

FRONT PAGE

Scientists to examine atmospheric pollution

- Milagro Project first one of its kind
- It plays a determining factor in climatic change

Raymundo Zúñiga Ortiz
El Dictamen

March 8, 2006, Veracruz. With an investment of between 20 to 30 million dollars, the port of Veracruz is the host of the “**Milagro**” project, first one of its kind worldwide and promoted by the UN and 80 other national and international institutions such as NASA. The project is focused on understanding the air quality conditions of the Mexico City Metropolitan Area.

Participating in this ambitious campaign are 120 institutions with scientists from around the world, backed by six technologically equipped airplanes (five of which operate from the Veracruz terminal), several satellites, one mobile unit and the use of tethered balloons.



LUISA Molina, del Centro Molina para Estudios Estratégicos sobre Energía y Medio Ambiente, y el Dr. Sasha Mandrunish, del National Center For Atmospheric Research, que encabezan el proyecto Milagro.

During the press conference for Milagro, Dr. Luisa Molina from the Molina Center for Strategic Studies in Energy and the Environment, and Dr. Sasha Madronich from the National Center for

Atmospheric Research, lead scientists of the project, revealed that the results from this study – the first one of its kind in the history of the world-, hope to uncover and better understand pollutant substances in the atmosphere to determine their role in the planet's climate change.

They explained that “this is an international scientific collaborative effort focused on the study of the local, regional and global impact of air pollution from a megacity using as a case study the Mexico City Metropolitan Area and its neighboring areas.”

The project is a joint collaboration of four field campaigns such as the MCMA-2006, led by the Molina Center for Strategic Studies in Energy and the Environment focused on examining emissions and boundary layer concentrations by gathering data on aerosols, volatile organic compounds and other gases, meteorology, and solar radiation.

The Mexico City Metropolitan Area was chosen as a case study for the “**Milagro**” project because its tropical latitude is similar to other megacities and it has reliable emissions inventories and air quality monitoring studies, as well as excellent logistical infrastructure and previous scientific collaboration experiences.

In a preliminary statement the scientists revealed that data taken from the initial flights over Mexico City shows a reduction in the quantity of pollutants in the atmosphere in comparison to measurements taken three years ago. Therefore, the steps taken by the governments of the Federal District (Mexico City) and the states of Mexico and Hidalgo toward reducing air pollution have been positive.

They explained that air pollution from Mexico City alone cannot influence the atmosphere in a way that would result in global climatic change, but air pollution from twenty megacities of this size could very much trigger changes in the world's climate.

Because of its closeness to Mexico City and the logistical advantages it offers, Veracruz was chosen to host **Milagro**.

They added that the final results would be made available to the public in one year's time to help prompt governments to develop and apply environmental-friendly policies in order to reduce this type of pollution.

Also attending the conference were the operative undersecretary of Civil Protection, Oscar Reyes Juárez, and the director of the Gulf of Mexico Forecasting Center, Federico Acevedo Rosas.

MILAGRO: Megacity Initiative: Local and Global Research Observations is also related to Megacity Impacts on Regional and Global Environments “Mirage”, part of the joint multidisciplinary effort financed and coordinated by NASA and other American institutions.