:30-13:30	<p>Working with the government: What ways to reduce uncertainty as a business killer and restore investors' confidence</p> <p>This October the government announced a 297 billion pesos (\$14 billion) infrastructure plan. This would help finance 39 highway, port and energy projects which – for at least five of them - would be implemented in a public-private partnership mode. This kind of initiative should help improve the relationship between the government and the private sector which has been quite frayed since the beginning of the AMLO administration. The business community has been quite upset by a number of decisions from the government – such as the cancellation of the partly built \$13 billion airport or the shuttering of the US\$ 1.5 billion beer brewery project with the revocation of the operating licenses from the Constellation Brands brewery - that it sees as self-inflicted wounds sapping business confidence and deterring investment whether foreign or domestic. The government has also been criticized by business leaders over his handling of the coronavirus crisis and his lateness in coming up with a stimulus package to boost an economy in recession.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the country's economic and financial crisis keeps deepening, will this be an incentive for the government to stop some of his market-unfriendly measures and to work in a more collaborative way with the business community? • Are there initiatives the business community could take to facilitate a shift of attitude from the government towards it? What do the Business Coordinating Council (CCE) and the Mexican Business Council see as possible steps to work with the government to stem the deterioration of the economic and social situation in the country? • The harsh tax settlements forced on companies – domestic and foreign -has been an important factor in the breakdown of the relationship between the business community and the government, whereas the collapse of the economy due to the coronavirus crisis has prompted all other governments to provide fiscal aid to companies. Could this policy be reversed as a way to reduce business uncertainty and restore some confidence?
12:30-13:30	<p>Creating new sources of mining revenues</p> <p>Mexico's mining industry is a producer of 13 minerals, some of them in high demand in the US, and the world's leading producer of silver. As so many other sectors of activity the mining industry has been badly impacted by the pandemic with production expected to decline by 20% this year and exports by about 10%. There has been a decrease in exploration investment over the last few years and no new mining concessions were opened in 2019 with the negative impact of lower FDI in the sector. The present administration had previously indicated that new concessions will be opened, and renewed exploration activity has been mentioned as a priority objective. It remains to be seen how this will translate in 2021 when demand for minerals is expected to recover from the decline of 2020. Lithium production is seen as a very promising prospect with the country's reserves of this mineral estimated at 243 million tons and global demand for lithium expected to keep growing for the years ahead. The country's industry has also been involved in a significant effort to integrate new technologies to develop faster supply chains, solutions for a faster production flows, reduce costs and improve its environmental record.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What prospect for the mining industry to recover from the pandemic impact in 2021? • How could the drive of the Mexico's mining industry towards Industry 4.0 status improve its attractiveness and competitiveness? • Mexico has been considered one of the best mining jurisdictions. To what extent does the government intention to inflict higher taxes on mining companies limit deductions for exploration expenses act as a disincentive for mining investors? • Beyond the important role that Canadian companies play in Mexico's mining sector, what other foreign companies could be attracted to the Mexican market and how?
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Tuesday 10 November	
08:30-09:30	Leveraging the technologies that will help jump-start growth
08:30-09:30	<p>Infrastructure: Drawing the lessons from the pandemic</p> <p>President Lopez Obrador had pledged to boost growth to 4% through a \$44 billion infrastructure plan that would be mostly funded by the private sector in November 2019. The Covid 19 crisis has stopped or slowed a lot of initiatives, but the government just announced this October 39 public private infrastructure projects worth \$14 billion in oil refinery plants, highways ports and a train project to link Queretaro to Mexico City. This announcement represents the reactivation of the plan presented last year. 7 of the these projects have already been executed and 32 will be started in the coming months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lot of investment in industrial parks comes from China which represents 37% of all FDI, how can Mexico attract more foreign investment in infrastructure projects and diversify the sources. - Mexico offers competitive conditions for private investment in infrastructure projects, what steps could further solidify the positive trend of public-private partnerships - What lessons from the pandemic? What steps to fix the issues?
09:30-09:45	Break
09:45-10:45	<p>Government policies and corporate actions to narrow the wealth divide accentuated by the crisis</p> <p>The World Bank figures show that overall poverty levels have been steadily declining in Mexico since 1996. However, with a GINI coefficient of 45.4% (100% is absolute inequality) in 2018, Mexico still has one of the highest levels of inequality amongst OECD countries. As GDP is expected to decrease by between minus 6.6 and 8.6% this year accompanied by a loss of between 800'000 and 1.4 million jobs this, it is clear that the negative impact of the pandemic will be most severely felt by the most vulnerable segments of the population – thus widening even more the wealth divide gap. As households have, in general, limited health insurance, one can expect that many more of them will/are being pushed back into poverty as they try to deal with Covid 19 treatment. Even if an optimistic forecast of 4% GDP growth materializes in 2021, based on a GDP decline of 6.5% this year, some scenarii foresee 8.9 million additional people in poverty and 7.7 million additional people reaching extreme poverty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond the microcredit loan programs for small businesses and other social initiatives, what concrete, doable, steps could be taken to mitigate the dramatic effect of the pandemic on the wealth divide? • As of 2018, 69% of Mexico's poorest were living in 6 of Mexico's 32 states, what will be the impact of the pandemic on the North/South divide? What government policies have worked? What is the role of business in supporting them?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum wage was supposed to be raised by 20% in 2020? What is the reality with the pandemic? What policies can support that goal without leading to a further decline in investment? • As it will take Mexico a number of years – some economists even speak of a full decade - to recover from the economic losses generated by the pandemic, how to ensure that longer-term measures can be sustained to contain and then help reduce the wealth divide?
09:45-10:45	<p>Energy: What kind of role and place is the government actually looking at for foreign companies</p> <p>The Mexican government has been clamping down on foreign oil players since the beginning of this administration to the point of possible trade litigations under international trade treaties. The latest move could be a ban on new energy permits, another attempt at protecting the state-owned Pemex, which lost \$36 billion in 2019, with an even gloomier outlook for 2020. As more foreign investment in the sector seems out of the question, MNCs are focusing on protecting their existing assets. The government has also rattled foreign companies which had invested more than US\$ 20 billion in the renewable energy sector since 2013 with new constraining regulations although this sector is potentially the most promising one in the energy domain and foreign capital and technology input would be most useful to accelerate its development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of business association have expressed concern at the government strategy. What real prospects for a change of course in the next 12 months as the energy sector situation continues to deteriorate in Mexico? • With lower oil prices worldwide, and decimated oil reserves, what will be the impact of a national strategy betting on hydrocarbon resources? • What is the rationale behind the new regulations hampering the activities of foreign companies in the renewable energy sector? What could be their impact on the development of these energies which is so crucial for Mexico's energy future? • Are there ways to recreate some confidence from the part of foreign energy companies?
10:45-11:15	Break
11:15-12:15	<p>Security & Crime: Beyond taking stock, what strategies could really work?</p> <p>Even if the pandemic, has brought down the number of some serious crimes including kidnapping and robberies, Mexico's murders have reached new record levels in the first half of 2020. 2019 had established a previous record with more than 35,600 homicides. Unfortunately, the anticorruption and fight against organized crime platform that was a key element in President Lopez Obrador's landslide victory 2018 has not translated into functional reforms. In his State of the Union address this September, the president painted an optimistic picture, saying that the social programs created by this administration have eliminated the need for collaboration with organized crime. However, there is still very little emphasis put on reforming the Judicial system or investing in re-building local police forces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While some states are struggling with organized crime related violence others still have relatively low levels of violence. What are the key differentiators? Are there best practices that could be emulated from one state to others? • Mexico seems still to be struggling to find the right combination – or use – of law enforcement agencies involved in the fight against organized crime such as the National Guard, or special units of the police. What is not working, and why? What could be done to establish the right set of different law enforcement organizations and the way they could function effectively? • It seems that this administration is embracing the same top-down approach than the two previous ones, what are the key elements of a plan that could work?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the Mexico-US collaboration working in addressing drug cartels related organized crime? Could this collaboration be made more efficient?
11:15-12:15	42 millions unbanked Mexicans: How can Fintech connect them to the financial system
12:15-12:30	Break
12:30-13:30	<p>Recreating sustainable investment flows</p> <p>According to UNCTAD, foreign direct investment (FDI) into Mexico increased slightly from 2017 to 2018, at close to \$35 billion but edging down to less than \$33 billion in 2019. FDI was close to \$18 billion for the first part of 2020, a slight increase from the same period last year. Even though MNCs have not left Mexico, gross fixed investment has fallen by an average of 5% monthly since 2018. President Lopez Obrador has been describing Mexico as a “land of opportunities” but has been sending mixed signals, such as the changes imposed on the energy sector recently or the cancellation of the \$13 billion new airport project, that have unsettled investors’ confidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 76% of the total investment in the first quarter of 2020 was from companies reinvesting profits and only 22% from new investments. What would be required to attract new money into Mexico? What should the country do to benefit optimally from the shift of US companies towards bringing their operations closer to home but not necessarily in the US? Is Mexico’s legal framework up to investors’ expectations? Will the government be able to come up with the more coherent message that investors are looking for and require about their place and role in the Mexican economy?
13:30-13:45	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miguel Alemán Velasco, Chairman of the Mexico Business Summit, Mexico Quirino Ordaz Coppel, Governor of Sinaloa, Mexico

This is a notional summarized program, paragraphs are added for each sessions in the full version. Sessions may be modified and schedules could be adjusted depending on current events and speaker confirmations.