



## **Vance News**

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### **Vance Center Publishes Report on 2015 Summit**

The Vance Center has released a report on the 2015 Legal Summit of the Americas, which took place in December of last year. It summarizes the panels and working group sessions and includes transcripts of key speeches at the Summit.

The report recounts conclusions that participants reached at the Summit, offering the Vance Center and its partner organizations in Latin America direction for their further work. These include:

- Corruption is a common problem for practicing lawyers; they confront it on behalf of their corporate clients, as well as personally;
- Lawyers face intimidation and retribution based on their legitimate practice of law, particularly in human rights cases;
- Despite inveterate corruption in many countries, lawyers have confidence in governmental and legal institutions, particularly in the legal profession as a bulwark against abuses;
- Lawyers consider civil society organizations to be important defenders of the rule of law and fundamental rights, even while they admit to limited understanding of how they operate;
- There is hardly any culture of charitable contributions in Latin America; civil society organizations have inadequate legal frameworks and infrastructures to operate;
- Pro bono practice is important and gratifying, but insufficient in fulfilling the ambition of many lawyers to contribute to improvements in their countries.



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From left: Edwin S. Maynard, Luis Almagro Lemes, Renate Rennie, Debra Raskin, and Alexander Papachristou

*Photo Credit: Karina Benzaquen*

The report concludes with a call for renewed collaboration within the legal profession and expanded ambitions for its collective work, hinting at new initiatives ahead:

“As voiced by participants in our Summit, securing the independence of the profession, combating corruption, and supporting civil society, are common concerns that can be addressed only by working together. Partnerships including law firms, lawyers’ organizations, NGOs, academicians, and bar associations from the United States and Latin America will facilitate development of long-term regional strategies for strengthening the legal profession’s independence and activism on behalf of democratic governance and open society.

“Establishing a network of members of the legal profession in furtherance of the Summit’s objectives also would provide support among NGOs in related areas and to individual NGOs in conditions of great need. Effectively fighting corruption and strengthening civil society require a vehicle that brings the private bar into civil society itself and maintains independence from politicized entities. In this manner, lawyers can take responsibility for NGOs, which also can stand for the interests they represent.”

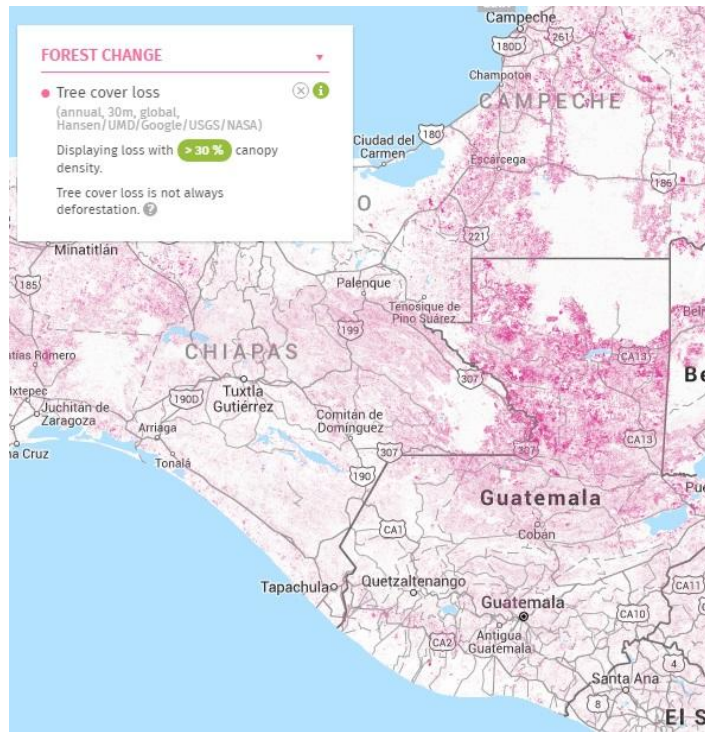
The report’s final words reflect on the Vance Center’s commitment to the legacy of its eponym: “We will continue to fulfill Secretary Vance’s vision and achievement by pursuing democratic governance, open society, and the rule of law in Latin America through peer-to-peer collaboration of members of the legal profession.”

### **Vance Center Joins Panel on Deforestation in Guatemala**



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A map of tree cover loss in Guatemala

Photo Credit: [www.globalforestwatch.org](http://www.globalforestwatch.org)

Guatemala has one of Latin America's most diverse forest ecosystems, but also one of the largest rates of deforestation in Central America. Through an analysis of the gaps and deficiencies in the current legal regime and a comparison with similar systems in other Latin American countries, Tigre drew conclusions on legal avenues for improved forest protection. Based on the model of protected areas widely used in Latin America, she used Guatemala as a case study to show how poor management of said areas is promoting widespread environmental threats, which are worsening the vulnerability of a country already prone to disaster, and how governance can improve the status quo.

Tigre was joined on the panel by Steven Bender, from Seattle University School of Law, Patricia Ferreira, from the Centre for Global Governance and Innovation in Canada, Marcia Narine, from St Thomas University School of Law, and Beth Lyon, from Cornell University Law School. The panelists shared their views and recommendations on current challenges in natural resource extraction in Guatemala, specifically related to business and human rights, climate change, deforestation, worker's rights in *manquilladoras* and language limitations to access to justice.

The analysis and recommendations of the panel will be published next year in the book "From Extraction to Emancipation" edited by Raquel Aldana and Steven W. Bender. The book will analyze some of the challenges faced throughout the Global South, such as

Vance Center environmental attorney Maria Antonia Tigre recently spoke on a panel at the 2016 Law and Society Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans. The panel, "Study Space Guatemala: From Extraction to Emancipation – Reimagining Development for Guatemala" reviewed the research findings of a diverse group of scholars on the social and economic challenges Guatemala currently faces due to legal gaps in regulating natural resource exploitation. The Vance Center supports the improvement of the rule of law, human rights, and environmental protection in Guatemala, and works with nonprofits there to pursue those goals.

Tigre discussed the severe threat to the unique ecosystem of Guatemala posed by intense deforestation, especially in the Petén area.

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environmental degradation, water depletion and contamination, forced displacement, and labor exploitation, using Guatemala as a concrete example. It questions how law can and should restore the balance between the promotion of investment and economic development with the protection of the public interest and the preservation of the public good.

### **Vance Center Launches Steering Committee for Women in the Profession Program**



WIP International Steering Committee members at the inauguration of Mexico's Abogadas MX 2016 mentoring program. From left: Taisa Markus from Paul Hastings, Adriana Ospina from the Vance Center, and Ruti Smithline from Morrison & Foerester.  
*Photo Credit: Victor Rivera*

The Vance Center Women in the Profession ("WIP") program recently convened the first meeting of its newly formed International Steering Committee. The committee, directed by the Vance Center, consists of 32 women law firm partners and a general counsel from 18 Latin American countries, and eight women partners from the Vance Center Committee Women in the Profession Working Group.

The Vance Center's WIP program has been committed to the advancement of women in the legal profession since it sponsored its first annual international conference in 2007. These annual conferences have provided an opportunity for women leaders and younger professionals to discuss issues regarding gender diversity in the legal profession. Due to the interest expressed by women lawyers across the region, the Vance Center, with the support of leading women

lawyers who have attended and co-organized the conferences, decided to extend the program to 18 countries in Latin America.

To accomplish this goal, the Vance Center established the International Steering Committee, consisting of one or two representatives from each of the 18 countries taking part in the committee. The representatives agreed to institute in each of the countries a local WIP Program to pursue the mission to promote the advancement of women in the legal profession. They also agreed to sign the International Commitment Declaration. This declaration provides that each local WIP Program will organize two events each year which will provide women lawyers with a platform to share ideas and create initiatives that support the hiring, retention, and promotion of women lawyers. Each program will also





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carry out at least one project annually that will give member lawyers the opportunity to make the practice of law enhance the status of women in general.

In preparation for the first meeting of the International Steering Committee, representatives from each country submitted written summaries of the action plans for each local group [country program summaries]. The committee representatives, who participated in the meeting via conference call, were able to share ideas and discuss best practices regarding the different types of programs that have been developed, or are planned, to promote gender diversity in each respective country. Local groups in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico have been running mentoring programs for a few years, and their representatives shared their experiences and lessons learned from these programs. There was much enthusiasm among the group at the opportunity to discuss with colleagues from across the region different ways of promoting the advancement of fellow women lawyers.

The International Steering Committee will meet in person for the first time in

Washington, DC on September 20, 2016, and by then all of the local programs that are not currently running will be officially launched.



Argentina's joint mentoring program with the University of San Andres receives the Chambers Women in Law Latin America award in the category "Most valuable Mentoring Program for Women Lawyers"

From left: Carolina Arroyo from Zang, Bergel & Vines; Dee Sekar from Chambers & Partners Global Diversity Editor

*Photo Credit: Chambers & Partners*

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Chile's mentoring program "learning to lead" recently ended its successful first year. The program was sponsored by Carey, Chile's largest law firm, and Falabella, a Chilean retailer, with the support of the Vance Center. From left: Jorge Carey, Lorena Pavic and Jessica Power all Partners from Carey; Paola Bruzzzone from EY and Carlo Solari Falabella President

*Photo Credit: El Mercurio SA*

### **Vance Center Launches Amicus Brief Initiative**

The Vance Center has launched a new initiative to support the Center's clients and mission through amicus brief filings before selected tribunals. This represents a significant expansion of the Center's previous work, notably representing Human Rights Watch in an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in the marriage equality case *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Weil Gotshal & Manges partner Richard Levine, Arent Fox partner Hunter Carter, Sullivan & Cromwell partner Werner Ahlers, Morrison & Forester partner Carrie Cohen, and White & Case pro bono counsel Louis O'Neill, are leading their firms' teams, alongside New York Times Company deputy general counsel David McCraw. The firms of Skadden and Paul Weiss have also signed on to the initiative, and other firms have indicated interest. Together, this group of over 30 lawyers will monitor the databases of 8 national and 5 regional courts, as well as 9 international NGO sites, to identify cases on which there is an opportunity for filing amicus briefs. Additionally, the Vance Center invited its clients to



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request support directly for key cases relevant to their work.

The Vance Center will consider a wide variety of cases for the initiative, matching its and its clients' diverse priorities. Possible briefs will address cases regarding accountability for genocide or other egregious human rights violations, redress for violence and discrimination, and exercise of fundamental rule-of-law principles. Additionally, cases concerning good governance, corruption, and the protection of rights for environmental and human rights defenders, among others, will receive close monitoring.