

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS AND
PROSPECTS FOR INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Washington, D.C.

Friday, April 3, 2015

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PICCONE: Welcome to Brookings. I'm Ted Piccone. I'm a Senior Fellow with the Latin American Initiative here in the Foreign Policy Program and I'm very happy to introduce today's event and our speakers on Summit of the Americas and Prospects for Inter-American Relations. As you all know next week we will have the seventh Summit of the Americas in Panama City, and much anticipated because of the developments around a host of issues including the first time that the government of Cuba will be attending and it will be President Raul Castro sitting together with other heads of state, and most importantly sitting with President Obama at this gathering. Of course it's not just about Cuba, there are many, many issues on the Inter-American agenda. I think there's a key moment of opportunity for not just the United States but for the entire region to sit down and craft a forward looking agenda on a whole host of challenges that the hemisphere faces.

We have today a program that will help us understand better what's on the Inter-American agenda and what we will see in Panama. And we will start with opening remarks as a keynote speaker from Roberta Jacobson, the Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the Department of State. Roberta and I first started working together back in the '90s in the Clinton administration and it has been fascinating to watch her career develop, and now holding this very senior position at a critical time confirmed by the U.S. Senate. And she will make opening remarks. And then we'll have a panel discussion led by Harold Trinkunas who is the Charles Robinson Chair and Senior Fellow and Director of the Latin American Initiative here. He came to us from the Naval Postgraduate School where he was a Professor for National Security Affairs in Monterey. And we will also be joined by Richard Feinberg from the University of California at San Diego, and a Non Resident Senior Fellow here at Brookings. Richard is

really the godfather of the Summit process, was the senior official at the White House for the first Miami Summit of the Americas in 1994, and has attended every Summit except for one and will be going to Panama along with Roberta and many, many other people next week.

So we look forward to their comments. And, Roberta, please. I should also mention, if you haven't gotten copies, and you'll hear more about it today, but please grab a copy of the latest report that Richard, Harold, and Emily Miller have done on "Better Than You Think, Reframing Inter-American Relations".

Roberta. (Applause)

MS. JACOBSON: Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Ted. I appreciate the introduction. I mostly appreciate you not reading my bio which gets longer and people think that's a feature of being very distinguished, I think it's a feature of being very old (laughter) every time it gets read.

I'm really delighted to be here this morning talking about the broad range of hemispheric issues. I'm delighted to be back at Brookings, and I am thrilled to be working with Ted again. We have worked together on and off on things hemispheric. I'm glad to see some of my colleagues from the region here. We've been working together steadily on things preparing for the Summit, but I must say most of all I am happy to be here with the godfather who over the last number of years preparing for summits and birthing the first one has consistently made offers that people could not refuse in preparing for summits for presidents and really has brought us to a moment when summitry itself has evolved and summits have evolved in this hemisphere to one that I think will be quite remarkable in many ways and will do things that don't always make the headlines. And I think that in some ways has always been the news out of a summit.

And I think I want to start by pointing out that three very smart people, one of them the godfather, Richard Feinberg, and Harold Trinkunas and Emily Miller, have really written this fantastic paper about the region. A couple of years ago I wrote a piece for *America's Quarterly* which was kind of about the idea that Latin America and the Caribbean has changed. And it was sort of on the idea that it's not your father's western hemisphere; ten things you don't know about Latin America and the Caribbean. And like most policy makers it was very compact, was short, was kind of punchy, and it had no data to back it up. But it was based on the idea that a lot of old think and old sort of myths about this region persist when it has moved beyond many of those old impressions and it has become a region of capable and equal partners. What this piece that they have done wonderfully titled, "Better Than You Think, Reframing Inter-American Relations", and I've already told Harold and Richard that I will be shamelessly utilizing that phrase "better than you think" in many of the substantive parts of the piece. What this piece argues is just that idea that there is a lot you don't know about what's happened in this hemisphere and how well it has gone for U.S. policy, and the maturity of those relationships is really quite developed. But it does so with all of the data to back it up. And that for me is extraordinary. So I thank you for that contribution to the debate and the support for the notion that President Obama brought to Trinidad in 2009 to the fifth Summit of the Americas where he outlined a desire to forge equal partnerships in this hemisphere built on common values and common interests. That we won't always agree on everything, which is precisely what this paper says, but that we agree on so many things that are in our mutual interests that we can have mature 21st century relations. I think this Summit in Panama will showcase a lot of very important issues that deliver on that promise of equal partnerships, in particular what he promised in 2009 which was an

updated architecture for cooperation and partnership based on shared responsibility, truly shared responsibility by the United States and by our partners.

One of the most important things I think, and I'll talk about this a little bit throughout the substantive portions of our priorities at the Summit, one of the most important things that new architecture as seen in the Summit developed since 2009. We saw it in 2012 in Cartagena, in Columbia, and in the CEO dialogue that you will see which is going to look in some ways very much like what Columbia did in Cartagena, but the preparations for it do not look the same. Because what has developed, which is exactly what we hoped for, is the America's business dialogue and a permanent forum for the private sector to be engage with leaders in bringing to government their priorities, the way they see the private sector and the economies working, and a way for leaders to interact with the private sector in a more permanent manner between summits and at summits. So that has really developed into something that will be a more constant dialogue along the lines of APEC, which is what we had intended.

At this Summit we want to take that next step in another non-governmental area which is in the civil society area and try and develop an institutional mechanism for civil society to have that permanent dialogue. Being here with all of you today is part of the dialogue with civil society. Each country should be having that dialogue. We will have the civil society dialogue taking place in the various fora at the Summit, but that also needs to take place on a more or less constant basis between summits. And in some ways by definition civil society is disorganized, it is not centralized, but it has to figure out a way to have a mechanism that keeps it connected and that keeps it more or less interacting with leaders in between summits. And so I think some kind of a mechanism for civil society to continue to interact with governments in between summits would be a huge benefit coming out of this summit.

Our own priorities for this Summit really fall into four categories that are part of the basic priorities in the hemisphere that we have, and they are democracy and human rights, global competitiveness, social development, and energy and climate change. They fit very well within both Panama's theme selected for the summit, which was Prosperity with Equity, and they fit very well within the eight subthemes that were developed for the summit.

Let me go through them very briefly and then obviously we're going to have a good conversation. On democracy and human rights there has been a great deal discussed about some backsliding, some concerns, some angst I would say about whether we are stepping up on democracy and human rights throughout the hemisphere, but in many ways I think this summit must confront that issue both in its positives and in some of its negatives. This is of course the first summit that will have all 35. That in itself is momentous, but has to be followed up by a robust conversation among leaders and with civil society groups who are there. The President has committed to being at having a conversation with the hemispheric forum on civil society because he thinks that it is critical that leaders be held accountable by their civil societies, including obviously the civil society participants from the United States as we interact with our own stakeholders all the time to try and be held accountable and to be transparent.

There are four side events as you know to the Summit. They are on youth, education, the CEO summit, and the civil society summit. They are feedback loops; they are ways that leaders are held accountable by various fora of citizens outside of government. And unless we have that then we're living in our own echo chamber frankly of leaders without getting the input we need from our citizens.

We also applaud the governments around the hemisphere that have supported that more robust civil society role. I would say that obviously there has been a

lot of attention focused onto particular issues in the democracy and human rights area. They are Cuba and Venezuela. Cuba obviously being at the summit for the first time is going to steal a lot of attention. I think the President's policy change in December gave a huge amount of lift to the issue of engagement on Cuba. It was obviously something we felt was long overdue and takes a huge irritant out of our policy in Latin America and the Caribbean, something that we will continue to move forward on in the coming months and years because full normalization will take years. I would argue that there are very real challenges on democracy in Venezuela that the entire hemisphere needs to be concerned about, not just UNASUR not just the neighbors of Venezuela, and certainly not just the United States. It never has been and won't be a bilateral issue. It's a hemispheric issue, but most of all it's a Venezuelan issue for Venezuelans to resolve.

I think that the issue of sanctions on seven individuals frankly has been blown way out of proportion. And infelicitous language in an executive order that is standard and in fact just came out two days ago in another executive order on cybersecurity. But I would also note that UNASUR in the middle of March when they put out a declaration on the sanctions issue put out two declarations which almost no one in the media picked up on. Those declarations were on the sanctions and unilateral actions perceived and rejected by UNASUR, but they were also on elections and democracy. And that went almost unnoticed by many people. And that was very important too. And the importance of human rights and the rule of law in Venezuela and moving forward on the elections. So that is a debate that really needs to continue to be had. And we are certainly comfortable having that full debate.

On economic growth and competitiveness there is and will continue to be a direct connection between economic growth and competitiveness and the democracy human rights accountability issues that I began with. If you don't have institutions of

governance that are transparent, that are responding to the needs of citizenry, that present justice systems, that are equal, accessible to all, and provide a level playing field, then your own economic growth is going to be stymied as well, and expansion of opportunity is going to be retarded. So there is a direct connection between those things that cannot be hived off and separated. We will focus in this summit because macroeconomic numbers, especially during a commodity boom, have been okay on the whole. And certainly this hemisphere has gone through the macroeconomic reforms that many other countries are struggling with around the world. We will focus a lot of our attention on small business, generating huge numbers of jobs and not necessarily always getting the support that they need, support in credit, access to credit, support in job training. We know that the small business network of the Americas has now fostered huge numbers of job creation in the hemisphere. There are over 4000 small business development centers that have been created since we launched these partnerships between small business development centers in the U.S. and small business development centers in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. In Columbia alone these efforts created nearly 6000 jobs and increased some business' sales over 50 percent. Even in the United States under two percent of small businesses export, but the minute you can connect small businesses to markets elsewhere, even if those are neighbors next door, you can hugely raise their capabilities while remaining obviously small and medium sized enterprises. And I have already talked about the Americas' business dialogue which I think is going to be essential as a continuing forum for movement on the economic sector. But I also think that we need to continue to press in the economic sector and among our business leaders for attention to equity issues, and the inequality issues, access to justice and judicial reform, which are as important for

them as investors and business people as they are for those who are shut out of the justice system because of resources or socioeconomic reasons.

On social development, which is my segue into that one, and the issue of inclusion I think this is one of the most important issues facing the region right now. We know it is still the most unequal region in the world. There are terrific statistics in Richard and Emily and Harold's paper in the way in which inequality has been reduced in the 2000s, and that has been impressive but it's from high levels of inequality and more needs to be done. The numbers that we've seen of people moving into the middle class in this hemisphere are staggering, they are impressive. Conditional cash transfer programs and other things have worked remarkably well. Those have to be sustained and that in itself is difficult, especially with commodity prices softening. So we need diversification of economies obviously. But also we need to remember how many people were left out of that process, whether it's because of geography, whether it's because they are in vulnerable population groups, indigenous groups, Afro Latinos, women, that push to get those benefits out to more people has to be doubled, has to be made more real.

And that brings us to the issue of education where we know there is a huge deficit in the region. The region's higher education institutions remain not up to the challenge of the 21st century and many leaders recognize this. So we will continue to push where we can with the 100,000 strong in the Americas Program which has now awarded 38 Innovation Grants to 110 higher education institutions in 12 countries. Steve Vetter is here and I'm proud that he is continuing to work with us on this and really moving ahead with a lot of private sector partnerships in a lot of countries, but we need to do even more. At Partnering we know that wholesale connections, because what we're doing is connecting institutions to institutions, we're not funding individual scholarships,

we know that connecting universities and colleges to universities and colleges will raise the number of students who go on these exchanges faster than funding individual scholarships. We've seen the numbers of students rising over the last couple of years by 12-13 percent in each direction already. We have to get that up even higher. We know that these models work and they work not just at Harvard, Yale, and Stanford. In fact it's much more important that we focus on community colleges in the United States and a growing number of countries that are looking at this model for their own use. Technical colleges, politecnicos in Mexico and other things that are training students for 21st century jobs that aren't -- and I'm a deeply committed social science person and humanities person -- but that aren't necessarily going to make them unemployable with an anthropology degree or a degree in one of the social sciences that they may not be able to use. An example would be a woman named Myra from a small community in Honduras who obtained a degree in business management from a community college in Iowa through SEED, S-E-E-D, which is the Scholarships for Education and Economic Development where we're going to be putting \$50 million for 1300 students. Mayra established when she went back to Honduras the Catracha Coffee Company which helped a group of traditional small coffee farmers export to the United States tripling their profits. Catracha returned more than \$30,000 to farmers through its profit sharing and social welfare program which is really, really powerful.

The last thing I want to talk about is energy and the environment because the other impediment that we know keeps areas of this hemisphere from realizing their full potential is high cost of energy in some places. And what we are looking at in this hemisphere on the other side of the issue on climate change is huge energy resources to be exploited, enormous, enormous wealth in the energy sector, but the possibility of doing it responsibly and sustainably as we face climate change crises

around the globe, especially when we look at increasing weather events in Central America that can be disastrous, and obvious concern in the Caribbean and to island states. More than 31 million citizens in this hemisphere lack affordable energy and we expect electricity demand in this region to double over the next decade which is why we launched the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas and Connecting the Americas 2022 to promote renewable energy efficiency, cleaner fossil fuels, resilient infrastructure, and interconnection. There are a number of examples I could give you on this, but we are seeing much greater connectivity between countries. SIEPAC in Central America has now completed the connection in 2014 that connected 37 million consumers in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. We know that energy costs, electricity rates, energy costs in Central America and the Caribbean are way above what many other countries pay, especially what we pay in the United States, and that is holding back economic progress. Unless we can encourage connectivity and the ability to move energy from the places in the hemisphere that have it and are developing it to places in the hemisphere that will never be self sustaining on energy, at least not in the short-term, and bring those energy costs down, we will never be able to overcome cycles of economic difficulty, and with it cycles of migration, poverty, and violence such as we see in Central America and the Caribbean, until we tackle those energy prices and those structural problems.

So I think in all of those areas we have initiatives that we'll be bringing to the summit, ways to tackle pragmatic problems that frankly aren't based on ideology, and that we're willing to engage on with every country in the hemisphere, every country in the hemisphere, any country that wants to partner with us. Because they're in all of our interests. And that's the way the partnerships should be based, on mutual interests,

because that's the way most countries should structure their foreign policy, not on ideology but on mutual interests, because that's what makes them durable.

So let me stop there. I think it's going to be a very good Summit of the Americas and I look forward to the conversation. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. TRINKUNAS: -- Roberta. I just want to start out by thanking you for joining us here at Brookings. It's always wonderful to have an opportunity to talk about the state of Inter-American relations, especially as we look forward to the Summit and to events beyond the Summit. And I think you'll find that you have a large number of friends here in the audience. I see people with great experience in the summit process including Mack McLarty --

MS. JACOBSON: I saw Mack.

MR. TRINKUNAS: -- and others.

MS. JACOBSON: Another godfather of summits.

MR. FEINBERG: Yeah, I was going to say that the other godfather of summits.

MR. TRINKUNAS: And Alec Watson is also here. So thank you --

MS. JACOBSON: All of them. (Laughter)

MR. TRINKUNAS: So I think you can expect some very informed questions from the audience, but we're going to start out first with just a conversation among us before going to the audience. Some of the things that Richard and I thought would be important to talk about as we look forward. And I think one of the things is I think I agree with you that if we think back to the 2012 Summit in Cartagena where there was friction around a number of issues, President Obama received criticism on issues related to everything from counter narcotics to Cuba to immigration policies. And the administration has taken initiatives in all these areas, and I congratulate you on those,

that really have sort of cleared the deck in many ways of the kinds of things that were sources of friction in the past. But now as we look forward to this summit that's coming up are there still some flash points or some problem areas that you see that might be an issue for the President next week?

MS. JACOBSON: No, I think there always are individual issues. I don't know that I see them as really broadly based. There are always the concerns that we aren't paying enough attention, that there are so many crises elsewhere that we really should pay more attention to this part of the world. I know that there are concerns over the actions that were taken on Venezuela and the sanctions. I do think those have been explained pretty well and I think folks understand that they were the result of language that is always used, they are not a prelude to invasion, we have no desire to overthrow a government. But on the whole I don't see the large sort of systemic issues. If you look for example even at counter narcotics I believe that the administration's message on taking a public health based approach at home has been much, much better understood in the three years since Cartagena than had been going into it. And if you look around the hemisphere at the experiments taking place, whether it's in Uruguay or elsewhere, and you look in the United States, clearly we're all wrestling with the same issue of what works. So I don't see the big systemic issues. We're focusing on getting TPP done, but even those who don't support a particular free trade agreement are looking for ways to deepen engagement on trade. So I don't know that I see -- some in the audience may raise issues with me that I'm not outlining, but I do see that we still have a lot of work to do. We have a new Secretary General at the OAS, we're going to hopefully working on revitalization of that architecture and organization, but I don't see as many big complaints I guess.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Well, I mean one issue you did raise though was this issue of Venezuela and the issue of the targeted sanctions against seven government officials and the reactions from Venezuela and the hemisphere on this issue. Can you talk to us a little bit about what consideration was given for the timing of that decision and was there a discussion about what kind of issues that might create for the President in Panama next week?

MS. JACOBSON: You know, I think one of the things that you have to remember is that that legislation in Congress had been pending for two years, and it had been working its way through the House and passed in the House, and then working its way through the Senate for a very long time. When it made its way to the President's desk we had been working with UNASUR since I guess the UNASUR mission began soon after Michelle Bachelet's inauguration which was around the time that the discussion were held, so from last March. So there was a pretty long period of our believing deeply that we should let the South American countries make that effort of trying to get things moving in Venezuela. There as a dialogue held between the opposition and the government. We really did believe strongly that it was important to let that play out, but we found it difficult to continue to argue that there was a process in place when there were no talks going on and when UNASUR itself, at least for quite a few months, did not have a mission going back and forth. So it was difficult to see where there would be a process that was engaging from externally, nor was there a process internally in Venezuela. And there was quite a bit that looked like it was not moving in the right direction, additional detentions and so forth, no releases to speak of. There were one or two because people were not well, et cetera, but not major releases. Concern to be honest over the upcoming elections and whether the structure for that election was going to be adequate to have a really free and fair election. I think the hope was that we

needed to move ahead to send a message these were very, very targeted. This was not a lot of people at all. And they were people that we felt very strongly could not allow access to our banking system. Obviously these actions had been taken previously. But it was a desire not to have this be as much of an issue in this Summit and therefore to do it before. Clearly the language that is in the standard executive order was considerably more neuralgic than I think some people realized, but I think it was also whipped into a bit of a frenzy by Venezuelan leadership. And I was a bit, I will confess, disappointed that there weren't more who defended the fact that clearly this was not intended to hurt the Venezuelan people or the Venezuelan government even as a whole, and did not more clearly explain or elucidate as we did for them in advance because we did talk to governments in advance of the sanctions that this was really very, very narrowly targeted.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Thanks. I know I have some more questions, but I think Richard wanted to jump in here.

MR. FEINBERG: Thanks very much. First, Roberta, thanks very much for your kind words. I really appreciate it. And congratulations to you on your leadership, and as Harold said for putting the U.S. in a much improved position going into the Summit than we were just three years ago in Cartagena where the President was very much isolated on a series of issues, and progress has been made on all of those. And I especially congratulate you on orchestrating the timing of the Iranian nuclear accord because between the Iranian nuclear accord and moving forward on Cuba the President will ride into Panama in a very enhanced position. He will be the man of peace and the man of dialogue. And I think it will be very hard for anyone at that summit to really take him on with those accolades on his shoulders. So, well done, Roberta. (Applause)

So, Cuba. What can you tell us about the possible interaction between President Obama and President Castro in Panama? And can you tell us anything about

what Secretary Kerry might do in terms of interacting with his counterparts from Cuba or other members of the various delegations? Will there be a photo op, will there be handshakes, will there be smiles, possibly bilateral meetings? Can you tell us anything about that?

And on the CEO Summit agenda there is a line item which says, "speech on trade and investment opportunities in Cuba. Speaker to be announced." Who might be giving that address?

MS. JACOBSON: I think on the last question it's probably best to ask Luis Alberto Moreno since the IGP is helping to set up the -- or I think running the CEO Summit. But I think, you know, someone from a large island in the Caribbean would be a good person to give that statement.

I think on the question of the interactions, you know, clearly President Obama knew when he made the decision to go to the summit and he knew that Cuba had been invited to the summit, you know, post December 17, that there would be an interaction at the summit, that the leaders are together a lot of the time, and so there will be an interaction with Raul Castro. None of the President's meetings are scheduled other than his bilateral with President Varela as the host. So I don't know exactly what kind of an interaction that will be, but they've obviously already spoken on the phone as he had said publicly on the 17th when he made the announcement. And there has been a lot of interaction since then at a lower level. Secretary Kerry has spoken with his counterpart, with Bruno Rodriguez. So I expect that there will be contact in Panama and it's useful obviously to be able to have that contact and move things along so that we can get things done and open embassies and move ahead with this relationship.

MR. FEINBERG: Good, good. Because I myself can imagine Raul Castro addressing this 700 assembled corporate executives from around the western

hemisphere and saying to them please, please now return and invest in trade with Cuba. And that would be quite a moment in Inter-American relations. We'll see if that happens.

MS. JACOBSON: That would be interesting, yeah.

MR. FEINBERG: We'll see if that happens. Laden with irony as well of course.

Also on Cuba, there is a lot of speculation that Cuba is actually acting as a moderating influence on the ALBA countries in order to keep the contentious issues of Venezuela from dominating the agenda, rather than Cuba wants to keep the spotlight on the U.S.-Cuban rapprochement. It would appear, Roberta, that the U.S. these days can get along better perhaps with Marxist states in the hemisphere than with certain rejectionist populist states in the hemisphere. Can you tell us anything about what role Cuba might be playing behind the scenes in Latin America in order to make the summit actually overall a success.

MS. JACOBSON: You know, one of the things that I think is interesting is I don't know exactly what role Cuba may be playing with Venezuela or with other countries like ALBA leadership, but I will say we did see this fall at the UN General Assembly a notable shift in Cuba's language. There was still an anti embargo resolution at the UN this fall as there has been for years, but there was a shift in language. And those of us who have watched Cuba for a long time are attuned to shifts in language. It was less personal, it was less of an attack, including on our representative who was speaking that day. And obviously on December 17 you heard a pretty remarkable statement from President Castro about President Obama and the steps that they were both taking on that day. What you see in the rhetoric of many of the ALBA leaders is very personal, it's very ad hominem; it's really of the sort that makes it very difficult to try and move ahead. And we often are admonished that it's just words, that we're a big country

and we need to rise above that, and it is just words and we do all the time rise above that sort of thing. But words also matter and words matter to populations and words matter to citizens, and words matter in foreign policy and in foreign relations. And so when you say that things may be easier with Marxist governments than with populist ones I don't know that that's a general rule, but I would say that the tone that leaders set is important. And right now the tone that certain leaders are setting in those more populist countries is one of demonizing the United States as the source of their problems, in particular in Venezuela, when we are not the source of the problem. And so that does make it harder for us to move forward pragmatically and not ideologically. Our goal in Venezuela is not to overthrow this government. Our goal in Venezuela is to create more political space as I think all the countries in this hemisphere have agreed to except Cuba in the Inter-America and Democratic Charter. And so we have had a conversation with Cuba quite honesty that has not been as -- it has not been as ad hominem as negative. Now that said it has acknowledged and been forthright where we profoundly disagree on human rights and universal rights, but we've tried really hard to tone down the level of those personal attacks, and that makes a difference in the ability to get other things done and hopefully makes a difference in our ability even to get some things done in that area.

MR. FEINBERG: I support what you're saying. I noticed that Raul Castro's remarks which were critical of U.S. sanctions against Venezuela, he was very careful not to directly criticize President Obama, but rather referred to decisions made by some of his aides, Roberta. (Laughter)

MR. TRINKUNAS: Do you want the last question before we go to the audience?

MR. FEINBERG: Okay. Thank you. So maybe on --

MS. JACOBSON: We didn't even get to page two. (Laughter)

MR. TRINKUNAS: I know my colleague too well.

MR. FEINBERG: Yeah. So --

MS. JACOBSON: Maybe I'm taking too long to answer.

MR. FEINBERG: Well, no, not at all. So let me just ask you about Brazil then. So Brazil I think it's fair to say the big country of course in South America has never really liked the Summit of the Americas. Mack and I will remember some of our efforts to get the Brazilians to be cooperative back in 1994. Because the Brazilians tend to view summits as an instrument of U.S. influence which might in some way reduce their influence. Today I think it's fair to say that Brazil appears somewhat aloof from hemispheric affairs. Dilma Rouseff is very preoccupied with her own domestic troubles. Nevertheless on which summit issues that you outlined does the U.S. look to Brazil to play a helpful role?

MS. JACOBSON: I think it's a great question, Richard, because I think Brazil, an engagement with Brazil is a really important theme in 2015 for us bilaterally, but also for the region. I would note for example that Brazil has not had an ambassador at BOAS for -- it's a couple of years now. And we're very optimistic that they will very shortly because I think that's crucial. I think as we approach this summit we look for Brazil to be a partner with many other countries, Chile, Peru, Columbia, Costa Rica, Panama, and a lot of others on some of the issues like social inclusion, where I think Brazil really has been very, very much a leader. I think we look to Brazil even -- and I know this may sound strange -- on the economic competitiveness issue. No it's not a TPP country or free trade partner, but as Brazil looks toward an economy that needs restarting, right, it is looking at things that may have been taboo in the past. It is debating openly what comes next in Brazil, and that's healthy and so it may not be looking at things the same way we are. But we're all looking for greater competitiveness in our

economy and that I think makes them a partner in this even if not on every single issue. I think as we look towards COP -- what number are we up to -- Paris, let's just say Paris -- sorry, I never remember what number we're up to, 21, whatever, 22. As we look towards Paris and climate issues we are not necessarily on the same page with Brazil, but we know Brazil is going to be crucial and so we want to work with Brazil. And I think for the Secretary, for Secretary Kerry, he looks at this summit, although it may not be on the agenda, he looks at every summit between now and Paris in December as preparation for Paris. So he will be talking about climate change issues. They certainly are on our agenda with countries like Brazil.

On democracy and human rights I think Brazil has a strong role to play, and we certainly are hopeful. They've been a major partner with us on the Open Government Partnership; that is going to be something that's discussed. Both Mexico and Brazil were co-chairs of that. And so that's an area where on governmental transparency we should be working together. Brazil is a very vibrant democracy with a robust civil society and a robust press. That's an area where we can work together.

So there are lots of I think themes in this summit where Brazil and we can be working together.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Thank you, Roberta, for the conversation.

MS. JACOBSON: Thank you.

MR. TRINKUNAS: And I'd like to go now to our audience where I think we'll get a few more great questions. Just a couple of points. I'll keep a list. When I go to you please wait for the microphone since this is being broadcast before asking your question. Identify yourself and your institutional affiliation. And for those of you who are fans of Twitter #VIISummit. I should have mentioned that earlier, but hopefully you saw it

up on the screen. And let's see, if you could just -- okay, I'll start with Steve in the front row and then I'll just work my way back. I'll try to keep some semblance of order here.

SPEAKER: Thank you so much for this rich discussion. One of the really exciting things that has happened with the Cuba opening is that there are 85 U.S. universities that have sent over 10,000 U.S. students to study in Cuba over the past 13 years. This has always been a very sticky kind of a proposition. One of the universities though that just won a 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Award is Western Michigan, and it will be one of the first universities to formalize relations, moving students back and forth. Roberta, what is your understanding of how easy or how complicated it's going to be as more and more U.S. universities want to work with Cuban universities?

MS. JACOBSON: I think just a quick answer that is from our perspective we'd like as many as possible to get into this business of doing more and more student exchanges. I think when we talked about student exchanges I think there's a great deal of interest. There's certainly a great deal of interest from students. I just don't know exactly what the bandwidth will be in the Cuban government for regularizing those. There's interest. It may be a little bit slower than we would like to move, but I do think there's interest. So I'm encouraged but I don't know that it will be as fast as we would like it to be.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Let me go to Claudia two rows behind. And then I'll go over here, and then I'll go back over there.

SPEAKER: Claudia Treso from the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo Sao Paulo*. I'd like to know how the U.S. intends to put the discussion on Venezuela during the summit, and also if you could give us more information about who President Obama will meet from the civil society. Thank you.

MS. JACOBSON: On the first question we don't intend to put Venezuela, to discuss Venezuela at the summit. The summit is a regional discussion. It's a hemispheric discussion. It's not our intention to have a discussion of any one individual country at the summit. The summit has eight themes; those themes are applicable as far as I can tell to every country in the hemisphere, and so those discussions will be applicable to every country, leaders will speak to the issues. So I see no reason to be speaking to an individual country at all. The issues are applicable to everyone, and the standards and the commitments should be applicable to everyone.

On the issue of meeting with civil society, my understanding, and this really is a question for the Panamanians as host, is that there will be a meeting of the leaders with representatives from the civil society forum who are chosen by the civil society forum. So I don't know that the leaders know exactly who they're going to be meeting with from that forum yet.

MR. TRINKUNAS: On the left. And then if those of you in the back, if you want to ask questions just raise your hands; hold them a little bit longer.

MS. JACOBSON: I apologize, but can you identify yourself if I don't -- may not know who you are?

MR. TRINKUNAS: Right.

MR. LUXNER: Hi, Larry Luxner; News Editor of the *Washington Diplomat*. Good to see you again. Given the location of next week's summit I'd like to ask you about Nicaragua where the Chinese investors have announced plans for a \$50 billion inter-oceanic canal linking the Atlantic to the Pacific. As you know this project has sparked widespread protests, some of them violent throughout Nicaragua, and Costa Rica is not happy either. I'm wondering, a few weeks ago a delegation from Nicaragua civil society came to Washington to air its concerns here among think tanks and Capitol

Hill, and I'm wondering if you have any plans to take this up with the Ortega government during the summit? Thank you.

MS. JACOBSON: I think the short answer on that is no, we don't necessarily plan to have a direct conversation with representatives of the Nicaraguan government on this, but we've certainly been very clear -- Ambassador Powers has been clear in Nicaragua, and we've been clear that our position on the canal has always been that the most important thing is that it be done in a way that is transparent and responsive to the concerns of the Nicaraguan citizens, those who have already been concerned about environmental issues and land issues, and those that may come up along the way. But the problems that we have seen thus far has been a lack of transparency both in sort of bidding and procedural issues, and whether all of the concerns are being taken into account that citizens have along the way.

MR. TRINKUNAS: In the middle, yes. On the right, yes. You just stood up. The microphone is behind you. Please. If you'd just identify yourself.

MS. SALINAS: Mary Alice Salinas, Voice of America. On Cuba and human rights, to what extent do you expect this particular issue to be addressed either through regular meetings or on the sidelines? And secondly, what will the message be from the U.S. to other governments about current efforts with Cuba to lay the groundwork for historic human rights dialogue, whether it's through your approach or expectations priorities?

MS. JACOBSON: Thank you. I think that it's pretty clear that the President from the beginning has said that our position on human rights in Cuba has not changed, that we believe that the human rights situation in Cuba is not adequate, is not what we would like it to be; that there needs to be respect for international norms of human rights, that we would like to see that improve, that we will not change our

standards or our willingness to speak out on human rights violations simply because we are now engaging with the Cuban government directly. We speak out on human rights violations elsewhere in the world in places where we have a relationship, a diplomatic relationship with government, and we'll do that with Cuba once we diplomatic relations as well. What I think the President is committed to doing is seeing representatives of civil society from a number of countries in the hemisphere including Cuba making sure that the message is clear that in places where either political and civil space has closed in recent years, or remains closed such as in Cuba, we give support to those who continue to peacefully fight for that space to be open. We did it in New York with civil society groups from around the world at the UN last fall and he'll do it again in Panama. And he won't shy away from that message whether it's directly with leaders or with the civil society individuals directly.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Yes, I see Greg Vale in the back. Yes, yes. Jeff, Jeff Vale.

MR. VALE: Thank you for the opportunity to be here. Roberta, actually I wanted to change the topic. Although (inaudible) has followed Cuba a lot obviously, I want to ask about Central America. I understand the President is likely to attend the SICA meeting with the Central American Presidents. The White House has a billion dollar aid request for the Northern Triangle countries. There have been a lot of concerns raised about accountability mechanisms, about corruption, about oversight if that aid or other aid goes through. Are you expecting that to be a topic both in general, and are the Central American presidents likely to propose something?

And then specifically one of the things that's come up as a measure of commitment has been the renewal of the mandate of CICIG in Guatemala and I wonder if you have any sense about that?

MS. JACOBSON: Thanks, Jeff. First of all, just to be clear that billion aid request is not just for the Northern Triangle, although the majority of the money will focus on the Northern Triangle because that is where the greatest need is; there's no doubt about that. We also want to be very clear that it's for all of the Central American countries because unless we work with everybody together we will simply end up having to do more in -- name one of the other countries -- once you do a good job in the Northern Triangle. We know that. So it does actually -- there are funds in that amount for Costa Rica, for Panama, for Belize, et cetera, but it does focus on Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

There is no doubt beginning from before the plan, the Alliance for Prosperity among the Central American Northern Triangle countries was drafted, and now through our own request to Congress and the implementation plan for their strategy and ours that measures of effectiveness and commitments on transparency, good governance, anti corruption, have got to be a part of this. On the foreign assistance side they have to be because we have I would say a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of the United States to make sure the money is being used wisely and going to what it is supposed to. And the governments themselves have said to us -- and I think this is really a mark of why we have more confidence in this moment working with these leaders -- have said to we want to use these funds to make fundamental changes in the way budgets are implemented in our countries, including forcing through accountability mechanisms. In a sense using your foreign assistance to make changes that are sometimes unpalatable at home because they need to be done to get the money. And we've seen some of those changes be made already. Honduras has already signed an agreement with Transparency International to do some sort of work with them on accountability and transparency. There are procurement mechanisms that will be put on

line. There are things like that that can be done that I think give much greater confidence to allow people to see how that money is being used. I think it is going to be important for others to emulate if not the same measures, similar kinds of ones.

On the issue of CICIG, I think that the renewal of the mandate is critical. I'm not sure I would put it the same way you did in terms of as a metric, but I do think that there's very, very strong support for that in Congress, and there is certainly very strong support for it in the administration going forward. Ambassador Castilla.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Go ahead, Mr. Ambassador, and then we may go to Richard, and then we'll come over here.

MR. CASTILLA: Hi, Roberta, Miguel Castilla, Ambassador of Peru. Thank you very much for your talk. I was wondering if you have in mind how we can get more U.S. Congressional engagement in the summits talking about budget issues and an agenda that will go beyond certain bilateral issues. You've outlined four key areas of mutual interest as you put it, but how do you see more dialogue? I know that there is a representation of Congress going and talking to several presidents, but how do you see the summit being a venue to achieve this?

MS. JACOBSON: No, it's a really good question because you and I have talked and I've talked with lots of others in this room about how we get members of Congress more interested in the region and more educated about the region. Because even on some of the subcommittees that deal with Latin America and the Caribbean there's not that much experience. These are relatively new members, they haven't spent a lot of time in the region. This is true particularly in the House. And so I think there is a huge amount -- an opportunity really for sort of getting people engaged. I do think it's a great thing for example that Chairman Duncan of the Subcommittee on the House side is going to be heading a Congressional delegation at the summit that I think at last count

has at least 10, maybe 12 members. And I think that's great. He was at the summit in Cartagena so he is pretty committed to this. And the most important thing in some way I would hope is that many of the if not leaders, foreign ministers, others will be able to do meetings with this delegation because it may only be 10 or 12 of them, but they will come back sort of enthusiastic -- I really believe enthusiastic from meetings and kind of spread the word.

But the other thing is I just think it's really important that we encourage them to visit. I've never seen a member of Congress, honestly never seen a member of Congress, no matter how negatively they may feel about foreign assistance or about a country's policies going in, who doesn't come back from a visit kind of energized to work in partnership on that country's issues and the bilateral relationship, and usually energized to do more and help. They do, they're just convinced of it, and they're usually pretty big supporters of our embassy and the foreign service after they come back too and they see how hard we work. So my goal is just to get as many of them to visit as possible and I've encouraged every embassy in this town to get up to the Hill as often as possible. It's frustrating because they've got so much on their plate and there's not as much focus on foreign affairs. I do think the deal on Iran will absorb a huge amount of time, but it's also now gotten to a next phase which is a good thing in a sense. There may be sort of less angst and more actual work on it that will take up some of them, but not all of them. But I would also say engagement on the Hill has to be done really quickly because we're going to approach a presidential election season and then foreign policy stuff will really get pushed aside and there will be even fewer travel.

MR. TRINKUNAS: I think we have time for just two more very brief questions if you could keep it short. I think Richard and then somebody else who has been very patient over here on the left.

SPEAKER: Thank you. And thanks for a very interesting discussion, Roberta. In the last Summit of the Americas in Cartagena ALBA showed significant influence, particularly over the Cuba issue. Now the Cuba issue is somewhat advanced, Chavez is dead, Pedro Caribe is now also moved back. Could you talk a little bit about how you see ALBA'S influence not only at this summit perhaps more generally as well?

Thank you.

MS. JACOBSON: A good question. I mean I think one of the things that is interesting is when you talk about issues where you're touching on an issue where there remains strong kind of emotional support for something that ALBA may lead on, the sanctions being a perfect example. Unilateral financial sanctions by the United States, it would not really have mattered how many or on what subject, are not things that the region supports. They really don't. If they're not under the United Nations or an international body, then it's never going to really get support. It may not have been as -- there may have been other ways to handle what we did, but it wasn't going to get support even of our friends. It would not have been as vocal, et cetera. So ALBA was able to lead on that issue because they were kind of pushing on the proverbial open door. And so even our friends said to us we don't want to sort of pound you publicly, but you know we hate financial sanctions. But I don't see much leadership on anything else. I really don't. Apparently not in the economic area. If you look behind the rhetoric Bolivia and Ecuador are not the same model as Venezuela. Ecuador has gone back to the IMF and back to the World Bank and done a gold swap with Goldman. I mean it's a very different economic model despite the rhetoric; much, much better managed in their fiscal crisis. Argentina, which is not ALBA, is in very bad shape. It's an example of why that economic model doesn't work. So there's no leadership there on the economic side.

On the political side I don't really think that there's leadership there either. I've been disappointed in the defense of democracy by other governments, but I don't see that anybody is defending the model. So I see that alliance as one that on certain issues when it touches on something that historically is one of solidarity they can lead, but that's kind of a cheap and easy win.

MR. TRINKUNAS: I think we have last -- over here on the left with the pink scarf.

MS. BENJAMIN: Yes, hi, Medea Benjamin writing for *Huffington Post*. Since you said that words matter will you say that Venezuela is not a threat to U.S. national security? (Laughter) Also is the U.S. funding Cuban dissident groups to go to the summit, and do you know who is deciding who gets accredited as a civil society group?

MS. JACOBSON: You are not going to get me to say words that contradict an executive order of the President of the United States. I've said that we have no interest in invading and no interest in overthrowing the government, but the words that are in an executive order are the words that outline sanctions. So what they refer to is threats to a banking system or not wanting certain people to enter the country for Visa purposes or banking.

On the issue of the dissidents, I would have to see about funding. I know that what we had was the possibility of helping civil society organizations like Writ Large if they needed funding to get to the summit. That was an open possibility and I'm not sure anybody took advantage of that. And it was a very small amount of money through like the Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Bureau at state which was possibly going to make some money available. And I'm not sure if anybody did take advantage of that.

On the last question on accreditation, that's the host government in this case which makes that decision, and they in fact I believe were working with Panamanian nongovernmental organizations to make those decisions because in this case it was not going to be the OAS that ran the civil society forum, because as you know Cuba is suspended from the Organization of American States and it would not be fair to have OAS rules apply because otherwise Cuban groups would not be able to be present. So we didn't use OAS rules and the OAS didn't therefore do the accreditation, it was Panama with these NGOs.

MR. TRINKUNAS: Well, Roberta, thank you very, very much for a wonderful talk and a wonderful conversation with us. Please join me in thanking Roberta.
(Applause)

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