

¡Bienvenidas y bienvenidos to El CC, CCLATAM's newsletter!. Every other week you'll find the main events shaking up Latin America, from Ushuaia in the south to Los Algodones in the north. Sign up [here](#) to stay updated on the region. Get [in touch](#) with us, we may feature an excerpt of your response in the next newsletter.

Editorial issue



Secretary of State Marco Rubio concluded his inaugural tour of Central America in line with expectations, delivering a clear message: align with the U.S. agenda, and we will be allies. While much of the media spotlight focused on Rubio's trip, the real highlight was the [International Economic Forum 2025](#) for Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by [CAF](#)—a kind of "Mini Davos of Latin America and the Caribbean"—which brought together global leaders, policymakers, and experts to chart a path toward sustainable and inclusive development in the region. The event served as an unparalleled platform where governments, world-renowned experts, and the private sector collaboratively shaped a regional roadmap for economic transformation.

Over the course of two days, distinguished leaders and experts in economics, technology, and sustainability tackled the most pressing challenges and opportunities

facing the region. The forum convened key figures, including [José Raúl Mulino, President of Panama](#); [Santiago Peña, President of Paraguay](#); [Gastón Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda](#); [Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the IMF](#); economist and author [Jeremy Rifkin](#); former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi; former Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt; and thought leader Rachel Adams, among others. Through 50 sessions, including keynote speeches, panel discussions, interviews, and addresses, participants explored innovative solutions to drive growth, inclusion, and competitiveness in the region.

Jeremy Rifkin, in his keynote address, offered a transformative vision of humanity's relationship with the planet, advocating for renaming Earth as "Planet Aqua" to highlight water's crucial role in sustaining life. Rifkin underscored the severity of the climate crisis, warning that humanity is facing an extinction-level event unprecedented in the last 360 million years, with the potential loss of 50% of species within the lifetime of today's children.

Matteo Renzi stressed the need for Latin America to define a clear integration strategy without mirroring European bureaucracy. He warned that without a unified project, the region risks marginalization in the evolving global order, but also emphasized that Latin America could learn from both the successes and failures of the European model. We really loved his message.

[Helle Thorning-Schmidt, interviewed by our great board member Michael Stott](#), reinforced the importance of Latin America and Europe working together to lead a more open and sustainable global economy. "Rather than diminishing globalization, we should enhance it," she asserted.



A Defining Moment for Latin America

[The International Economic Forum](#) in Panama marked a turning point for Latin America and the Caribbean, proving that the region is not just capable of addressing global challenges but also of leading with bold, innovative solutions. With strategic

leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and renewed confidence in its potential, Latin America and the Caribbean can position themselves as pivotal players in shaping a more equitable and sustainable world.

The success of this inaugural forum reaffirms CAF's commitment to fostering sustainable and inclusive development in the region. This groundbreaking event has established itself as a unique platform for dialogue between governments, experts, and the private sector, setting the stage for Latin America and the Caribbean to gain greater relevance on the global stage.

La Charla

This week Maria Rocio Vargas, CCLATAM Senior Policy and Partnership Advisor chats with [Bruce Mac Master](#). Bruce is the President of the [National Entrepreneurs Association of Colombia](#) and leads the [Association of Latin American Industrialists \(AILA\)](#). Before he held various key positions in the public and private sectors including, Director of the Department for Social Prosperity -DPS- within the Colombian National Government and partner at Inverlink, the pioneering investment bank established in Colombia. Furthermore, he has been involved in significant social initiatives, co-founding Compartamos con Colombia and the Granitos de Paz Foundation. His extensive experience in the social sector includes serving on the boards of the [Pies Descalzos](#), Batuta, Semana, Conexión Colombia, Víctor Salvi, and [Casa de la Madre y el Niño Foundations](#).



A few days ago, we went through one of the most delicate moments in the history of diplomatic and commercial relations between the United States and Colombia, with the United States being our main trading partner. In your opinion, Bruce, what are the lessons learned for Colombia from this episode?

Yes, I would say there are many, but I want to highlight the fact that a huge discussion opened up about the true relevance of the United States to us. In some ways, this is a conversation that many people do not like, and it's a conversation that, historically, has been considered an imperial or anti-imperial discussion. The truth is that an evident fact came to light: the United States is Colombia's great commercial ally.

The United States being Colombia's great commercial ally means that a significant part of our economy is closely linked to our ability to maintain a good relationship with the United States. This is a concrete fact that not only relates to products but also to people. In other words, we are very close to North American culture. A good number of Colombians or Colombian families have people who are there; many studied there, many want to go there, and spend their vacations there. North Americans are increasingly coming to Colombia for tourism as well. We are very close. If you take a flight from Cartagena to Miami, it's two hours and fifty minutes. In fact, Cartagena is much closer to Miami than Miami is to Seattle or Chicago.

So, I believe that this became evident, and having achieved that, one could or should be aware that valuable things must be protected. And since they are valuable, they also have many facets, because it's not just about commerce and people, but also about a very close relationship with the entire financial world and capital markets. A significant portion of the financing that Colombian companies receive comes from North American markets.

But that is not even as important as the fact that a considerable part of the financing that the national government obtains comes from North American markets. So, if we complement that with the issue of remittances, we are talking about Colombia receiving fourteen billion dollars from exports and fourteen billion dollars from remittances. That's twenty-eight billion dollars that arrive every year and are a crucial part of the functioning of our economy, our exchange rate, and our balance of payments. Therefore, I would say that the most important thing is that Colombia is realizing this. We must also insist on it because, of course, one cannot simply play with that relationship. One cannot just put little traps for the ally or partner or even create new irritants. It makes no sense. It is not intelligent to do so. In this global world, where there are so many strategies and so many things, we must act intelligently

You talk about the theme of closeness, not only as a main commercial ally but also the cultural closeness between the two countries. You mentioned that Colombian entrepreneurs want to do business with the United States and have that interest and

desire for that approach. So from these lessons, in your opinion, what should be the role of the private sector in managing this approach in trade relations in the country? We have seen you and the ANDI (National Business Association of Colombia) come out to defend Colombian entrepreneurship and speak about the importance of this relationship. What lies ahead, what will be the role of the private sector?

The Colombian business sector acts, and should act, for the benefit of all. We do not only produce products and services; we generate employment and are a significant source of funding for the state. We are also a major part of the creative, innovative, and developmental force, so we feel an immense responsibility. We are not a passive subject in everything that happens, and I believe that even the national government must be urged to be careful. The government must be required to be careful, particularly in this case regarding this relationship, because they, the government, for ideological reasons, campaign issues, or even the international positioning of the president, cannot play with the future of Colombian families.

I have seen the president very proud that his tweet had more than I don't know how many millions of views, and I wonder if that is truly important for the country or if the president is living in a parallel reality, focused on his social media, and is actually forgetting or can forget the need to generate employment, the need to produce wealth, and the need to create opportunities for Colombians. The private sector, the Colombian business sector, must continue to fulfill its role, which, among other things, includes maintaining very close ties with that economy that is so important to us, even if the leaders of the countries are not friends.

I have always insisted that the relationships between peoples and the relationships between economies are significantly more important, more lasting, and much stronger than the relationships between leaders, who are individuals with their weaknesses and strengths, but do not truly represent what the relationship between the United States and Colombia means. We have had 203 years of diplomatic and commercial relations; we must take care of and strengthen them. Yes, as you mentioned, I believe that should be the case. Colombia not only exports a significant portion of its products to the United States, making it our main destination, but hopefully, Colombia could export much more to the United States, and that is what we should do.

Bruce, bringing this discussion back to our region, we also observe President Trump's direct interactions with other nations and Marco Rubio's trips to various countries in the area. What kind of collaboration exists among the regional private sector? What challenges and opportunities emerge from these events for the region?

I believe the primary goal of the Colombian business community, and indeed of the Latin American business community, which I represent as president of the Latin American Industrial Association, should be to foster increased economic integration within the Western Hemisphere. The significant opportunity currently available to our nations largely hinges on our capacity to establish ourselves as key suppliers to the North American market.

This market is the largest, the most influential, boasts the highest demand, and possesses the greatest purchasing power. It's important to highlight that numerous countries have thrived by supplying products and services to the U.S. Even China experienced substantial growth primarily by becoming a major supplier to the United States. I contend that Latin America should aim for this, which undoubtedly requires commitment from both sides. Our role is to demonstrate to leaders why this is a logical direction and why it's a reasonable ambition for both the U.S. and the rest of Latin America to recognize the current opportunity to generate significant prosperity across our continent.

This, I believe, should be our collective objective. The United States has a proven track record of revitalizing economies; it helped Europe recover after World War II, aided Japan's resurgence post-war, supported South Korea during its development, and bolstered Southeast Asia, as well as, of course, China itself. Perhaps I would extend an invitation to the United States to view Latin America as a continent worthy of support at this time.

That was my last question. So, what is the message to the United States? And as you just said, how important it is that the United States invests in the region to be that commercial partner that is needed and that we can undoubtedly be.

I will tell you one more thing, Rochi, and that is that I believe that a very good part of the immigration issue could be resolved if there is a lot of prosperity in Latin American countries. Because what we really have is a gigantic difference in prosperity that makes families or individuals consider the possibility of going there, beyond what the immigration policies of some are. If we had an immensely prosperous continent based on that commercial relationship, I am sure that many of the anxieties we have today regarding migrants would be resolved. We worry about them leaving because we lose human capital, because they take risks, because it is eventually difficult for them to be there, and the United States feels that it is losing opportunities. In short, I truly believe that this important opportunity to create concrete and very prosperous opportunities, hopefully in Latin America, is what can ultimately resolve the issue of migration as well.

Alright Bruce, thank you a thousand times on behalf of CCLATAM

Elsewhere in LATAM

 Ecuador's presidential election is set for a runoff on April 13. Incumbent Daniel Noboa is narrowly ahead of leftist contender Luisa Gonzalez by less than 1%. While forecasts had suggested Noboa could secure victory in a single round, he was just slightly ahead late on Sunday, garnering 44.5% of the votes compared to Gonzalez's 44.1%, with 78.7% of the ballots counted. Noboa, 37, who hails from a prosperous business lineage, claims that his strategy of deploying military forces in urban areas and prisons has contributed to a 15% decline in violent deaths, reduced violence within prisons, and aided in capturing key gang leaders. Conversely, leftist Gonzalez, aged 47, along with Noboa's other 14 competitors from the first round, has urged for stronger initiatives to tackle the drug trade-related violence that has increasingly affected Ecuador in recent years.

 The Milei administration has announced Argentina's withdrawal from the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), citing "deep differences" over health management, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. This move comes just weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump initiated the U.S. withdrawal from the international health body.

 [Ivan Werneck Bassères](#), who coordinates environmental licensing for oil and gas exploration at the Brazilian environmental protection agency [IBAMA](#), has urged the agency's expert team to prioritize the assessment of the wildlife protection plan submitted by Petrobras. This plan is essential for the environmental agency to move forward with the licensing application for oil exploration in the Mouth of the Amazon, a region within the Equatorial Margin.

  Following Trump's 25% tariffs on Mexico, temporarily suspended under an agreement with President Claudia Sheinbaum, Brazilian exporters—particularly in orange juice and coffee—are poised to gain a competitive edge in the U.S. market.

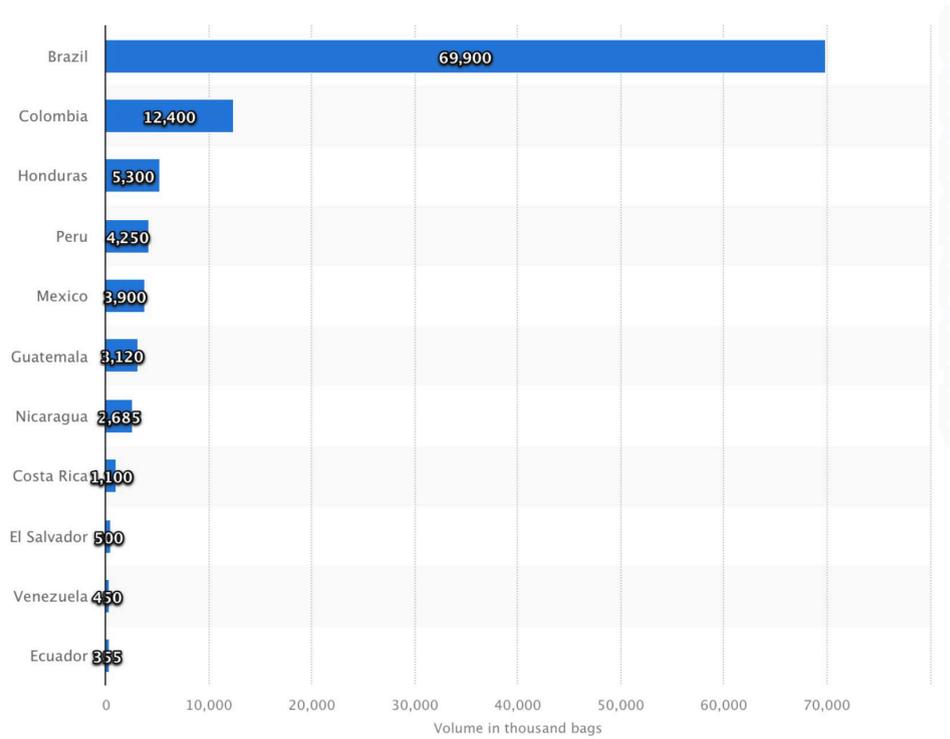
 [Rosaura Ruíz, the head of the Ministry of Science, Humanities, Technology, and Innovation \(SECIHTI\)](#), introduced a new semiconductor initiative called '[Kutsari](#),' which means sand in the Purépecha language. Ruíz emphasized that the first phase will focus on creating a state-of-the-art semiconductor design center, utilizing the vast expertise of Mexican professionals. The next phase will shift towards the production of traditional or 'legacy' chips to meet local demand. By 2026, a decision will be made regarding the establishment of a private, public, or mixed enterprise to construct a semiconductor manufacturing plant in Mexico, aiming to begin operations by 2029. The assembly phase for semiconductors is projected to conclude by 2030, completing the full supply chain for this sector.

La Cita

"Latin America and the Caribbean should not only aspire to be on the global map; they must lead, innovate, and prove that they can be a region of solutions. We need greater investment in innovation, sustainable infrastructure, and education. This approach will allow us to diversify our economies, empower our communities, and ensure a resilient future in the face of global challenges."

Sergio Díaz-Granados, Executive President of CAF

El Gráfico



 Coffee production projection for 2025. So far, a shrinking supply, steady demand, and an unprecedented speculative surge have driven coffee prices to historic levels on the New York market. On Thursday (6), the benchmark March futures contract hit \$4.0395 per pound, up 1.56% for the day. Coffee has now posted 10 straight record highs and has risen in 12 of the last 13 trading sessions.

La vía hacia Madrid



Watch the Video

The Latam Digital Summit 2025, Madrid on February 26-27, presented by CCLATAM and [DPL Group](#) in collaboration with [CAF Development Bank](#), the [United States Telecommunication Training Institute \(USTTI\)](#), and the [Duke Sanford Cyber Program](#) is getting packed. Amongst 74 high-level speakers, Ministers, Elected Officials, Regulators, Business Leaders, Representatives of International and Regional Organizations (WB, EU, EP, CAF, ECLAC), Academia and Civil Society this week we highlight [Oscár Lopez, Minister for Digital Transformation](#) and Public Service, Spain; [Maryleana Méndez, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Association of Telecommunications Companies \(Asiet\)](#); [Hubert Vargas Picado](#) Vice Minister of Telecommunications of the [Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications \(Micitt\) of Costa Rica](#); [Rodney Taylor](#), Secretary-General of Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU); [Julissa Cruz, ED Dominican Institute of Telecommunications \(INDOTEL\)](#). We haven't talked about supporters of the Summit. Here a few of them:



EL Evento

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**Women in
Cybersecurity**
Breaking Barriers
in Latin America
February 27, 2025
3:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Círculo de Bellas Artes,
Madrid, Spain

Join a high-level discussion on current barriers for women in cybersecurity.
Limited access available! RSVP before February 14, 2025.
Contact: maria.herrera@duke.edu

As part of the
**DIGITAL SUMMIT
LATAM25**

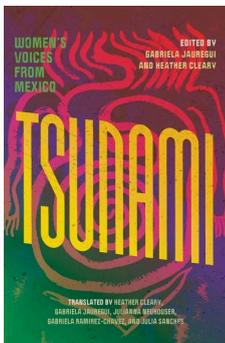

Women in Cybersecurity: Breaking Barriers in Latin America

Hosted by the [Duke Sanford Cyber Policy Program](#) and the [Center for Latin America Convergence \(CCLATAM\)](#) alongside [Digital Summit Latam](#), this special session tackles the barriers preventing women from accessing cybersecurity education and careers—while proposing actionable solutions.

This exclusive gathering will bring together industry leaders, researchers, and practitioners to share insights, experiences, and strategies for advancing women's careers in cybersecurity across Latin America. The discussion will also contribute to critical research on executive education and mentorship programs, directly shaping targeted solutions to increase women's representation in this vital field.

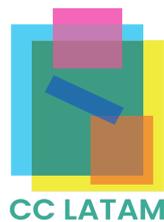
Access is limited. If interested, contact Maria Herrera at maria.herrera@duke.edu.

La Lectura



A seismic force in contemporary feminist literature, **Tsunami: Women's Voices from Mexico** brings together a powerful chorus of established and emerging Mexican

women writers to challenge patriarchy and its entrenched structures. Through personal essays, manifestos, poetry, and creative nonfiction, this groundbreaking collection tackles gender violence, Indigenous rights, #MeToo, and the broader fight for justice in Mexico today. Rejecting Eurocentric feminism, Tsunami asserts plurality as a political priority, amplifying trans, Indigenous, Afro-Latinx, and intergenerational voices. Inspired by the marea verde protests and insurgent feminisms beyond mainstream discourse, this anthology is not just a book—it is a movement, an unflinching critique, and a call to action.



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Thank you for reading, nos vemos en la próxima.