

Promoting a stronger partnership

By **H.E. DIEGO GÓMEZ PICKERING**

AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



DIEGO GÓMEZ PICKERING

is the 20th Ambassador of Mexico in the UK, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. As well as being a foreign affairs specialist, writer and journalist, Ambassador Gómez has previously collaborated with President Enrique Peña Nieto and, from December 2012 to January 2014, worked as the Director for Foreign Media in the Office of the Presidency. Moreover, he was head of Foreign Press Coordination for both President Peña Nieto's presidential campaign and throughout his transition period as President elect.

The President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, will make a State Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 2 to 5 March at the invitation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. He will accomplish an agenda that includes meetings with members of the Royal Family, government officials, headed by Prime Minister David Cameron, as well as parliamentarians, party representatives, intellectuals and businessmen.

This State Visit – the fourth undertaken by a President of Mexico – is being carried out within the framework of the Dual Year, resulting from the combination of the Year of Mexico in the United Kingdom, and the Year of the United Kingdom in Mexico, formally announced on November 3, 2014 in Mexico City, by President Peña Nieto and HRH The Prince of Wales.

The President will hold meetings with representatives of the business and commercial sectors of the United Kingdom, whom he will remind of the favourable investment climate that prevails in our country and that has prompted an increase in bilateral trade with Mexico.

By celebrating the Dual Year, representatives of both countries are coordinating their best efforts to showcase our respective cultural heritage, but also to underline the historic opportunity that this initiative offers to catalyse trade, encourage investment and increase tourism on both sides of the Atlantic.

Since the UK distinguished itself by being the first European nation to recognise the independence of Mexico and establish trade relations, the two countries have taken advantage of economic complementarities to promote their respective growth and improve the welfare of their populations.

A tangible example is that, since the signature of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Mexico, in 2000, trade between the UK and our country has grown 153 per cent.

So, while we implement in both countries a vast programme of artistic, cultural, educational, scientific and culinary activities, we will also consolidate a strong legacy in economic matters. With that in mind we have set two goals:

First, to increase bilateral trade to £ 4.2 billion by the end of 2015, and increase to 500,000 the number of British people traveling to Mexico, taking into account the importance of tourism for the Mexican

economy, which generates US\$13.8 billion a year.

The 2015 programme spans more than 100 separate exhibitions, concerts, festivals, academic workshops and artistic residencies; as well as trade missions, research projects and scholarships. Events are taking place across a number of cities in the UK including London, Manchester, Liverpool and Edinburgh. The Year of Mexico will showcase the country's long history and traditions, its modern economic and commercial dynamism, and further strengthen its reputation as one of the world's most exciting destinations for trade, investment and tourism.

On the 5th of February, President Peña Nieto held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, who conducted a two-day visit to Mexico leading a delegation of 43 British businesspeople to promote bilateral trade and investment.

The leader of Liberal-Democratic Party travelled accompanied by the Minister for Trade and Investment, Lord Livingston, as well as Baroness Jane Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury, the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Mexico. The Deputy Prime Minister underscored the fact that Mexico is undergoing a process of economic renewal, and expressed his support for the structural reforms promoted by President Peña Nieto.

So, the Dual Year will be useful to underline the UK's relevance as a global trade and financial centre, as the third largest economy in Europe and the seventh worldwide, and to endorse our countries' longstanding partnership.

It will also serve as a platform to present to potential investors the many opportunities that Mexico represents as an emerging market whose transformation efforts continue to generate high expectations, arising from the adoption of constitutional reforms in labour, public education, fiscal policy, electoral transparency, telecommunications and energy, among others.

The Year of Mexico in the UK and the Year of the UK in Mexico 2015 will inspire exciting exchanges, partnerships and cooperation in all areas, enriching and strengthening our strong bilateral relationship.

Thus, I strongly believe that the Dual Year #MXUK2015 represents a great opportunity to develop a growing, warm and dynamic relationship even further. And the President's State Visit to the United Kingdom is a great example of that. **F**

