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ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY INCREASES URGENCY OF JOINT ACTION TO STRENGTHEN NORTH AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS, BUSINESS LEADERS SAY

New Orleans, April 22, 2008—Economic challenges and intense global competition have increased the urgency of joint strategies to improve the competitiveness of the United States, Mexico and Canada, members of a trilateral advisory group said today in a report presented at the North American Leaders' Summit in New Orleans.

The North American Competitiveness Council (NACC) is a group of business leaders from the United States, Canada, and Mexico that was created in 2006 to gather advice from the private sector on ways to enhance North America's competitive position, promote increased employment and foster a higher standard of living. In its 2007 report, delivered to President George W. Bush of the United States, President Felipe Calderón of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, the NACC urged progress across a range of policy areas that are vital to the security, prosperity, and competitiveness of North America.

The NACC's 2008 report, released today, says that government and business leaders must work harder to ensure broad public understanding of the significant benefits that flow from liberalized trade and investment within North America. NACC members, the report adds, are "deeply concerned" about recent isolationist rhetoric and its potential impact on efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of the three countries.

The report says that improved border management is a critical priority for businesses in the three countries. New measures to enhance border security, as well as more rigorous enforcement of existing rules, have saddled businesses with "longer delays, higher inspection rates, additional fees, and more layers of security when they can afford it least," the report says. In addition, today's report offers advice and recommendations to the Leaders in other key areas associated with intellectual property rights, the automotive industry, food and product safety, financial, and environmental regulatory cooperation, among others.

Copies of the NACC Report to Leaders are available from the websites of the NACC Secretariats: the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (www.ceocouncil.ca); the Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad (www.imco.org.mx); the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (www.uschamber.com) and the Council of the Americas (www.counciloftheamericas.org).

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