The 24th Biannual Latin America Working Group

February 7 & 8, 2013
Mexico City

Thursday, February 7th

8:30 – 10:00 pm  Welcome dinner with the Secretary of Foreign Relations José Antonio Meade Kuribreña

Sección F de la Sala José María Morelos. Torre Tlatelolco, Av. Juárez 20, Piso 1

Friday, February 8th

8:00 – 8:30 am  Breakfast

8:30 – 8:45 am  Welcoming remarks: Michael Shifter, Inter-American Dialogue, COMEXI, & Ambassador Andrés Rozental

Sección D de la Sala José María Morelos. Torre Tlatelolco, Av Juárez 20, Piso 1
Mexico: A moment for real reform?

How would you assess the first two months of the Peña Nieto administration? To what extent is the reform agenda on track? Are there grounds for optimism? Do the “Pact for Mexico” and recent labor reform herald a new era of cooperation? If successful, what would be the effect of energy reform on the country’s economic outlook? Will such reform become reality? Will the PRI and PAN continue to work together in pursuing education and fiscal reform? Will the reform processes generate significant resistance? What are the main obstacles that stand in the way?

On the security front, how is Peña Nieto likely to make his mark in light of Calderón’s significant institutional legacy? To what degree are major changes in strategy contemplated? What are the realistic prospects for progress? To what extent do recent figures point to a more encouraging trend? Will policy measures reflect the shifting landscape of criminal activity in Mexico?

Coffee break

Mexico: What lies ahead in foreign policy?

To what extent is Mexico’s foreign policy likely to change under the current administration? What issues or countries will get more or less emphasis? Will the direction be roughly the same as the past six years?

Can we expect any significant change in the security cooperation framework with the United States? What other issues, besides security, will drive the US-Mexico agenda? Can longstanding sources of bilateral tensions, especially immigration and anti-drug policy, be tackled? How does the Mexican energy sector reform impact the relationship?

Which are the prospects for Mexican relations with Central America? To what extent will Mexico’s security situation and policy affect the relationship? Is there a chance for more cooperation on security, and room for an agenda beyond security?

To what extent will the Mexican government want to engage South America? Will be the Mexico-Brazil relationship significantly shape hemispheric dynamics? Which are further topics of interest for Mexican foreign policy on the bilateral agendas with Latin American countries? Do any other countries deserve special attention in Mexican foreign policy? Will there be any changes in Mexico’s approach towards Cuba? What are the implications of successful negotiations of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)?
12:15 – 12:30 pm  Question and answer session with Under Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, Vanessa Rubio Márquez

12:30 – 2:00 pm  Lunch with Under Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, Vanessa Rubio Márquez

2:00 – 3:30 pm  Venezuela: Possible scenarios

What is the nature of the current political and economic situation in Venezuela? Who is in charge? Are there likely to be elections over the coming months? What are current dynamics within the PSUV and Chavismo? Are the splits significant or minor? Is the opposition prepared for another election? What is the status of the opposition’s unity and leadership? Does it have a strategy? What is the role of the armed forces? Are they likely to be a critical actor in plausible scenarios? How serious is the security situation in the country? Is it continuing to deteriorate? Is the economic outlook is as dire as many predict and could a devaluation further aggravate political tensions? What are the regional impacts of different possible Venezuelan scenarios? What are the likely effects on the Colombian peace talks? What about the role of Cuba in post-Chávez scenarios? How would different political scenarios affect Brazil’s agenda in the region? What about ALBA members and governments that are part of Petrocaribe? What are the possible economic and political effects of a change in government in Venezuela?

3:30 – 5:00 pm  Colombia: Is peace possible?

What is the current status and prospects of the peace talks? What are the risks involved in such an effort? If the talks break down, what would be the impact on the Santos presidency? If an agreement is reached, does Santos have enough political capital and capacity to unite Colombian society to fully support the terms of the accord on critical issues like land, drugs, and justice? How significant would an end of the conflict be for Colombia’s economic prospects and political situation? What are the Santos administration’s main sources of strength? What are its weaknesses and vulnerabilities? Are opposition forces likely to get any traction? What role is Uribe playing and what are his objectives? Does Santos seem to be a strong position to be reelected in 2014? Are the country’s economic and social agenda on a positive path?

To what extent has Santos’ foreign policy succeeded? What has been accomplished to date? Is Santos poised to play a regional leadership role? What has been the effect of the ICJ ruling?
What are the main issues on the US-Colombia agenda? Will Colombia play a role in Central America?

5:00 – 5:15 pm  
**Coffee break**

5:15 – 6:30 pm  
**Ecuador: Where is the country headed?**

What are possible outcomes and implications of the presidential election? What are likely to be the most decisive issues? If Correa is reelected, what are likely to be his next steps? What will be the main economic and political challenges facing the government over the next term? Will an opposition begin to take shape? What about the splits and tensions within Correa’s Alianza País?

If Chávez leaves the scene, will Correa assume a more active posture on the regional stage? To what extent is China playing a critical role in Ecuador? Will the relationship between Quito and Washington improve in coming years? Will the Assange case have any meaningful consequences for Ecuador’s international reputation and standing?