

C26+ Project Status | meeting report 02.18.22

The **C26+ group** convenes relevant civil society, non-profit and private sector stakeholders in North America to create *actionable recommendations* for competitiveness & *follow up* the implementation of the USMCA. On February 18, C26+ members presented to **Roberto Velasco**, Chief Officer for North America, Secretary of Foreign Affairs (SRE), and **Juan Gonzalez**, Special Assistant to the President and National Security Council (NSC) Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere the main findings and recommendations made in the policy-briefs of C26+ Working Groups: *Digital Economy (Brief 1)*, *Smart Borders (Brief 1, Brief 2)*, and *Innovation & Entrepreneurship (Brief 1)*.

Enrique Perret, Director of the U.S.-Mexico Foundation (USMF), kicked-off the session by highlighting that one of the main goals of the **C26+ group** is to provide informed and useful recommendations for governments and the private sector to create a more competitive North American region. The **C26+ recommendations** –created during 2021 and widely shared with government officials, media outlets and stakeholders– were presented by members of the three working groups: *Entrepreneurship & Innovation - Maria Ariza (BIVA) & Hernán Fernández (Angel Ventures)*; *Digital Economy - Valeria Moy (IMCO) & Alberto Rodríguez (New America)*; and *Smart Borders - Emilio Cadena (Prodensa) & Karyl Fowler (Transmute)*.

After listening to the recommendations, the government officials made some comments regarding the work of the **C26+ group**. On behalf of Mexico, **Roberto Velasco** mentioned that the government values the interest of civil society and stakeholders in promoting the dialogue to strengthen the friendships and cooperation between both countries and assured that Mexico is heading in the right direction with the U.S. He also recalled that in 2022, Mexico and the U.S. will celebrate its 200 Anniversary of diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile, **Juan Gonzalez**, representative of the U.S., mentioned that the border is not a place of enforcement but opportunity and that both countries have a common set of values, which means they are stronger together working for a shared prosperity. He also pointed out that the work of **C26+** helps the involved parties to structure the agenda of 2022's High-Level Economic Dialogue (HLED) that will take place in Mexico.

At the end of the session, **C26+ members** exchanged views with both officials, where they emphasized the disposition of the private sector to collaborate with the governments; mentioned that the regulation framework is a great mechanism but needs to be enforced; highlighted that this is a pivotal moment for ally-shoring the supply chain in the region; and that there are other North American-related initiatives and there should be an effort to align goals.

The meeting concluded with the intention of following up the work of the **C26+ program** during 2022 and a common agreement that the timing is right to act and foster a more competitive North American region.

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