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VIEWPOINT: GOING ADVERSARIAL

Baja California Officials Learn from U.S. Counterparts

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The new Code for Criminal Procedures of Baja California was published Oct. 19, 2007. That code established a new criminal justice system based on the adversarial model including oral arguments that was to be implemented in Mexicali Aug. 11, 2008.

Under these conditions, I assigned myself the task of analyzing the challenges that began appearing, to establish and support the consolidation of a genuine system of justice—one of quality, efficiency and transparency. In other words, the institutional reorganization meant harmonizing resources, experiences, needs, professionalization and capacity training.

Before taking on such challenges, it was necessary to consolidate a new philosophy in criminal justice to gain citizens' trust through an administrative change and reorganization; but above all, it was necessary to change the mindset, rebuild values, and take advantage of the challenge of transparency to strengthen the capacities of our investigators, prosecutors and police officers. Specialized training by impartial experts was indispensable to achieve this.

On Aug. 2, 2008, in Seattle, Wash., Baja California—a border state that benefited from the binational relationship of Mexico and the U.S. and that shared the previously stated vision—entered into partnership with the Conference of Western Attorneys General by signing memorandums of understanding with attorneys general in the states of Idaho, Arizona and New Mexico. It was in this manner that the relationships were consolidated that allowed us to break paradigms and initiate a magnificent process of internal training and specific development of the inherent abilities of each member of our institution.

It is in this manner that as of today, our state attorney general's office has signed memorandums of understanding with 12 states in the U.S., sharing judicial knowledge and experiences, exchanging ideas and walking hand in hand in search of a better procurement of justice, generating excellence in specialized subjects such as oral arguments, criminal investigations and professional ethics. These agreements have been carried out successfully.

Up to now, 169 civil servants from our institution have benefited by participation in workshops and training courses that have generated improvement in the fulfillment of their duties, which translates such into a model institution. ■