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46TH WASHINGTON CONFERENCE ON THE AMERICAS

# Advancing an Agenda for Growth in the Americas

The Council of the Americas convened the 46th Washington Conference on the Americas on May 3, 2016, at the U.S. Department of State, with additional, sponsor-only events at the OAS. Featuring a fully interactive interview format, the conference made a significant contribution to understanding and advancing the state of regional affairs at the end of the Obama Administration while looking ahead to the next U.S. presidency. Conference participants engaged with senior government officials, thought leaders, the diplomatic community, and each other to gain unique, actionable insight into the issues and trends shaping the Americas today. This is the top level conference each year on the Americas; make plans now to join us in 2017!



Speakers including **President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama** and **U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry** spoke of the urgent need for additional trade, investment, and transparency and anticorruption priorities across the region. **Colombian Defense Minister Luis Carlos Villegas** gave a comprehensive overview of the peace process and discussed what to anticipate the day after a peace agreement is signed. **Carissa Etienne, head of the Pan American Health Organization**, focused her remarks on the threat of zika and other mosquito-borne illnesses, as well as the state of regional health including non-communicable diseases. **Ambassador Martín Lousteau** provided real-time insight into Argentina's reforms, including resolution of outstanding bondholders claims, while asking for patience as Argentina sorts out its trade agenda with MERCOSUR. **U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker** gave a rousing call for passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and

made a strong defense for the centrality of trade in U.S. policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean. **U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Roberta Jacobson** outlined State Department priorities in the region, focusing on North America, trade, energy and climate, and democracy, among others. Finally, a panel of finance experts including **World Bank Managing Director Sri Indrawati**, **U.S. Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs Nathan Sheets**, and **Under Secretary of Finance and Public Credit for Mexico, Fernando Aportela**, joined a fascinating conversation led by former **IMF First Deputy Managing Director John Lipsky** on regional financial conditions and prospects. Others who conducted interviews or led panel discussions included former **Colombian Foreign Minister Carolina Barco**, **Council of the Americas Chairman Andres Gluski**, **Chairman Emeritus John Negroponte**, **President Susan Segal**, and **Vice President Eric Farnsworth**.



President Varela stated that the commitment to transparency is critical to democracy: **“In Panama, this means an overriding commitment to transparency and accountability in the use of public funds, so that all men and women in public life clearly understand that politics shall only be used to serve the people.”**



U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker In passage of TPP: **“I’m confident it can happen this year. Now is the window.”** She emphasized: **“Trade is imperative. We can’t build a fence around our country.”** On the effects of globalization on job security: **“We need to do a better job,”** she said. **“We owe people the right skills, training, and opportunity.”**





Argentine Ambassador to the U.S. Martín Lousteau on trade blocs: **“We first have to rebuild our muscle before going into another agreement.”**



Colombian Minister of Defense Luis Carlos Villegas on the state of Colombia's armed forces: **“The first public good to bring to people is security.”**



PAHO Director Carissa Etienne on the Zika virus: **“The virus is set to cost Latin American and Caribbean countries \$3.5 billion this year, or 0.06 percent of regional GDP.” “We need to have some ways of reducing mosquito populations, or else we’ll continue to have outbreaks every two years.”**



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on the anticorruption movement: **“Now more than ever, citizens all around the world are making clear to everybody that corruption is not going to be tolerated.”** On citizens' trust in their governments: **“Corruption as a whole robs the future of a country.”** On the Paris climate agreement: **“This is an enormous signal to the global marketplace that this is the future,”** he said. **“The energy market is the future. The choices we make with respect to energy are going to define whether your country is up or down.”**





Assessing and improving financial prospects with Fernando Aportela, Under Secretary of Finance and Public Credit, Mexico; Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer, World Bank; Nathan Sheets, Under Secretary for International Affairs, U.S. Department of Treasury; and John Lipsky, former First Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (moderator). While the region currently faces uncertain prospects for growth in the short term, there are hopeful signs. **“It’s not Mission: Impossible,”** said Lipsky. **“We’ve seen it done before.”**



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