

# Calderon named Mexico's president-elect

The Miami Herald  
Sep. 06, 2006

**MEXICO CITY** - Defeated leftist candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador rejected a court decision awarding Mexico's presidency to Felipe Calderon, insisting he will never recognize his rival's legitimacy and vowing to create a parallel government from the streets.

Calderon celebrated his long-delayed victory by reaching out to the millions of Mexicans who did not vote for him and calling on his main adversaries, including Lopez Obrador, to help heal the nation's divisions.

Lopez Obrador's supporters threw trash at the headquarters of Mexico's Federal Electoral Tribunal, whose seven magistrates voted unanimously Tuesday to declare Calderon president-elect. The decision rejected Lopez Obrador's allegations of systematic fraud and awarded Calderon the presidency by 233,831 votes - a margin of 0.56 percent. The ruling cannot be appealed.

"I do not recognize someone who tries to act as the chief federal executive without having a legitimate and democratic representation," Lopez Obrador told thousands of supporters in Mexico City's main Zocalo plaza.

"To hell with their institutions," the former Mexico City mayor cried, to raucous applause and chants of "Felipe, the people don't want you!"

Calderon, a member of outgoing President Vicente Fox's National Action Party, was to meet with the president Wednesday to begin planning the Dec. 1 government handover. Always confident of his eventual victory, Calderon has been quietly drawing up transition plans since just days after the July 2 election. Lopez Obrador's supporters have said they would block the handover.

Calderon appeared confident and spoke forcefully in an appearance before cheering supporters hours after the court's decision was revealed. His backers pumped their fists in the air, chanting "Felipe! Felipe!" and a mariachi band regaled him at the end of his speech.

The 44-year-old former energy secretary and career politician promised during his campaign to follow his predecessor's free-market, pro-business policies to create jobs, keep the economy growing and fight poverty.

But his first public speech as president-elect was dominated by overtures to his opponents, whom he implored to join him in closing the huge class and political divisions that widened during the long, nasty electoral campaign and the tense, two-month wait for the court's ruling.

"Being Mexican is always more important than being a member of a political party," he said, adding that "closing the door to dialogue is closing the door on Mexico."

Calderon announced three major initiatives aimed in part at winning over those who didn't vote for him: reducing poverty, fighting crime and improving the economy.

"I want to express my recognition for those who were my adversaries," he said. "Your proposals, the most important ones, will be incorporated in the government's agenda. I invite you to join forces to benefit all of Mexico."

In a late-night interview with Mexico's Televisa television network, Calderon said he would take his time choosing a Cabinet, announcing his choices "very likely in the hours close to the swearing-in" ceremony Dec. 1.

"I don't have any plans, at least at this point, to speed up the naming of the Cabinet," he said, adding that he would be looking for "honest people ... capable people, people who are loyal to the (administration's) plan, and to Mexico."

He reiterated his willingness to work with Lopez Obrador. "I recognize that he has a genuine concern for the situation of poverty in which millions of Mexicans are living," Calderon said.

"I invite him to translate this concern into actions that benefit precisely these millions of Mexicans," he added. "For now, this attitude (of resistance) does not help in the least to overcome the situation of suffering and misery in which the country's poorest people live."

But Lopez Obrador refused to accept Calderon's victory, vowing to hold a national convention in which delegates would elect him as Mexico's alternate president.

"We are going to exercise our sovereignty to construct a new government ... cast aside the simulated republic and create a true, authentic republic," he said.

Lopez Obrador's movement has become increasingly radical since the election, and polls indicate he lost support after lawmakers from his party blocked Fox's last state-of-the-nation address Friday. But he has consistently called on his followers to remain peaceful amid fears they would erupt in violence.

World leaders, including the prime ministers of Japan and Belgium and several Central American presidents, congratulated Calderon on his victory.

The White House said Mexico's democratic institutions, especially the Federal Electoral Tribunal, have proved themselves "strong and capable of reflecting the will of the people of Mexico."

"We congratulate Felipe Calderon on his victory and look forward to working with him and his team," the White House said.