The 23rd Biannual Latin America Working Group

July 23 & 24, 2012
Washington, D.C.

Monday, July 23rd

7:30 – 9:30 pm Welcome dinner at Circle Bistro (One Washington Circle NW, Washington, DC 20037)

Tuesday, July 24th

8:00 – 8:30 am Breakfast

8:30 – 8:45 am Welcoming remarks: Michael Shifter, Inter-American Dialogue

8:45 – 10:15 am Mexico: What lies ahead?

What can be expected from Peña Nieto? What does the PRI’s win mean for democracy in Mexico? Is it a changed party? Does the recent student movement represent a renewed citizen engagement? How will the congressional landscape affect legislation this sexenio? What policies can be expected, or hoped for, to tackle insecurity, corruption, and the drug trade?

What are Mexico’s prospects for economic growth? To what extent will reform be possible in the energy and fiscal arenas?
What kind of relationship should be expected between the United States and Mexico? What potential do the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations have for Mexico? What does the newly formed Pacific Alliance mean for Mexico’s regional relations? Overall, what changes in the relationship with South America can be expected to stem from a new administration?

10:15 – 10:30 am  Coffee break

10:30 – 12:15 pm  Colombia: How is Santos doing at mid-term?

What are the causes and implications of Santos’ lower approval levels of approval? What are the politics behind the judicial reform and why did it create such a strong public reaction? What has been the consequent fall-out? What is the potential for Uribe’s ‘Puro Centro Democrático’ political coalition? Are there other viable political options? What is the status of government – FARC relations and the prospect for peace? Does the ‘Marco Jurídico de la Paz’ represent a new strategy for conflict resolution? What are its merits and flaws?

To what extent has Santos’ foreign policy succeeded? Has a new approach benefited the country? What have been the effects of the Cartagena Summit for Colombia’s standing in the hemisphere? How will Colombia’s presidency of the United Nations Security Council influence its leadership in security issues? What are the prospects of stronger ties with China? To what extent does the TPP represent an opportunity for Colombia?

12:30 – 2:00 pm  Lunch: A conversation with Ricardo Zuniga, Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs, National Security Council

What is the outlook for regional institutions and hemispheric relations? Were reactions to President Lugo’s ouster appropriate or effective? In light of Paraguay’s suspension and Venezuela’s admission, what is the outlook on Mercosur’s current and future role? How at risk is the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights? Considering the OAS mandate to conduct a report on drug policy, what strategies may be adopted at the regional level to engage this challenge cooperatively?
2:00 – 3:15 pm  Peru: Where is Humala headed?

What have been the most important achievements in the first year of Humala’s government? Have there been any surprises? How effective has he been holding his coalition together? What role have mining conflicts played? How has the administration handled the persisting conflicts? What are the key challenges facing Humala in the coming years? Is it likely that Peru can manage growing security concerns?

What is the outlook for Peru’s continued growth and reduction in poverty? Do Humala’s social policies truly represent a break with the past?

To what extent does Humala’s foreign policy differ from García’s? What are the Humala administration’s main foreign policy priorities, both within the hemisphere and globally? With the recent International Drug Conference held in Peru, is the country looking to play an active role on the drug issue?

3:15 – 4:15 pm  Ecuador & Bolivia: What are the prospects?

Ecuador: How strong is Correa’s political support? What are likely to be the main issues in the upcoming 2013 election? Will the opposition be able to mount a significant challenge to Correa? How has the President’s relationship with the press evolved? How legitimate is the judicial system? Is public spending sustainable? What are the main economic weaknesses the country faces?

What are the aspirations and limitations of Correa’s regional posture in light of his boycott of the Summit of the Americas and his comments during the OAS General Assembly in Cochabamba? What are the prospects for improved relations with the United States?

Bolivia: How solid is Morales’ political standing? What are the trends and implications of Morales’ popularity? Could rising political discontent with the President pose a risk for political instability? What do the recent police mutiny and indigenous protests reflect? Are there any potential presidential candidates that present a challenge? What are the main economic concerns? Will nationalizations continue?

How is Bolivia’s drug situation changing? To what extent is Brazil playing a policy role in dealing with the drug question? How do US-Bolivian relations stand, and what are the prospects for improvement?
4:15 – 4:30 pm  Coffee break

4:30 – 6:00 pm  Venezuela: What are likely scenarios?

What is the current state of play in Venezuela? How is the presidential campaign progressing? What are the main vulnerabilities and strengths of the two main candidates? What are the major issues being discussed? What is the likelihood of another Chavez administration? What role could restricted press freedom play? How great is the risk of violence during or after this campaign? Given Chavez’s health, what might be in store for Venezuela should he exit the national stage?

How is Venezuela’s relationship with its neighbors? To what extent can Venezuela’s entry into Mercosur improve its regional position? What are the trends of Chavez’s influence within the region and globally? Is there any chance for improved relations with the US?