



# TV UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

Week of 11 September 2006

Programme No. 1026

Duration: 3'19"

## MEXICO STRUGGLES TO SAVE ITS "WATERY" PAST

### VIDEO

### AUDIO

#### NARRATION

Aerial shot Mexico City

Mexico City is now one of the world's largest urban areas – but in ancient times these city streets were a network of lakes and canals on which the Aztecs built their capital. (11.5")

Ext. streets travelling freeway

Travelling shot on boat, heron

The only reminder of this "watery" past is along the canals of Xochimilco, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The traditional area is made up of small islets called *chinampas*, used for agriculture and small nurseries. Water from the canals is essential for the traditional activities that preserve this landscape.

MS Group on boat looking at maps

Travelling shot chinampas

(22")

CU of boat in treatment plant

But things have changed now that the water comes from an old treatment plant instead of fresh water springs, says Sergio Mendez Cardenas: (9")

Sergio Mendez Cardenas, local government official (In Spanish):

Ws Irrigation

"The people from around these canals always refer to the existence of these springs, but

these ceased to exist 30 or 40 years ago.”

(8”)

### NARRATION

The spring water was less salty than today’s treated water, which makes cultivation difficult.

Ws and close up

Water facility as boat docks

Native plants and animals have also been affected. (10”)

The *axilotl* (A-HI-loteh) is an amphibious salamander unique to these parts. It was once considered to be the embodiment of the Aztec god *Xolotl* (*Sho-LO-t*), says local resident Alejandro Correa Lopez. (12.5”)

Ws tank with salamander

CU of Aztec God

### Alejandro Correa Lopez (in Spanish):

“In the end he became an amphibian, and he went to live in the depths of the lake of the great Tenochtitlan, where he has lived there all this time. Now many species are extinct -- but *Xolotl* is still here!” (10”)

CU salamander in tank

### NARRATION

Sadly the Mexican salamander can no longer survive in these waters, polluted by-unregulated urban growth. Illegal residences like these are to blame, says urban planner Yadira Correa Perez. (14”)

CU of dirty water banks

### Yadira Correa Perez, urban planner (in Spanish):

“The fields (*chinampas*) are not meant to support drainage systems. This means that the houses will dump their sewage directly into the

CU of Yadira Perez

canals.”

(7.5”)

### NARRATION

MS of people with bicycles getting  
off local ferry

As more and more people settle here, they will seek jobs in the local tourist economy. But many fear that unchecked growth will undermine an already compromised ecosystem.

(11”)

MS Water conference exhibition and  
billboards

Looking to balance environmental and economic concerns, a recent global conference on water management was held in Mexico.

(7”)

Ws of Mexican gondolas

Investing in new water treatment facilities -- while also creating an oversight team for management of the site -- could be the solution for Xochimilco's future ...where a colorful tourist area represents the present, but where the marshy wetlands still hold the key to Mexico City's past.

(19.5”)

This report was prepared by Michele Zaccheo for United Nations Television. (4”)

UN LOGO