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## Goals for Border Institute I

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### OPENING COMMENTS<sup>1</sup>

The group of experts assembled here at Rio Rico, Arizona, represent the major stakeholders and decision makers along the U.S.-Mexican border. Included in this group are representatives from U.S. Congressional offices; federal agencies, particularly the U.S. EPA; state government; local government; tribal governments; the business community; binational organizations; environmental and other non-governmental organizations; and the academic community, including both U.S. and Mexican universities. This group represents some of the most knowledgeable experts on the growth, development, and natural environment along our joint border.

The goal for this conference is to help define a vision for the border region for the year 2020. In defining that vision this conference will be developing a road map for the border's long-term future. In listening to the presentations on population growth, economic characteristics and trends, environmental conditions, challenges to the region's natural resources, transborder planning, and the current and potential institutional frameworks for decision making, it is very important to frame our questions and discussions around the future challenges and future opportunities confronting this key region.

As we will discuss in the days ahead, there is a wide range of decisions being made within the border region on a daily basis that affect the lives of many thousands of people. These decisions are made by governmental officials, business managers, and a variety of involved and concerned organizations and individuals living within this dramatic, yet potentially threatened environment. The challenge for these meetings is to think of this decision making in sustainable terms. Obviously, both public and private decision making must go

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forward on a continuing basis. As the prepared papers at this conference will note, short-term decisions can, and do, have mid- and long-term consequences. This group of researchers and officials must begin to help fashion a border vision that will assist both American and Mexican officials, at all levels, to consider the economic and environmental consequences of their future decisions.

### ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

What is meant by the term sustainable development? The major components for achieving economic growth with a sustainable environment was outlined by the President's Council on Sustainable Development, which published the Task Force Report *Sustainable Communities* in the fall of 1997. The report noted that for development to be sustainable, it must satisfy five criteria:

- 1 Long-Term Impacts and Consequences Sustainable development requires the use of a long-term horizon for decision making in which society pursues long-term aspirations rather than simply making short-term, reactive responses to problems.
- 1 Interdependence Sustainable development recognizes the interdependence of economic, environmental, and social well-being.
- 1 Participation Sustainable development depends on decision making that is inclusive and participatory, recognizing the input of various stakeholders.
- 1 Equity Sustainable development promotes equity between generations and among different groups in society.
- 1 Proactive Prevention Sustainable development is anticipatory. It promotes efforts to prevent problems as the first course of action.

### INSTITUTE GOALS

The major goal of Border Institute I is to use these five criteria to assist this group of invited experts to think in terms of both what is and what could be over the next 20 years. The results of each work-group's discussions and decisions must be based on the pragmatic reality of what is, but enabled by an ability to plan for a future of what could be.

The conclusions and recommendations reached at this Institute will be used to inform and assist decision makers along the border to take actions that help to strengthen the region's economy, improve and

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protect the environment, and strive to achieve social justice and equity. We need to start today to help define a vision for the border in the year 2020 that is worthy of the best thinking and highest ideals that this distinguished group of experts can bring to these proceedings.

NOTES

1. These comments were prepared as opening remarks on the goals for the Border Institute I and as an introduction to a paper that was used as a discussion guide for the Institute's breakout group meetings.