

## **Mexican president-elect, Trump agree economic development can stem illegal migration**

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MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexican President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said he and U.S. President Donald Trump spoke by telephone on Wednesday about boosting economic development in Mexico and Central America in order to stem illegal migration.

FILE PHOTO: Mexico's President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador waves to supporters during a rally as part of a tour to thank supporters for his victory in the July 1 election, in Mexico City, Mexico September 29, 2018. REUTERS/Henry Romero

The phone call came after Mexico, the United States and Canada agreed on a new trilateral trade deal late Sunday, which Lopez Obrador hailed as a “good accord” that would create economic certainty and encourage investment.

The two leaders also discussed “a next step,” agreeing on investment among Mexico, Canada and the United States to aid development in Central America and Mexico to tackle “the migration phenomenon,” said Lopez Obrador, who takes office on Dec. 1.

Mexico's President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador speaks during a rally as part of a tour to thank supporters for his victory in the July 1 election, in Mexico City, Mexico September 29, 2018. Picture taken September 29, 2018. REUTERS/Henry Romero

“He looks favorably on it,” the leftist Lopez Obrador told reporters at the Mexico City airport, referring to Trump.

The Mexican president-elect added that representatives of his incoming government would travel to the United States in the next few days, including the foreign minister-designate, Marcelo Ebrard.

It was a “great call,” Trump tweeted, with Lopez Obrador, adding that “we will work well together!”

The White House said in a statement that Trump and Lopez Obrador discussed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and “expressed their pleasure with the agreement and noted it would make the region stronger and more competitive.”

Mexico's President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador speaks during a rally as part of a tour to thank supporters for his victory in the July 1 election, in Mexico City,

Mexico September 29, 2018. Picture taken September 29, 2018. REUTERS/Henry Romero

Lopez Obrador said a plan was being put together for development projects across the country. They ranged from a new oil refinery to a train connecting parts of southern and eastern Mexico that his team has discussed.

The projects belonged to a “general development plan” that would require more than \$30 billion in total investments, he said. It was not clear how much would be divided between public and private investors, or between countries.

Before the July election, Lopez Obrador said he wanted to reach a deal with Trump to prioritize development in Mexico’s poorer south and in Central America to stem illegal immigration, which has caused tensions between Washington and Mexico.

Trump provoked widespread outrage in Mexico when he described Mexican migrants as rapists and drug-runners during his own election campaign. He also pledged to build a southern border wall to stop migrants, saying Mexico would pay for it.

Lopez Obrador has shied away from addressing the wall to avoid clashing with Trump. He said in the run-up to the Mexican election, however, that U.S. money would be better spent on aiding development south of the border than on a wall.

Lopez Obrador said U.S. Vice President Mike Pence would attend his inauguration, not Trump.

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