

# ELECTORAL REFORM IN MEXICO

## *On the Road to Consensus*

**D**espite the fact that the results of the August 1994 federal balloting —the most closely watched in the history of Mexican elections— were generally accepted as valid, they also spawned criticisms and comments about the organization of elections in Mexico and the laws governing them.

The political players in Mexico saw the need to carry out an overall reform of the state that would take into consideration the public's most heartfelt demands about political affairs: among them, a redefinition of presidentialism in order to take some powers away from the head of the executive branch and transfer them to the other two branches of



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**Signing the agreement.** From left to right: Alberto Anaya (PT), Porfirio Muñoz Ledo (PRD), Santiago Oñate (PRI), Felipe Calderón (PAN), Emilio Chuayffet (Minister of the Interior), President Zedillo, Humberto Roque Villanueva (leader of the Chamber of Deputies).



Government officials will no longer head up Mexico's electoral bodies.

government; a change in the government's information and press policy; a comprehensive reform of the justice system; profound modifications in the relationship with indigenous peoples in Mexico; the direct election of the Mexico City government; and a major constitutional reform and modification of enabling legislation regarding Mexico's elections.

The electoral reform is the first part of the reform of the state to come to fruition. It took almost two years of effort and high-level negotiations, with the participation of the federal executive branch, represented by the Ministry of the Interior, and the country's most important political parties, represented by their national leaders and the heads of their congressional caucuses in both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

For the first time in the history of electoral reforms in the country—and there have been several since 1977—agreement was reached by consensus of all the political parties participating in the negotiations. This paved the way, also for the first time, for unanimous approval of the constitutional amendments by the Chamber of Dep-

uties in August 1996. The fact that the four very different parties represented in Congress voted unanimously is an indicator of the ability of Mexico's political forces and players to resolve controversies peacefully at a negotiating table.

While the unanimity about the electoral reform is a landmark in Mexico's political history, it also should be stressed that it was reached despite the fact that the participants did not always come to agreements about some basic questions. For this reason, *Voices of Mexico*, conscious of the historic significance of the accord, but also of the fact that there are still many points to be resolved on the road to democracy, requested that the four parties which participated in the reform process each write a short essay about what was gained and what remains to be done with regard to elections in Mexico.

The presidents of the PAN, PRI and PT and the general secretary of the PRD share with the readers of *Voices of Mexico* their opinions on this question, whereby the magazine hopes to offer a general panorama of the reform as seen through the eyes of those who forged it.