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Introductory Remarks

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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This *Journal* is the first fruits of a process which began three years ago when a group of thirty Mexican and United States lawyers met at the conclusion of an American Bar Association International Legal Exchange program in Mexico (organized by the Mexican Law Committee of the International Law and Practice Section of the ABA). The group had dinner in Monterrey, Mexico, to share their ideas about what could be done in the future to maintain the quality of the educational program they had experienced. One of the ideas was to form some sort of permanent educational process that would bring together U.S. and Mexican attorneys and legal scholars to continue to educate attorneys from both countries.

The idea was enthusiastically embraced by the Chairman of the Mexican Law Committee of the Section of International Law and Practice of the American Bar Association, who held meetings of the Mexican Law Committee members in 1991 to develop proposals to create such an association. Professors from several American law schools participated in planning for the new association and, because of its strategic location, New Mexico was chosen as the site for the annual conference. The Mexican Law Committee accepted the offer of the Dean of the University of New Mexico School of Law to use its personnel to administer a new organization. A not-for-profit corporation, The United States-Mexico Law Institute, Inc., was organized under New Mexico law early in 1992 and plans were made for the First Annual Conference to be held in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

By this time, the negotiations for a free trade agreement among Mexico, Canada, and the United States were well advanced. The Mexican Law Committee members agreed that the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement should be the focus of the first conference. The State Bar of New Mexico generously provided funds and other assistance to the Committee and the Law School in order to get the new venture underway.

The Chairman and Executive Director of the new Institute, with help from Mexican Law Committee members, invited prominent Mexican and

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U.S. attorneys and government officials to participate in the Conference. The result was a successful meeting attended by 130 attorneys, judges, and government officials from both countries, including thirty attorneys from Mexico, two members of the U.S. International Trade Commission, and representatives from the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Commerce, and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Although financial resources were limited, with the success of the Conference and the wide recognition of the importance of a continuing focus for the exchange of views and information between the Mexican and U.S. legal communities, a number of law firms and companies with interests in both countries have become contributing members of the Institute. These contributions provide a small fund to assure the survival of the organization. To achieve the long-range goals of the founders, however, much more support will be needed from American and Mexican sources. These goals are: promotion of research on and analysis of legal problems common to the United States and Mexico; the study of the administration of justice in both countries; the provision of a regular forum for attorneys, judges, government officials, and legal scholars to meet and share opinions with their counterparts from the other country; and the annual publication of the papers presented at the conference through the *United States-Mexico Law Journal*.

The Second Annual Conference of the Institute will again be held in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The dates will be Thursday, October 28 through Saturday, October 30, 1993. The program will include a review of the current status of the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement and implementing legislation in Mexico and the United States. On Saturday, a special program will be held under the guidance of Professor Michael Gordon of the University of Florida School of Law on commercial arbitration and the enforcement of foreign judgments and arbitral awards in Mexico and the United States.

Although we have a very long way to go, we believe that substantial progress toward our goals has been made. This progress would not have been possible without the generous assistance in time, ideas, and money of the members of our board of directors, the State Bar of New Mexico, the officers of the Section of International Law and Practice of the American Bar Association, the officers and members of its Mexican Law Committee, and the faculty and staff of the *New Mexico Law Review* and the University of New Mexico School of Law.

We are most grateful for all of these contributions, and others too numerous to mention, and look forward to developing a better understanding of the common legal problems of Mexico and the United States and the improvement of our relations in the future.