

Vance News
December 2015

Vance Center Convenes the 2015 Legal Summit of the Americas



Before the luncheon on the second day of the summit

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

Photo Credit: Karina Benzaquen

More than 80 attorneys, NGO leaders and members of academia gathered at the New York City Bar Association recently to participate in the 2015 Legal Summit of the Americas, convened by the Vance Center. The participants represented 19 countries, five bar associations, six universities, 21 NGOs, and 37 law firms. The Summit began with welcoming remarks by New York City Bar Association President Debra Raskin and Summit co-chairs Antonia Stolper, Vance Center Committee vice-chair and partner at Shearman & Sterling, and Pablo Guerrero, president of Fundacion Pro Bono Chile and partner at Barros & Errazuriz.

Sub-titled “Democracy and the Lawyer”, the Summit focused on how the legal profession working collectively can strengthen governance and open society in Latin America. Throughout the two-day event, participants attended and appeared on several panels addressing issues such as current economic and political conditions in Latin America and human rights issues in the region. Other topics included the nature of the ethical obligation of



Vance News

December 2015

lawyers to support access to justice and a review of pro bono development in the region since the drafting of the Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas.

The Vance Center intended the Summit to stimulate the development of strategic initiatives for its and its partners' continued engagement in Latin America, following on the 2005 summit and the ensuing pro bono initiative. The heart of the 2015 Summit were three break-out sessions in which all participants rotated among working group discussions of specific themes: supporting civil society; promoting honesty in governance; and enhancing ethics in the legal profession.

Moderating these discussions respectively were Vance Center Committee member Sabrena Silver, partner at Linklaters, and Carlos del Rio, partner at Creel, Carcia – Cuellar, Alza y Enriquez, Werner Ahlers, Vance Center Committee member ex officio and partner at Sullivan & Cromwell, and Carmen Rosa Villa Quintana, regional representative for Central America of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Vance Center Committee member Hunter Carter, partner at Arent Fox, and Ruby Asturias, partner at Pacheco Coto Central America.

At a luncheon on the second day of the Summit, Manhattan District Attorney and former Vance Center Committee member Cyrus R. Vance Jr. expressed how “delighted my father would be to discover all the great work that the Vance Center is doing enabling lawyers to contribute to social justice”. In the Summit’s keynote speech, Luis Almagro Lemes, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, described his organization’s efforts to ensure “more rights for more people” in the Americas, including the right to access justice and to be free of corruption, both key concerns of the Summit.

At the Summit’s conclusion, the working group moderators joined Summit co-chairs Todd Crider, Vance Center Committee vice-chair and partner at Simpson Thatcher, and Paula Samper, President of Fundacion Pro Bono Colombia and partner at Gomes-Pinzon Zuleta Abogados, in summarizing the panel and working group sessions. Todd Crider opined that, “as lawyers, by virtue of the type of thing we do, we have to work for access to justice (...). As more and more lawyers do pro bono, people’s lives are changed. This would not occur but for our actions. We must continue to make the delta of our existence.”

Vance News

December 2015



Members of the 2007-2008 drafting committee of the Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas
(From left: Todd Crider, Paula Samper, Horacio Bernardes Neto)

Photo Credit: Karina Benzaquen

The Summit took place thanks to partial funding from the Tinker Foundation, as well as the support of other sponsors, including members of the Vance Center Committee. A full list of participants, Summit materials, and photos of the Summit are available [here](#). A report on the Summit is forthcoming early next year.

Vance Center Attends Climate Change Conference in Paris

As diplomats, NGOs, and observers from 195 countries gathered in Paris at the 21st Conference of the Parties ("COP 21") to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ("[UNFCCC](#)") , the Vance Center was well-represented. Vance Center Committee member Rubén Kraiem participated as a member of the Panamanian delegation and the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, while Environment Program Director Susan Kath attended as an NGO-observer for the American Society of International Law.

In a dramatic conclusion, a day behind schedule, Laurent Fabius, French Foreign Minister and President of COP21 announced that delegates had unanimously agreed on new, ambitious undertakings, [the Paris Agreement](#). This marked the end of a contentious and challenging two-decade effort by developed and developing countries to agree on concrete steps to reduce carbon emissions, but also the roadmap for further work addressing global climate change.

Vance News
December 2015



**Plaza Entrance to Le Bourget Where the Conference
Was Held**

Photo Credit: Susan Kath

Some highlights include: reaffirming the goal of limiting global temperature increase well below 2 degrees (and urging limiting it to 1.5 degrees); establishing binding commitments by all parties to make “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs), and to revise them every 5 years, and pursue domestic measures to achieve them; committing to regular reporting and international review by all countries;; reaffirming the binding obligations of developed countries to support the efforts of developing countries, and encouraging voluntary contributions by developing countries with a goal of mobilizing \$100 billion a year through 2025; extending a limited “loss and damage” mechanism; prohibiting “double counting” in international emissions trading; and calling for a new mechanism, similar to the Clean Development Mechanism, which allows emission reductions in one country to be counted toward another country’s NDC.

Kraiem’s efforts yielded good results for the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, a pro bono client of his firm Covington & Burling, in its efforts to introduce a mechanism in the UNFCCC process for promoting and, on the basis of results-based payments, incentivizing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). That REDD+ became part of Article 5, par. 2 of the Paris Agreement ensured that it will be part of the post-2020 regime.

Kath, in addition to observing many COP 21 negotiating sessions, joined in the initiative by the human rights and climate change working group to secure language protecting human rights in the Paris Agreement, which was successfully included in the preamble to the agreement. Kath also participated in numerous side events about climate change and adaptation planning related to forest governance and biodiversity in Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. She also attended the inaugural Climate Law and Governance Day at the Sorbonne, an initiative to

Vance News

December 2015

address how the international legal community can support implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Vance Center Continues to Pursue LGBT Rights in Latin America

The Vance Center and its client, the Legal Assistance Office for Sexual Diversity in El Salvador (ALDES), recently organized a training program for lawyers in El Salvador to provide pro bono representation to LGBTI persons. Matt Rooney, Senior Counsel at Vance Center Committee law firm Mayer Brown conducted the training which focused on using international law to protect LGBTI rights.

El Salvador has signed and ratified several treaties with provisions that can protect LGBTI people. According to the Salvadoran Constitution, these treaties supersede laws inconsistent with them and thus strengthen protections for the LGBTI community, which suffers hostile treatment by many in Salvadoran society and law enforcement.

27 Salvadoran lawyers from the Attorney General's office, the national police academy, a university law clinic, a human rights law clinic, and private law firms attended the training. Lawyers from Mayer Brown had prepared an extensive training manual distributed at the training. In addition to conducting the training, Rooney joined ALDES Executive Director Ana Montano in meeting with representatives of several NGOs that support the LGBTI community, attending a conference on the mistreatment of LGBTI persons in the country, and participating with members of local university and human rights law clinics in a legal counseling open house for the community.

The training continued the long collaboration between the Vance Center and ALDES on LGBTI rights in El Salvador. That lawyers are interested in providing pro bono representation on these issues represents notable progress in securing rights for LGBTI persons.



Matt Rooney Presenting Case Law on LGBT Rights to the Participants

(From left: Matt Rooney, and Brandon Freeman)

Photo Credit: Matt Rooney and ALDES



CYRUS R. **VANCE CENTER**
FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

Vance News

December 2015

Coincidentally, that same week, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights released its report on “Violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Persons in the Americas”. The report describes widespread violations of LGBTI rights in the region, such as violence, discrimination, harassment, and failure to protect, including by official policy and action. It also surveys the various laws of most countries in the hemisphere that relate to LGBTI rights, both supporting them and undermining them. In the report, the IACHR acknowledged the support of the Vance Center’s Human Rights and Access to Justice Program, its pro bono partner law firms and their individual associates and partners who collaborated through the Pro Bono Network of the Americas. The Spanish version of the report can be accessed by [here](#).