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Results from the **Milagro** Campaign's research studies expected in six months: Sheinbaum Pardo

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Transcript of the interview with Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, Secretary of the Environment of Mexico City following a Press Conference celebrating the initiation of the "International Tlalocan Water Festival" at the former Corpus Christi Temple / **Tuesday, February 28, 2006**

Q: Claudia, concerning the pollution that travels from the Tula industrial strip to the Valley of Mexico. What can be done?

A: I haven't had a chance to read the Reforma newspaper, I only got to see eight columns. Would you be kind enough to tell me exactly what it says?

Q: The Secretary of the Environment of the State of Mexico has determined that pollution originated there is responsible for 70 percent of the pollution arriving to the Valley of Mexico, the main sources being the Federal Energy Commission (CFE) and PEMEX facilities.

A: I see. What happens is that there are two. Tula's industrial strip is part of the atmospheric basin of the Valley of Mexico, it is not considered as part of the Mexico City Metropolitan Area because it only contemplates the municipalities of the State of Mexico and Mexico City. The 59 municipalities from the State of Mexico have recently been declared as part of the metropolitan area.

Even though we are part of the same basin, Tula has never been recognized as being part of the Valley of Mexico; that is, in what has been politically defined as the Mexico City Metropolitan Area. In truth, we aren't completely certain of what the research studies of the **Milagro** campaign conducted by doctors Luisa and Mario Molina will show us about how the Tula strip is affecting the Mexico City Metropolitan Area. However, I do believe we should consider that section as integrated. For many-many years the Valley of Mexico has been discharging its raw sewage in the Valley of Tula. We still don't comply with the zero-one norm for residual discharge regarding residual waters. Both Mexico City and the State of Mexico are dumping their raw sewage in the Valley of Tula. This is something that has been happening for many years and it is imperative to solve this matter.

Therefore, even when it may be all well and true that the refinery, the thermoelectric power plant and the industrial zone are affecting the Valley of Mexico, it is also true that there is a problem that must be addressed in terms of how this particular region affects Hidalgo.

Q: Are there any provisions to be considered in either situation, I mean since both the situation regarding the atmospheric emissions in Tula as well as the water situation in the Mexico City have been made public? Because in the end....

A: I believe that there are. What happens is that we are talking about a very big allocation of money that needs to be invested. This is not to say that the money shouldn't be invested on this matter, but it is important to consider that we are talking about very big expenditures. Therefore, maybe one of the possibilities would be to integrate the state of Hidalgo to a metropolitan agenda as it has been requesting from a while back now. This would allow us to contemplate this issue in an integrated manner and not only cover the subject of Tula but of some other municipalities as well.

Q: Could this integration be prompted through the findings of the Milagro campaign?

A: Yes it could. Now, independently of the Hidalgo municipality from the state government of Hidalgo, I think that PEMEX must invest in the Tula refinery because it is a very old refinery. If you go to Tula you can see the obscenely black plume it exudes that translates into many pollutant particles, particularly sulfur. So, I do believe PEMEX should take this refinery into account as one of the refineries that most requires renovation repairs, mainly because we are talking about a health hazard to the population.

Q: And what about the Federal Energy Commission (CNE)?

A: Regarding the Federal Energy Commission, I don't know how much the thermoelectric power plant is to blame. In the case of the refinery it is self evident, one can verify in plain sight the impacts it has on the environment.

Q: Doctor, when do you think we can expect the first results from the Milagro Campaign and what is estimated that they will find in the Tula industrial strip that needs to be studied at this time? And in monitoring the atmosphere are we going to uncover illnesses, are we going to find out about something that becomes worse during the hot season? What is it exactly that the campaign hopes to find?

A: Well I don't know exactly what the campaign is going to find. The measurements are just being conducted. It is estimated that the first results will be available in six months and in one year they will made public, and that in two

years they will be available to the general public and to any scientist that wishes to access them.

Q: Is it safe to assume that they may provide the basis for a new environmental program?

A: Yes, they will be incorporated. Currently we are working on an air quality program focused on small particles, we are already working jointly with the State of Mexico.

Thank you very much.