



Plan País

A Long-Term Vision for Venezuela

Conference Programme

Yale University, April 2011

Mission

- To encourage the development of a long-term vision for Venezuela
- To produce an innovative and comprehensive set of policy goals
- To build a cohesive community of Venezuelan students and professionals abroad

Background

At a time when its Latin American neighbors are swiftly recovering from the global financial crisis and demonstrating sustained improvement in the standards of living of their citizens, Venezuela is facing an inflation rate of over thirty percent per year, negative economic growth, and some of the highest crime rates in the world.

Under the motto, *“what can we do for our country?”* our conference strives to foster a constructive, academic debate about the most effective ways in which Venezuela can achieve its full potential. Together we hope to formulate a comprehensive development plan focused on poverty alleviation and social inclusion.

We wish to invite students passionate about policymaking and interested in Venezuela to participate in seminar-style workshops moderated by Latin America experts. These experts are distinguished personalities in the Latin American academic sphere.

The product of this exercise will be a policy brief that highlights students' innovative recommendations. The brief will then be forwarded to Venezuelan policymakers and academics with the intention of disseminating the students' long-term vision and inviting further dialogue and action. We thus hope that the learning experience will continue far beyond the conference and will be the first step in building a close community of Venezuelan students and professionals.

Format

The conference will be organized into nine different working groups, under three different categories: Social, Economic, and Institutional. Attendees will rate their placement preferences and then be appointed to their respective groups, working with other members in their group for the duration of the conference to propose potential solutions to the topics at hand.

Each working group will have ten to twenty members in addition to a moderator and will be held in a small classroom setting. A renowned expert in the respective field will guide the discussion.

There will be three two-hour sessions and one one-hour session, covering the following four stages:

- I. **Diagnostics:** Look at the facts—what are the main problems in this area?
- II. **Priorities:** Discuss the urgency of the problems—which of the issues should we focus on?
- III. **Proposals:** Brainstorm potential solutions—how can we best address these challenges?
- IV. **Evaluation:** Prepare for the group presentation—what are the limitations of the proposals?

A general meeting will take place on the second day after the workshop sessions have concluded. Elected representatives from each group will present their group's policy brief to the rest of the attendees so that participants can ask questions and engage themselves in the other areas.



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Agenda

Friday, April 1, 2011

Linsly-Chittenden Hall (LC)

63 High St., New Haven, CT

9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Registration <i>New Haven Hotel, Foyer, 229 George St.</i>
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Opening Ceremony Prof. Luis Vicente León: <i>“Deconstructing Venezuela’s Most Important Myths”</i> Prof. Ricardo Hausmann: <i>“Devising a Governance Strategy”</i> <i>LC 102</i>
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	First Working Group Session <i>(See “Working Groups” below for room numbers)</i>
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Break <i>Refreshments in LC Foyer</i>
4:30 pm – 6:30 pm	Second Working Group Session
8:30 pm – 10:00 pm	Arepa Dinner <i>Pierson College Dining Hall, 261 Park St.</i>
10:30 pm – 1:00 am	Cocktail Reception <i>Bespoke, 266 College St.</i>

Saturday, April 2, 2011

Linsly-Chittenden Hall (LC)

63 High St., New Haven, CT

9:00 am – 11:00 am	Third Working Group Session
11:00 am – 12:30 pm	Lunch Break
12:30 pm – 2:30 pm	Fourth Working Group Session
2:45 pm – 3:15 pm	Colloquium Mr. Lorenzo Mendoza: <i>“Why Do We Need a Strong Private Sector?”</i>
3:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Group Presentations and Closing Remarks <i>LC 101</i>

Working Groups

Social

Education: Investing in Venezuela’s People – Dr. Juan Carlos Navarro

LC 103 (Fri., Sat.)

This working group will focus on the quality of and access to public education in Venezuela, regionally and nationally. What can we do to make our labor force more competitive? How should the government expand university access?

Poverty Alleviation: The Future of Social Programs in Venezuela – Mrs. Monica Dohnert

LC 206 (Fri., Sat.)

We will first evaluate the performance of government programs (*misiones*) in raising the standard of living of Venezuela’s poorest. How can the existing mechanisms be improved? What is the potential of programs such as conditional cash transfers or microfinance in the country?

Crime and Impunity: Making Venezuela a Safe Place – Prof. Ángel Ayalón

LC 105 (Fri., Sat.)

Tackling crime and violence in Venezuela is a complex task because they are the symptoms of several failures, including a lack of gun control, a weak judiciary, overcrowded prisons, and police corruption. This working group will seek to develop a *comprehensive* plan to attack the homicide rate from several angles. Finally, how should ex-convicts be reinserted into society?

Economic

Fiscal, Monetary, and Exchange Rate Policy – Dr. Alejandro Grisanti

LC 204 (Fri., Sat.)

Venezuela has one of the most complicated exchange rate regimes in the world, the region's highest inflation rate, and a consistently pro-cyclical fiscal agenda. The group will attempt to address these concerns, and in doing so, aim to develop a sounder macro-economic model.

Reaping the Benefits of Our Oil “Curse” – Dr. Ramon Espinasa

LC 205 (Fri., Sat.)

In the last thirty years, Venezuela's economic growth has increasingly concentrated on oil production and exports. The advantages and disadvantages of this model will be discussed, and we will focus on several key policy topics, including the autonomy and ownership structure of PDVSA, the balance between business and social objectives, and the need for a gasoline subsidy (currently costing around 5% of GDP).

Stimulating Investment and Growth – Prof. Ricardo Hausmann

LC 210 (Fri., Sat.)

In an environment of high expropriation risk, limited capital markets, and high costs of doing business, how can we stimulate the growth of new, labor-intensive industries? The group will focus on diagnosing Venezuela's major constraints on investment activity, and based on these, propose policies aimed at sustaining growth.

Institutional

Implementing Checks and Balances – Prof. Carlos Blanco

LC 104 (Fri., Sat.)

The Venezuelan political system has been characterized by a high level of centralization and a dependence on the executive. The introduction of the *Consejos Comunales*, or Community Councils, and the politicization of the military have changed the political panorama. How can we improve governance considering these intra-state actors?

Electing the Fairest System of Representation – Prof. Francisco Monaldi

LC 212 (Fri.), LC 208 (Sat.)

We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Venezuelan electoral system, debate the differences between participatory and representative democracy, and attempt to determine which system best ensures effective and equitable representation at the local, state, and national levels.

Information and Disinformation: Venezuela's Politically Active Media – Dr. Ana Julia Jatar

LC 318 (Fri.), LC 209 (Sat.)

Venezuelan public and private media, as institutions, have played an exceedingly important role in the country's political process. The group will debate the politicization of the media, its polarizing effect on voters, and its social responsibilities in the context of the recent media law, *Ley Resorte*.

Organizing Team

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