

## Ernesto Zedillo

Former President of Mexico who led profound democratic and social reforms; economist and advocate of multilateralism, inclusive globalisation, nuclear non-proliferation and drug policy reform.

- President of Mexico 1994-2000
- Recipient of the Franklin D Roosevelt Freedom from Fear Award, 2002
- Chairman of the Global Development Network, 2005-2011
- Director of the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization

*"Inclusive globalisation is needed not only by the weak but also by the strong; not only to defeat economic polarisation but also to alleviate old and new resentments that threaten the security of our world."*

### Work with The Elders

In January 2014, Ernesto Zedillo travelled to [Iran](#) with Kofi Annan, Martti Ahtisaari and Desmond Tutu where they met with various leaders including President Hassan Rouhani. The Elders discussed easing of regional tensions, the spread of extremist violence internationally, the issue of human rights and the Syrian crisis, as well as supporting progress being made in the international negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme.

Ernesto Zedillo joined The Elders delegation to **Moscow** in April 2015. Led by Kofi Annan, Ernesto Zedillo along with Martti Ahtisaari, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Harlem Brundtland and Jimmy Carter visited Russia to discuss key geopolitical issues. During the trip, The Elders met with President Vladimir Putin, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, as well as former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

In September 2015, Ernesto Zedillo travelled to New York with an Elders delegation of Gro Harlem Brundtland, Hina Jilani and Graça Machel to celebrate the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals. During the trip, Ernesto Zedillo participated in an event on the selection of the next UN Secretary-General as part of The Elders [A UN Fit for purpose](#) initiative.

### A bold reformer

Ernesto Zedillo began his career as an economist, rising through Mexico's Central Bank before being appointed Secretary of the Budget in the federal government in 1988. He became Education Secretary in 1992 and launched immediate, sweeping reforms of the national basic education system.

Elected President of Mexico in 1994, he successfully enacted bold reforms to address the major financial and economic crisis that faced his administration. From 1996 to 2000, Mexico experienced a five-year period of the highest rates of GDP growth in the country's recent history. At the same time, his government made strong commitments to social justice by increasing its spending on social programmes year after year.

His administration also launched PROGRESA, the first 'conditional cash transfer' social programme, following extensive research on the best methods to fight extreme poverty. As part of this, poor families received financial support on the condition that children attend school and receive preventative medical care. The initiative reached millions of families and has since been replicated in more than 40 countries throughout the world.

Zedillo undertook profound democratic reforms – transparency and independence of the electoral institution, fair campaign finance and guaranteed access to media, and an electoral tribunal within the judiciary to solve electoral controversies – paving the way for a robust multi-party democracy in Mexico. He pursued and achieved full independence for the Mexican Federal Judiciary, and appointed a leader of the opposition as Attorney General of the Nation.

### **Confronting global challenges**

Since leaving office, Ernesto Zedillo has worked, both at Yale and as member of a number of international panels and commissions, to find solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing the global community.

He serves on the [Global Commission on Drug Policy](#), chaired by his fellow Elder, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, which calls for a vast rethinking of the 'global war on drugs' debate and proposes better regulation to end the criminalisation and marginalisation of drug users. He co-chaired the Latin American Initiative on Drugs and Democracy and, based on work at the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, published an edited volume: *Rethinking the War on Drugs through the US-Mexico Prism* (2012).

His work on nuclear non-proliferation includes serving on the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, which released its final report, *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers* in 2009. In 2007, he was appointed to chair a commission to recommend the future course of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN body promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

He has also worked on a number of initiatives focused on climate change mitigation and, in 2008, published an edited volume, *Global Warming: Looking Beyond Kyoto*.

### **Championing development**

Ernesto Zedillo is Director of the [Center for the Study of Globalization at Yale University](#), where he has taught *Trade Theory and Policy*, *Debating Globalization* and *The Economic Evolution and Challenges of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries*.

He has participated in many initiatives to improve the world's ability to design and implement development policy, notably as:

- Vice-Chair of the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security, 2010-2012
- Chair of the High Level Commission on Modernisation of World Bank Group Governance, which published its recommendations in 2009
- Chair of the Global Development Network, an organisation working with developing country researchers and institutes to support their work, 2005-2011
- Chair of the UN High Level Panel on Financing for Development in 2001