# LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

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THEDIALOGUE


FEATURED Q&A

# Is the Child Migration Crisis Still Ongoing?

Tens of thousands of unaccompanied children showed up last year at the U.S.-Mexico border. A portion of the border between Nogales, Ariz., and Nogales, Sonora is pictured above. // File Photo: U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Gordon Hyde.

**Q About a year has passed since tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors from Central America entering the United States sparked what some called a humanitarian crisis and led to calls to significantly expand U.S. engagement with the subregion. While the number of unaccompanied minors at the U.S. border has dropped this year, Mexico has reported a sharp increase in the number of deportations of Central American minors. What has happened to the minors who have been returned to their home countries? A year out, how would you rate the responses of the governments involved? What is the outlook for the 'Alliance for Prosperity' plan announced in response to the crisis last summer amid questions over U.S. funding given that the Guatemalan and Honduran governments are entangled in major corruption scandals?**

**A Eric L. Olson, associate director of the Latin American program at the Woodrow Wilson Center:** "It is clear that the humanitarian crisis faced by unaccompanied child migrants from the three Northern Triangle countries is not over when they are deported from the United States or Mexico. All three countries have improved procedures for receiving the children, providing a basic physical and psychological evaluation, and referring them to emergency care when needed. But in the vast majority of cases, returnees are sent on their way with minimal support—a bag lunch or a bus ticket home. No specific reintegration services are available, and in some cases we suspect the migrants either immediately or soon thereafter simply try to return to the United States. In cases where migrants return home, they often find

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### U.S., Cuba Reach Deal to Reopen Embassies

The deal comes six months after the Cold War foes announced their historic thaw in relations. U.S. President Barack Obama is expected to make the announcement this morning at the White House.

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POLITICAL

### United States, Brazil Vow to Fight Climate Change

Tuesday's announcement came during a visit by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff to Washington.

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BUSINESS

### Amazon Launches New Online Storefront for Mexico

The move represents the online retailer's "biggest international launch ever," said Juan Carlos García, the country manager for Amazon Mexico.

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García // File Photo: Twitter.

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POLITICAL NEWS

# United States, Cuba Reach Deal to Reopen Embassies

U.S. President Barack Obama is expected to announce today that the United States and Cuba have reached an agreement to restore diplomatic relations and will reopen embassies in each other's capitals, a senior administration official said Tuesday. The announcement comes six months after Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced in December that the Cold War foes would move toward restoring relations, 54 years after ties were severed in the wake of the Cuban Revolution. U.S. and Cuban officials held four rounds of talks in the past six months in an effort to re-establish diplomatic relations, The Wall Street Journal reported. Obama and Castro met for their first formal talks in April at the Summit of the Americas in Panama, and the United States in May removed Cuba from its list of state sponsors of terrorism. This morning, the chief of the U.S. interests section in Havana is expected to go to the Cuban foreign ministry to deliver a letter from Obama to Castro about the restoration of ties, and Obama is expected to deliver a speech from the White House Rose Garden at 11 a.m. Eastern Time, Reuters reported. The State Department must notify Congress of its intent to reopen the U.S. embassy in Havana, and lawmakers would then have 15 days to review the notification before the embassy can be re-established, The Wall Street Journal reported. That formal notification is expected to happen today. Later this month, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is expected to attend a flag-raising ceremony in Havana as the U.S. interests section is converted to an embassy, Reuters reported. The Cuban mission in Washington will have a similar conversion. "This is a huge development that shows that both Washington and Havana are committed to normalizing relations," Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, told the Advisor. "Establishing diplomatic ties was expected, though it still sends a powerful message that the long era of estrangement is, mercifully, over." During a news conference Tuesday at the White House with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, Obama expressed hopes that Washington's thaw with Cuba leads to "more opportunities and prosperity for the Cuban people." However, opponents of renewed ties criticized the move. "There was little doubt that the Obama administration would pursue its goal of opening an embassy in Cuba no matter the sad reality on the ground," said Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.). Also, Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, a presidential candidate, said he would oppose the nomination of any U.S. ambassador to Havana unless he sees progress on issues including human rights in Cuba as well as the resolution of property claims. [Editor's note: See **Q&A** on U.S.-Cuba relations in the June 18 issue of the Advisor.]

> **"Establishing diplomatic ties was expected, though it still sends a powerful message that the long era of estrangement is, mercifully, over."**
>
> **— Michael Shifter**

# U.S., Brazil Vow to Fight Climate Change

The United States and Brazil on Tuesday pledged to work together to reduce the impact of climate change and announced plans to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation in other areas during a long-delayed visit by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff to Washington, The Wall Street Journal reported. The announcement marks a small step forward for the nations ahead of a December meeting in Paris where U.S. President Barack Obama is hoping a global climate change accord will be reached. Both countries pledged to increase the share of renewable energy other than hydropower in their matrixes to 20 percent by 2030, and Brazil additionally committed to

NEWS BRIEFS

## U.S. Senator Makes Surprise Visit to Venezuela to Meet With Opposition

U.S. Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on Tuesday made a surprise visit to Venezuela where he met with members of the opposition, opposition leader María Corina Machado said on Twitter, the Associated Press reported. Corker's office and the U.S. Embassy in Caracas did not respond to requests for comment, so it is not known if the senator will also meet President Nicolás Maduro or government officials.

## Banco de Chile Agrees to Buy Penta's Credit Portfolio

Banco de Chile, one of the nation's largest banks, last week agreed to buy the credit portfolio of smaller Banco Penta, a source with knowledge of the deal told Reuters on Tuesday, contradicting an earlier report in local newspaper Diario Financiero that Banco de Chile had offered to pay $235 million for a number of Penta's key assets. Banco de Chile has been negotiating with Penta since January. Penta is selling off a number of assets at the same time its owners are being investigated in connection with alleged illegal campaign financing.

## Enersis Chairman Rosenblut Steps Down

The board of directors of Chilean-based power company Enersis on Tuesday announced the resignation of chairman and director Jorge Rosenblut, who has recently been the subject of media attention in Chile related to questions about irregular financing of the electoral campaign of President Michelle Bachelet, La Tercera reported. Enersis named Francisco de Borja Acha, the head of legal and corporate affairs at parent company Enel, as the company's new director and board chairman.

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eliminating illegal deforestation and restoring 12 million hectares by 2030. The United States has submitted a plan for the December meeting to cut greenhouse gases between 26

**Rousseff and Obama met Tuesday at the White House** // File Photo: Brazilian Government

and 28 percent by 2025 based on 2005 levels. Brazil has not yet submitted its climate-change plan, but Brian Deese, a senior adviser to Obama who focuses on climate change, said Tuesday's announcement "reflects the strong commitment of the two presidents to reaching an ambitious climate-change agreement." Rousseff's visit was a step down from the state visit that had been scheduled to occur in 2013, but was canceled in the wake of revelations that the U.S. National Security Agency had spied on her personal communications. The leaders Tuesday downplayed any remaining discord. They also announced a new U.S.-Brazil climate-change working group and agreed to boost cooperation in areas including military exchanges and cybersecurity.

**BUSINESS NEWS**

# Amazon Launches New Online Storefront for Mexico

Online retailer Amazon on Tuesday announced a major new push into Mexico, launching a Spanish-language site, Amazon.com.mx. The move builds on the success of its Kindle Store that opened for Mexican customers in 2013 and represents Amazon's "biggest international launch ever," said Juan Carlos García, country manager for Amazon Mexico. Amazon will offer free shipping on orders over 599 pesos, or about $38. The Seattle-based company has not achieved the scale of penetration abroad that it enjoys at home, however. Almost two-thirds of Amazon's revenue comes from North America, where sales grew 25 percent last year to $55.5 billion, Bloomberg News reported. By comparison, a recent study by A.T. Kearney estimated the growth of e-commerce in Mexico at 32 percent last year, to $6.6 billion. The Mexican Internet Association says that only one-fifth of Internet users there make purchases online. [Editor's note: See related **Q&A** in the May 12 issue of the Advisor.]

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the same violence and/or poverty that compelled their flight in the first place. Some are stigmatized for having failed in their quest to migrate or assumed to have engaged in illegal activity resulting in their deportation. Young women face particular stigma since it is often assumed they were sexually abused or raped during their perilous journey north. While government reintegration services are largely non-existent, grassroots organizations and non-governmental groups have stepped in to fill some of the gap. Churches—Catholic and Evangelical—have also tried to respond to the special needs of returnees, and in Guatemala, some Mayan groups have tried to expand their traditional community work to include resettlement. This is why it is important that the money President Obama requested of Congress be focused specifically on conditions in sending neighborhoods and communities so young people have alternatives to migration."

**Ursula Roldán A., migration coordinator in the Institute for Research and Policy Management (INGEP) at Rafael Landívar University in Guatemala City:** "The future of the children stopped at the U.S.-Mexico border and returned to our country is uncertain. Through May 31, 2014, there were 11,479 Guatemalan boys and girls stopped at the border, according to U.S. government figures. According to Guatemala's Directorate General of Migration, from the land route in Mexico, there were 6,152 Guatemalan minors deported in 2014 and 4,000 deported in 2015. The Jesuit Migrant Network in Central and North America on World Refugee Day cited two UNHCR investigations consisting of interviews with unaccompanied minors from Central America intercepted at the U.S border; 58 percent required special protection, and 48.6 percent who spent the night

> **"Central American governments continue to tie their hopes to the United States and business elites."**
>
> **— Ursula Roldán A.**

at migratory stations in Mexico mentioned having left for reasons of violence and security. Also, it was found that 73 percent had not received information about their right to seek asylum. This leaves us thinking that the greater number of deportations Mexico is carrying out, which is in line with U.S. policy, prioritizes immediate deportation over protecting children from the generalized violence and criminal structures that affect the Northern Triangle countries. For their part, the Central American governments simply receive deported migrants without providing any special attention to keep children from again becoming victims of violence. It is necessary for Central American governments and the United States to discuss humanitarian policies for shelter and family reunification. Central American governments continue to tie their hopes to the United States and business elites. The Alliance for Prosperity favors elites' plan for energy expansion, extractive projects and infrastructure platforms that benefit them. However, political fighting between Democrats and Republicans in the United

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States means they will likely only reinforce borders under their national security model, which is now moving south. So unaccompanied minors are just a pretext, since without transparent governments and in almost failed states, it will be difficult to attack the structural causes of migration."

**Adriana Beltrán, senior associate for citizen security at the Washington Office on Latin America:** "In February, the Obama administration requested $1 billion in 2016 assistance to Central America in the wake of the unprecedented wave of unaccompanied migrant children from the region. The proposal would triple foreign aid to Central America and broaden the focus of U.S. assistance beyond security to include funds for economic development, institutional reforms and governance. How much Congress will approve is still unclear. Last month, the House Appropriations Committee approved $296.5 million. The sum represents less than a third of the administration's request, exclusively funding security-related programs. The Senate Appropriations Committee will debate the aid package next week. Addressing the underlying factors of migration from the region is going to require significant funding and a comprehensive approach. Although fewer Central American migrants are arriving in the United States, this is largely due to a significant increase in apprehensions by Mexican authorities, which illustrates that the humanitarian crisis is far from over and underscores the urgent need to address the sources of violence and lack of opportunities driving many children and families to flee their homes. This will require investing in community-based violence prevention initiatives, supporting efforts to build effective and accountable criminal justice systems, strengthening democratic institutions and funding programs that improve education and provide training and job opportunities in the communities where migration is most likely. The current political crises in Guatemala and Honduras underscore that tackling the endemic corruption and impunity that have impeded progress in the region must be a central component of an effective strategy."

> **"The humanitarian crisis is far from over..."**
>
> **— Adriana Beltrán**

*Editor's note: The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at* gkuleta@thedialogue.org.


# Advisor Video

## A Conversation with Lorenzo Córdova

An Inter-American Dialogue Discussion with the head of Mexico's National Electoral Institute (INE)

View webcast of Monday's discussion.

PLAY



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