

Vance News

May 2015

Vance Center Organizes Key Colombia Conference

The Vance Center recently convened a conference in Bogota, Colombia on transitional justice and the International Criminal Court, focusing on the ongoing peace process between the government and the main rebel group, the FARC. ICC Deputy Prosecutor James Stewart in a keynote address delivered a message to Colombia that could change the dynamics of the negotiations. Responding to widespread speculation about the role that the ICC might play in the aftermath of a potential peace accord, the Deputy Prosecutor emphasized the Court's flexibility and its desire to work alongside the Colombian government as the peace process progresses.

Vance Center Programs Director Marie-Claude Jean-Baptiste facilitated the deputy prosecutor's attendance, based on contacts she developed at The Hague in 2014 working with the Coalition for the International Criminal Court. This was the first high level ICC visit to Colombia since the peace negotiations got underway, and the deputy prosecutor's remarks afforded an opportunity to improve communication and understanding between the ICC and Colombia. With peace talks advancing to the most difficult stage, factions across Colombia's political spectrum increasingly have raised the threat of ICC intervention to challenge the peace process.

Such mischaracterization and misunderstanding of the ICC's role and intentions prompted the Vance Center to plan this important conference, along with Universidad del Rosario and other sponsors. It provided a platform for the ICC to deliver a clear message: it supports Colombia in its efforts to end peacefully the long-standing armed conflict; and it will remain flexible throughout the process, so long as those responsible for the most serious crimes do not go unpunished. Other speakers included Colombia's attorney general, inspector general, and chief negotiator, as well as media and national and international civil society leaders. For the conference agenda, click [here](#). To view the streaming of the conference please click [here](#). The conference's positive message resonated loudly among Colombians. In subsequent days, local newspapers praised the deputy prosecutor not only for clarifying the ICC's position on the peace talks, but also for promising flexibility and support along the way. For press coverage, please click [here](#).

The other conference sponsors were the [International Center for Transitional Justice](#), the [Coalition for the International Criminal Court](#), the newspaper [El Tiempo](#), the [United Nations Development Program](#) (UNDP), and the [Hanns Seidel Foundation](#) in the organization of this high-level discussion.

Vance News
May 2015



(ICC Deputy Prosecutor James Stewart and Programs Director Marie-Claude Jean-Baptiste)

Vance Center Convenes Expert Discussion on Darfur

The Vance Center organized a panel to discuss the effectiveness of international efforts to prevent and punish mass atrocity crimes, with a focus on the ongoing, but largely forgotten genocide in Darfur. The panel included experts from the International Criminal Court, the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, the U.S. government, and local and international human rights organizations.

The discussion focused on the effectiveness of existing legal, diplomatic, and humanitarian interventions to prevent and punish systematic atrocity crimes committed by and/or with the complicity of state officials. It identified challenges the international community faces in reconciling efforts at finding a peaceful resolution to conflicts while pursuing accountability for perpetrators of atrocity crimes.

Vance News

May 2015



(Panelists and Moderator along with event Co-Sponsors)

Co-hosted by the International Justice Project, the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, and the African Affairs Committee of the New York City Bar Association and moderated by Vance Center Programs Director Marie-Claude Jean-Baptiste, the panel discussion featured the following speakers who made the following remarks:

- **Jonathan Loeb**, Human Rights Watch Fellow, opened the panel with a vivid depiction of the situation on the ground in Darfur, including systemic killings, rape, theft of livestock, and destruction of villages, and the difficulties that the international community, including the UN peacekeeping mission, faces in protecting civilians when the main perpetrators of atrocity crimes against the civilian population are government forces.
- **Luke Mhlaba**, Principal Legal Officer at the Office of the Legal Counsel to the United Nations and former legal advisor to the peacekeeping mission in Darfur, discussed the role of the UN peacekeeping mission in providing security to the civilian population and the interplay between the work of the UN and the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- **Jana Ramsey** of the Office of Global Criminal Justice of the U.S. Department of State spoke about the work of the U.S. government's Atrocities Prevention Board in promoting a coordinated approach to the prevention and punishment of atrocity crimes. Regarding Darfur, Ms. Ramsey reminded the audience that the "passage of time does not diminish [the U.S. government's] will to bring perpetrators to justice", and that the U.S. government has not forgotten Darfur.
- **Karen Mosoti**, head of the ICC Liaison Office to the United Nations addressed the role of the ICC in achieving accountability in Darfur and explained the challenges the Court faces in prosecuting the cases against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and two other indictees at large, given the lack of cooperation from the international community, including State Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC and the UN Security Council, which referred the case to the ICC. Mrs. Mosoti spoke about proposals under discussion at the Assembly of State

Vance News

May 2015

Parties of the ICC regarding cooperation that may help to address these challenges.

• **Raymond Brown and Wanda Akin**, co-founders of the International Justice Project and representatives of victims in the Bashir case before the ICC, closed the panel by explaining the victim participation scheme before the ICC, the challenges of working with victims in a case where the defendant is still at large, and the need for victims' voices to be heard.



Vance Center Gains Key Staff Member



Adriana Ospina has joined the Vance Center as Director of Pro Bono Partnerships, responsible for developing and managing relationships with law firms and other legal institutions that collaborate on pro bono legal representation with Vance Center lawyers. In addition, she manages the Center's relationship with pro bono clearinghouse organizations, including those in the Pro Bono Network of the Americas, to promote pro bono practice in Latin America and elsewhere.

Ms. Ospina currently serves as a member of the Greenwich Board of Education in Greenwich, CT and has been active in supporting initiatives to narrow the achievement gap between minority students and their non-minority counterparts in Greenwich's fifteen schools. She is also an active volunteer for Abilis, a non-for-profit organization that serves children and



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Vance News

May 2015

adults with disabilities. As the director of Abilis' Hispanic parent network, Ms. Ospina was responsible for planning and teaching a bi-annual course on special needs law to low-income, Hispanic parents of children with special needs.

Ms. Ospina received a JD from Harvard Law School and an AB in German Studies from Harvard College. After receiving her JD, Ms. Ospina worked as an associate with the law firm Shearman & Sterling in the New York office and subsequently as Of Counsel while living in Brazil and then Colombia. During her time at Shearman & Sterling, Ms. Ospina worked on general corporate and banking finance transactions.

Ms. Ospina was born in Colombia and has lived in the United States, Austria and Brazil. She speaks Spanish, English, Portuguese, French, and German.