



# *Fútbol and regional identity:* **making the concept of North America tangible**

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- The 2026 North America World Cup, a worldwide celebration *en nuestra casa*, is a once in a lifetime opportunity to embrace a **regional identity** that absolutely everyone can be proud of.
- Ensuring that the 2026 World Cup is a catalyst for a **North American identity** requires **vision, action** and **funding**.
- Let's spur its potential to create a lasting affirmation of **a vibrant and inclusive North American identity!**

The countries of **North America** have become economically integrated over the last thirty years, but the concept of a **regional identity still remains elusive**. We need to find new ways to transition from the policy discussions centered in Washington, DC, Mexico City and Ottawa to strategies that help **convince all of our citizens that by working together on the thorniest issues of the day, our countries are better off together**. When the global sport of *fútbol* -or soccer- takes center stage during the upcoming **North America World Cup** in 2026, it might just provide us with a way to establish a more **emotional connection to our neighborhood**.

Over the last several years the world has moved away from multilateral-based solutions toward greater regionalization. No doubt geopolitical tensions - armed conflicts in the Middle East, Ukraine, the strained relationship between the US and China, and a global trend toward polarizing politics - have fueled this dynamic.

Today Mexico, the US and Canada together represent 29% of world GDP and have substantial competitive advantages in areas such as energy, water, minerals and food security. What we lack, however, **is a more holistic vision of how to work together to build sustainable, prosperous**

**and healthy societies**. Our challenge is organizational and cultural. Establishing ambitious efforts to find common solutions for shared problems is both wise and pragmatic, but national politics and parochial prejudice too often get in the way.

It is within this complex context that in 2026 the North American nations will jointly host the first ever regional World Cup. *Fútbol*, the “beautiful game,” is the most popular sport on Earth, and it is also now a common sport between the three countries, with the US and Canada increasingly giving Mexico a run for its money on the pitch.

**This worldwide celebration, *en nuestra casa***, is a once in a **lifetime opportunity** to build a political and cultural vision that can sustain the economic reality from the bottom up, allowing us to **embrace a regional identity that absolutely everyone can be proud of**.

**Achieving this goal will require vision, action and funding. So let's get moving!**

To take this **quantum leap in cultural identity**, however, we need to act now to **establish the narrative** and the concrete actions that will allow our connections and affinities to visibly shine. **Mexico, the US and Canada share** more than we often recognize: **art, sports, music, culinary traditions and family ties** do not stop at the border but are fused in a jazz-like synergy that can be the background tones of the celebration of competitive football.

Ensuring that the 2026 World Cup is **not just another massive sporting event**, but a catalyst for a **regional shift in thinking will require vision, commitment, and resources**.

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The many organizations gathered within the [NorthAmericanProject.com](http://NorthAmericanProject.com) and at the North Capital Forum in Mexico City to exchange ideas on regional challenges can offer guidance on how to make the most of this rapidly approaching moment.

With proactive steps, we can transform this quadrennial celebration into a **lasting affirmation of a North American identity** that is vibrant, inclusive, and worthy of pride.

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