



30th PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE-SECURITY FORUM

SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

SUMMARY REPORT

NOVEMBER 13-14, 2025



NOVEMBER 13

OPENING REMARKS

Honorable David Rivard, Director, National Agency for Development and Design of El Salvador.

The Honorable David Rivard began by expressing his appreciation to all for coming to El Salvador and acknowledged the diversity of parliamentarians following the forum. He highlighted that he had only recently learned about the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum, noting the broad interest among participants in understanding El Salvador's "secret formula" for progress.

He emphasized that the country's achievements are rooted in the leadership of a few exceptional individuals whose vision has inspired national transformation. He noted that President Nayib Bukele's leadership, along with that of the Speaker, the Minister of Justice, and Admiral Merino, has motivated both government officials and the wider population, particularly during elections.

The Honorable David Rivard encouraged attendees to engage directly with ordinary Salvadorans, even late at night, to personally experience the country's sense of security and the population's optimism. He highlighted that genuine change comes from leaders adopting a moral commitment to the people they serve.

He concluded by expressing gratitude and enthusiasm for getting to know the forum's participants personally.

His Excellency Ernesto Castro, President of the Honorable Legislative Assembly of El Salvador.

The Salvadoran Security Model as a Regional Reference

"Addressing the historical transformation of El Salvador: from one of the most violent countries in the world to one of the safest & The Role of the Legislative Assembly in the Transformation of El Salvador: Governance and Security"

His Excellency Ernesto Castro opened his remarks by welcoming international delegations, dignitaries, and members of the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum. He reflected on El Salvador's past, recalling decades of violence, political instability, and the profound social impact of gangs, extortion, and insecurity that shaped daily life for Salvadorans.

He described the country's turning point as an organic movement led by citizens demanding change, which culminated in the rise of President Nayib Bukele and the political project

“Nuevas Ideas”. Despite systemic resistance and institutional obstacles, this movement achieved a historic electoral mandate in 2021, granting the new administration and legislature the ability to implement long-awaited reforms.

President Castro explained how the government advanced the Territorial Control Plan, strengthened security institutions, and enacted extensive legislative changes to confront gang violence. These measures included increased penalties for serious crimes, streamlined judicial processes, modernization of legal frameworks, and expanded resources for police and the armed forces. He emphasized the pivotal moment of March 2022, when a surge in gang violence prompted the Legislative Assembly to approve the state of exception, enabling decisive action to dismantle criminal structures.

He reported that these efforts have resulted in the arrest of approximately 90,000 gang members and an unprecedented reduction in homicides, with numerous consecutive days without a single murder. Castro underscored both the tangible and intangible outcomes of this transformation—safer communities, restored public trust, and the collective sense of national relief after decades of fear.

Looking forward, he outlined the government’s focus on rebuilding education and health systems, expanding economic opportunities, attracting international investment, and strengthening social development programs, including early childhood initiatives. He highlighted growing tourism and renewed international confidence in El Salvador’s stability.

His Excellency concluded by expressing gratitude to visiting delegates, affirming that the Salvadoran people are united in the country’s ongoing transformation, and reaffirming their commitment to continue supporting their president and the nation’s renewal.

State Criminal Justice System Against Criminal Organizations

Honorable Minister Gustavo Villatoro, Minister of Security and Justice of El Salvador

Honorable Minister Gustavo Villatoro began by welcoming national and international participants, emphasizing the significance of hosting the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum in a country that now reflects, in practice, the very security policies long discussed in international forums. He highlighted that El Salvador stands today as the only country in the Americas that has successfully defeated its principal societal and state-level enemy: large-scale criminal organizations, particularly gang structures that once dominated national territory.

He credited President Nayib Bukele’s leadership and the Security Cabinet for establishing an independent, sovereign, and comprehensive security strategy. Minister Villatoro explained that El Salvador built a state criminal justice system specifically designed to confront organized

crime, based on a 360-degree analysis of regional threats. He underlined that gangs in El Salvador evolved into terrorist organizations that controlled communities, suppressed state authority, and operated with high levels of impunity due to historical judicial failures and outdated penal codes.

Villatoro reviewed the historical trajectory that allowed gangs to grow—from weak legal frameworks, fragmented institutions, and failed reforms in the 1990s and 2000s, to the increasing territorial control achieved by these groups over the following decades. He explained that previous governments lacked both the political will and coherent legal tools to confront these structures effectively.

He affirmed that the current administration's turning point was recognizing gangs as terrorist organizations and implementing legislative reforms accordingly. Key measures included restructuring the penal code, redefining criminal group liability, strengthening penalties for organized crime, and enabling the state to act proactively rather than react only after violent incidents. He stressed that the legal framework now targets both the individual offenders and the criminal organizations as entities with their own operational will.

Minister Villatoro pointed out that, with legislative support secured in 2021, the administration executed decisive actions, including the state of exception declared in 2022, which allowed authorities to dismantle gang leadership, disrupt criminal finances, and regain territorial sovereignty. He highlighted that El Salvador's approach is now unique in its effectiveness and doctrinal clarity, positioning the country as an international example of how to confront criminal structures that threaten national stability.

He concluded by reaffirming that peace and security are inseparable from sovereignty, and that El Salvador's transformation reflects a doctrine centered on protecting citizens, strengthening institutions, and preventing criminal organizations from regaining power.

The New Attorney General's Office

Honorable Attorney General Rodolfo Delgado, Attorney General of the Republic of El Salvador.

The Honorable Attorney General Rodolfo Delgado explained that the Salvadoran Constitution allows the State to implement exceptional measures when facing imminent threats to national security, as occurred during a period of intense gang violence. He emphasized that criminal organizations in El Salvador possessed hierarchical command structures and controlled communities, effectively determining the fate of citizens. In response, the State strengthened control measures and expanded the doctrine of collective criminal responsibility to address these threats, which he described not as a regression but as an evolution in criminal law aligned with constitutional and international standards.

Attorney General Delgado highlighted that these reforms present challenges, especially regarding human rights guarantees, but insisted that the criminal model seeks to balance accountability with respect for human dignity. He then described the transformation of the Attorney General's Office, noting that before his arrival it was compromised by political interests, lacked institutional development, and suffered from weak infrastructure, low investment, and internal mistrust.

Upon taking office, he prioritized restoring the institution's original constitutional mission—defending the interests of the State and society. He reestablished close cooperation with the National Police and the Armed Forces, promoting an investigation model based on trust and institutional harmony rather than isolation. Delgado underscored the importance of investing in human capital, improving working conditions, raising salaries, and strengthening training programs for prosecutors.

He detailed major infrastructure investments and the ongoing digital transformation of the Attorney General's Office, positioning it as a regional reference in prosecutorial effectiveness. Delgado reaffirmed that the State's principal enemy remains gang structures and pledged to pursue justice for all detained individuals through lawful and objective investigations.

He concluded by emphasizing that the goal of these reforms is to guarantee constitutional rights—such as life, liberty, and security—for all Salvadorans. He stressed that prosecutors must continue serving victims, combatting other forms of crime including drug trafficking and sexual offenses, and contributing to building a safer and more just society for future generations.

Support of the Armed Forces in Public Security and its Impact on National Security

Honorable Minister René Merino, Minister of Defense of El Salvador.

Honorable Minister René Merino outlined El Salvador's security transformation under President Bukele, focusing on the Territorial Control Plan (TCP) and the State of Exception. He explained that deploying the Armed Forces alongside the National Civil Police was constitutionally justified and enabled decisive action that previous administrations avoided due to political constraints. He emphasized that strong leadership, rather than institutional capacity alone, was critical to preventing criminal groups from gaining political influence.

The Minister described the multi-phase TCP, including reclaiming gang-controlled territories, youth prevention efforts, modernization of security forces, targeted incursions, and a nationwide offensive to counter escalating violence. He stressed the importance of avoiding predictable tactics and maintaining a sustained security presence. Central to the strategy was close coordination and intelligence sharing among the Armed Forces, PNC, Ministry of Security,

and Attorney General, which enabled large-scale daily arrests and built trust between police and military forces.

He stated that the State of Exception was applied selectively to dismantle gang structures while minimizing impact on the general population and respecting constitutional roles. According to the Minister, these measures led to a dramatic reduction in homicides, positioning El Salvador among the safest countries in the Western Hemisphere, with projections of fewer than 100 annual homicides. He concluded that beyond improved security, the strategy boosted drug seizures, expanded high-security detention capacity, increased tourism, and supported long-term national development aligned with President Bukele's vision.

Challenges and Opportunities of Applying Artificial Intelligence in the Administration of Justice in El Salvador

His Excellency Henry Alexander Mejía, President of the Honorable Supreme Court of Justice of El Salvador.

His Excellency Henry Alexander Mejía addressed the forum on the urgent challenges and risks posed by artificial intelligence for the Salvadoran justice system, emphasizing the judiciary's responsibility to adapt to emerging technologies while safeguarding human judgment. He outlined El Salvador's significant legal and institutional modernization, highlighting recent laws on technology, cybersecurity, data protection, and AI—positioning the country as a regional leader with a dedicated legal framework and oversight body for AI governance.

He explained that AI can enhance public administration and judicial efficiency through data processing, legal research, and case analysis, but must never replace human decision-making. Emphasizing ethical responsibility, transparency, non-discrimination, and data protection, he warned against political misuse of AI and stressed that justice remains a constitutional duty requiring human oversight. He cited international and regional examples, including Brazil's judiciary, and reaffirmed that judges must remain the ultimate authority.

Concluding, he showcased national advancements such as the new Center for the Combat of Organized Crime and ongoing digital transformation within the judiciary. He underscored that AI should strengthen institutional capacity, protect rights, and improve access to justice while supporting national security, development, and public trust, thanking participants and expressing optimism for continued dialogue.

Transnational Organized Crime, Illicit Trade and Drug Trafficking (2:10 – 2:25 PM)

- **Drug trafficking routes and their impact on Central America.**
- **New methods of illicit trafficking (drones, cryptocurrencies, dark web).**
- **Mutation of illicit trade in the global criminal ecosystem – including counterfeit goods, arms, wildlife trade, and other emerging markets.**

Honorable Víctor Gonzalez, Former Member of The Congress of Spain.

The Honorable Víctor González thanked the hosts and spoke in Spanish out of respect for El Salvador, noting the country's remarkable transformation from past insecurity to a safer environment. He highlighted how improved public safety has restored hope among Salvadorans, reduced migration pressures, and allowed citizens to live normal lives comparable to those in Europe.

González addressed transnational organized crime, describing Central America as a key corridor for cocaine trafficking to the United States and emphasizing its human cost. He attributed the persistence of criminal networks to geography, institutional weakness, and systemic corruption, which have led to extreme violence, forced migration, and weakened state authority.

He stressed that organized crime now operates as a global, technology-driven parallel economy, using drones, cryptocurrencies, and dark-web markets to expand illicit activities across multiple sectors. González outlined the need for integrated regional intelligence, advanced technological investment, disruption of criminal financial structures, and stronger state presence in vulnerable territories.

He concluded by warning about the security risks posed by Cuban nationals recruited to fight in Ukraine and emphasized that confronting today's transnational, technologically sophisticated criminal ecosystem requires coordinated, international, and innovative responses.

Migration, Human Trafficking, and Illicit Smuggling

- **How organized crime exploits irregular migration.**
- **Human trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation.**
- **Community prevention strategies and intergovernmental cooperation.**
- **Public-private alliances in cyber defense.**

Energy and Critical Minerals – Sustaining Global Supply Chains

- **Energy security in a multipolar world.**

- **The strategic role of lithium, cobalt, and other minerals.**
- **Ensuring supply chain stability through regional/global cooperation.**

Honorable Ambassador Carla Sands, Chair, Foreign Policy Initiative, Distinguished Senior Fellow, Energy Policy, AFPI – United States.

Ambassador Carla Sands thanked the organizers of the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Forum and the government of El Salvador for hosting the event, praising Congressman Robert Pittenger and the forum leadership for productive engagement. She highlighted President Nayib Bukele's success in reducing gang violence and narcotics trafficking, noting that El Salvador now has the lowest crime rate in Latin America. She emphasized that improved security has driven economic growth, strengthened U.S.–El Salvador relations, and expanded bilateral trade across key sectors.

Sands warned that while the United States pursues peaceful and mutually beneficial trade, adversarial powers such as China and Russia are expanding their influence in Latin America. She described China as a significant economic and security threat, citing dual-use infrastructure projects, propaganda, telecommunications expansion through companies like Huawei, and control over critical minerals essential for modern technology and clean energy. Drawing on her diplomatic experience, she urged Western nations to resist arrangements that could undermine sovereignty and critical infrastructure.

She also addressed Russia's growing regional presence, including propaganda networks and intelligence cooperation with governments such as Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba, warning that disinformation campaigns seek to weaken democratic institutions and pro-U.S. governments. In closing, Sands called for a renewed commitment to national sovereignty, economic independence, and strong alliances across the Western Hemisphere, encouraging deeper cooperation on security, trade, and investment while rejecting criminal organizations, narcotics trafficking, and opaque agreements with malign foreign actors.

NOVEMBER 14

Opening Remarks / Keynote Remarks

Honorable Senator Bill Cassidy, United States Senate. (Video)

Sen. Cassidy's remarks focused on the global threat posed by money laundering and the illicit financial networks that enable transnational crime, authoritarian regimes, and the proliferation of fentanyl. He outlined how Chinese criminal industries steal intellectual property and distribute counterfeit goods, harming artisans, legitimate businesses, and national economies. Cassidy also warned of China's role in supplying chemical precursors for fentanyl, fueling a deadly epidemic in the United States. He emphasized the need for aggressive accountability for China and transnational criminal organizations. He highlighted U.S. legislative action combating counterfeit goods and underscored the importance of international cooperation, thanking the Forum for its contribution to this global effort.

Honorable Matt Pottinger, Former U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor. Video.

The Honorable Matt Pottinger outlined the global threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), emphasizing its role in undermining health, security, and liberty worldwide. Key points included:

- The CCP's coverup of the COVID-19 outbreak and its continued violations of international treaties.
- Economic disruption through state-sponsored intellectual property theft and predatory trade practices.
- Military threats, including support for authoritarian regimes and potential conflict over Taiwan.
- Efforts to export autocratic governance and influence global narratives through propaganda and technology.
- Hon. Pottinger called for unified global action to deter Beijing's aggression, defend democratic values, and protect international sovereignty.

Energy and Critical Minerals – Sustaining Global Supply Chains

- **Energy security in a multipolar world.**
- **The strategic role of lithium, cobalt, and other minerals.**
- **Ensuring supply chain stability through regional/global cooperation.**

Dr. Sohan Dasgupta, Assistant Secretary for Trade and Economic Security – United States.

Dr. Dasgupta highlighted the geopolitical importance of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements, calling them the foundation of military readiness, technological innovation, and economic stability.

He warned that the free world faces a severe vulnerability: overdependence on China, which controls most of the global processing capacity. This dependency, he argued, threatens sovereignty and invites coercion.

Dr. Dasgupta advocated for “economic statecraft” and strategic deal-making to diversify supply chains, forge alliances with mineral-rich partners, encourage domestic production, and reduce exposure to adversarial states.

He concluded that securing critical minerals is essential not only for national defense but for global democratic resilience.

Honorable Kevin Dayaratna, Director, Center for Data Analysis and Chief Statistician – United States.

Dr. Dayaratna presented data showing that access to affordable and reliable energy is directly correlated with economic growth, higher life expectancy, reduced poverty, improved agricultural output, and lower mortality from air and water pollution. He emphasized that nations with robust energy consumption enjoy greater prosperity and social well-being. Dayaratna argued that policies limiting energy development—especially restrictions rooted in climate alarmism—harm economic opportunity and hinder human flourishing.

Using international datasets, he illustrated that countries relying on energy imports from hostile nations face heightened security risks. He encouraged nations to pursue energy independence, leverage domestic resources, and collaborate with reliable allies.

The Role of Parliaments in Global Security

- **How legislators can strengthen legal security frameworks.**
- **Experiences of international parliamentary cooperation.**
- **Building regional consensus.**

- **Parliamentary Checks on the Judiciary as a Path to Structural Reform and Anti-Corruption.**

Congressman Nikolas Ferreira, Member of Brazilian Parliament.

Congressman Ferreira delivered a forceful account of Brazil's escalating security crisis. He described the rise of 88 criminal factions, including the PCC and Red Command, which control territories, impose rules, tax residents, and use terror—effectively operating as parallel governments.

Ferreira compared Brazil's homicide levels to active war zones and highlighted alarming statistics, such as the dramatic rise in police assassinations and stray-bullet deaths. He criticized the Brazilian government and judiciary for policies he believes empower criminal organizations, including lenient custody hearings, restrictions on police operations, and corruption scandals linked to political elites. Ferreira praised El Salvador's security model and urged Brazilian lawmakers to restore constitutional balance, ensure judicial accountability, and confront criminal power structures with resolve.

Honorable Macarena Olona, Former member of Spain's Congress of Deputies

Hon. Macarena Olona offered a strong endorsement of President Nayib Bukele's security model, emphasizing that his overwhelming electoral support reflects tangible improvements in public safety. She argued that “without security there is no freedom,” framing El Salvador's transformation as evidence that decisive state action can dismantle entrenched criminal networks.

Hon. Olona introduced the metaphor of sheep, wolves, and the shepherd dog to underscore the essential role of the police and armed forces. In her view, societies often misunderstand or mistrust their security institutions, despite relying on their courage to confront danger on behalf of civilians.

She praised key elements of the Bukele security doctrine, including firm political backing for law-enforcement agencies, the rejection of negotiations with gangs, and reforms that prioritize the protection of innocent citizens. Hon. Olona described El Salvador's maximum-security facility, SEOT, as a global symbol in the fight against organized crime, asserting that it removes criminals' ability to operate from prison and decisively shifts the balance of power in favor of the state.

She noted that several countries—including Ecuador, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica—are already studying or adapting El Salvador's model. Hon. Olona emphasized that governments that fail to confront crime ultimately enable it and warned against states that

violate the rule of law in the name of security, arguing that El Salvador has succeeded while maintaining legal authority.

She concluded with a tribute to the Salvadoran police and armed forces, praising their courage, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to protecting the public.

Congresswoman Vice President Suecy Callejas, Vice President of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador.

Vice President Suecy Callejas delivered a comprehensive explanation of El Salvador's legislative role in the nation's historic security transformation. She detailed the approval and continued extension of the State of Exception, which enabled authorities to dismantle gang control over communities. Vice President Callejas emphasized that previous governments allowed criminal structures to deepen, whereas today's administration uses constitutional tools to protect citizens. She explained legislative actions including:

- Increased penalties for gang crimes.
- Protection of judicial personnel.
- Budget expansion for police and armed forces.
- Judicial reforms to remove corrupt judges.

Vice President Callejas framed El Salvador's progress as the result of political courage, coordinated state action, and loyalty to the Salvadoran people. She urged other nations to use their constitutional powers decisively to restore security and dignity for their citizens.

Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Disinformation

- **Use of AI to prevent crime and anticipate risks.**
- **Manipulation of algorithms and digital disinformation as a threat to democracy.**
- **Balancing technological innovation and ethics in security.**

Mr. J.C. Boggs, Esq., Partner, King & Spalding LLP.

Mr. J.C. Boggs outlined how national security in the 21st century extends far beyond military power, now encompassing industrial capacity, investment flows, energy security, access to resources, and technological leadership as key determinants of geopolitical strength.

Mr. Boggs emphasized the growing strategic competition between the United States and China, identifying artificial intelligence (AI) as the most consequential driver of economic, political, and defense capabilities. He noted that while the United States leads in advanced

semiconductors and private-sector AI investment, China's large engineering workforce, lower costs, and centralized decision-making enable rapid advances in robotics, autonomous systems, and AI infrastructure.

Mr. Boggs highlighted AI's transformative benefits in healthcare, drug development, and financial security, while warning of serious risks from generative AI, including deepfakes, sophisticated cyber fraud, and destabilization of information environments. He concluded by stressing that AI governance and international parliamentary cooperation will be essential to navigating the opportunities and risks of rapid technological change.

Dr. John Strand, CEO, Strand Consult.

Dr. John Strand warned about the strategic risks of relying on Chinese technology in national digital infrastructure. He explained that modern societies depend on deeply interconnected telecommunications networks and cloud systems for essential services such as payments, healthcare, government data, and machine-to-machine communication. Because of this dependence, using equipment from untrusted vendors creates vulnerabilities that go far beyond espionage—authoritarian states could potentially shut down networks, block software updates, or exert political pressure through digital dependence.

Dr. Strand highlighted that many Latin American governments store sensitive citizen data in Chinese cloud services, often without full awareness that China's 2017 National Security Law obligates companies to share information with the government. He also noted the growing presence of Chinese AI applications that collect extensive personal data and store it in mainland China, a trend that has prompted bans by several democratic institutions.

He pointed to the EU's 5G Toolbox as a model for restricting high-risk vendors and reviewed global efforts by the United States, Europe, and Australia to limit China's access to advanced semiconductor technology—measures that have already slowed China's progress and reshaped global supply chains.

Dr. Strand concluded by urging countries to strengthen digital security, choose technology partners aligned with democratic values, and recognize that Chinese apps and devices are already harvesting user data today.

Threats to National Security in the Western Hemisphere

- **Key cross-border risks to political stability.**
- **The impact of transnational crime and terrorism on regional order.**
- **U.S.–Latin America cooperation frameworks.**

Honorable Erik Bethel, Fellow, Chamber of Digital Commerce; former U.S. Representative to the World Bank.

Hon. Erik Bethel opened by praising El Salvador's historic transformation, describing it as a global example of courage, innovation, and national renewal. He highlighted that the country's dramatic shift from widespread violence to safety is the result of strong leadership and political determination under President Bukele.

Hon. Bethel also emphasized El Salvador's bold decision to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender, framing it not merely as an economic reform but as a declaration of sovereignty and technological independence. He noted that this move signaled to the world that innovation can arise from any nation, not only wealthy ones.

Transitioning to broader geopolitical themes, Bethel addressed the evolving national-security landscape in the Western Hemisphere, emphasizing increasing strategic competition and the need for nations to defend their economic, technological, and political sovereignty against external threats. He concluded by calling for continued vigilance, cooperation, and forward-looking leadership across the Americas.

The Geopolitical Impact of Crypto and Digital Currencies

- **How digital currencies affect financial stability.**
- **Risks of illicit use for laundering and terrorism.**
- **Regulatory frameworks and regional cooperation.**

Mr. Kristopher Klaich, Director of National Security Policy, Digital Chamber – United States.

Mr. Kristopher Klaich warned that the global financial system is undergoing a historic shift driven by debt crises, geopolitical fragmentation, and rapid technological change. He argued that authoritarian states—especially China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea—are weaponizing blockchain to evade sanctions, fund weapons programs, and undermine the Western-led financial order.

Mr. Klaich highlighted China's expansive strategy, citing its treatment of blockchain as core national infrastructure, dominance in global patents, and the growth of its Blockchain-Based Service Network, which integrates digital currencies, social credit systems, and international data centers to extend Beijing's global influence. He also noted the use of blockchain by hostile states and criminal networks for cybercrime, fraud, trafficking, and sanctions evasion.

Despite these risks, Mr. Klaich emphasized that blockchain can strengthen democracies by enhancing cybersecurity, transparency, and resilience while reducing corruption. He underscored the strategic importance of Bitcoin, sovereign reserves, stablecoins, and blockchain-based supply chains, praised El Salvador's leadership in Bitcoin adoption, and called for greater cooperation among like-minded nations to set open standards and clear

regulatory frameworks. He concluded that the world now faces a defining choice between authoritarian financial control and a system rooted in openness and democratic values.

Ms. Lilita Infante, Chief Executive Officer, CAT Labs, Former U.S. Department of Justice Special Agent.

Ms. Infante introduced the concept of “Operation Reverse Robin Hood,” a framework aimed at seizing criminal assets—particularly cryptocurrency—and returning them to the public. Drawing on her experience as a pioneer in the DEA’s first cryptocurrency-focused cyber task force, she emphasized that digital assets enable law enforcement to recover exponentially larger sums than traditional financial investigations.

Ms. Infante explained that modern criminal organizations, including drug cartels, terrorist networks, gangs, and large-scale fraud syndicates, routinely rely on cryptocurrency. Because private keys are often embedded within seized digital evidence—such as mobile phones, computers, servers, and cloud data—law enforcement may already possess access to substantial criminal wallets. She cited cases in which U.S. authorities seized billions in cryptocurrency without arrests, underscoring the transformative potential of digital asset investigations.

Ms. Infante urged governments to require systematic scanning of all digital evidence for cryptocurrency traces and private keys, describing this as the equivalent of “finding the money itself.” She highlighted El Salvador’s seizure of more than 100,000 gang-related cell phones as a significant opportunity to recover large volumes of criminal assets.

Ms. Infante recommended that at least 5% of investigators be trained in crypto-asset seizure techniques and equipped with advanced tools to process large-scale digital evidence. She also stressed the importance of safeguards to prevent insider theft and clear procedures for securing, managing, and transferring seized digital assets. She concluded that cryptocurrency, when properly leveraged, can be a powerful tool for dismantling criminal enterprises financially and returning resources to society.

Honorable Congressman Steve Stockman, Former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Hon. Steve Stockman reflected on his early legislative efforts in the U.S. Congress to introduce cryptocurrency-related bills more than a decade ago and noted how many of his early warnings are now becoming reality. He expressed deep concern over the increasing push by governments—particularly authoritarian regimes—to control digital assets and use artificial intelligence to monitor and restrict individual freedoms.

Stockman warned that state-controlled digital currencies, such as China's, enable governments to cut citizens off from food, employment, housing, and basic services, creating a dystopian model of social control. He highlighted that China and Russia are already attempting to influence global AI governance standards at the United Nations, which poses a significant threat to democratic values.

While acknowledging the positive potential of AI and digital assets to enhance commerce and innovation, he stressed that these same technologies can be weaponized by oppressive governments. He referenced his early experiences lobbying Congress on Bitcoin when colleagues dismissed the technology, underscoring how rapidly the geopolitical landscape has changed.

Stockman urged parliamentarians and policymakers worldwide to defend freedom by preventing authoritarian actors from dominating global digital and AI systems. He emphasized the necessity of ensuring that emerging technologies remain tools of empowerment rather than instruments of coercion.

He closed with a call to vigilance, warning that if democratic nations fail to act, they risk “waking up one day asking what happened” as control over digital infrastructure falls into the hands of malign actors.

Honorable Oonagh McDonald, CBE – Former Member of Parliament, United Kingdom.

Hon. Oonagh McDonald delivered a concise yet substantive analysis on the economic and regulatory implications of Bitcoin, stablecoins, and emerging digital currencies. She explained that Bitcoin's extreme price volatility, driven purely by market sentiment rather than intrinsic value, makes it unsuitable as a reliable store of value or medium for long-term savings. This instability—shared with assets like gold—led directly to the creation of stablecoins, which are designed to maintain value by being pegged to traditional currencies, particularly the U.S. dollar, which underpins approximately 99% of all stablecoins.

She emphasized that the stability of both fiat currencies and their pegged digital equivalents ultimately rests on the strength, governance, and economic performance of the issuing nation—not merely on the “full faith and credit” promise but on real economic fundamentals.

Dr. McDonald highlighted the opaque nature of some stablecoin issuers, especially privately held companies like Tether, which historically were not required to publish audited financial statements. She welcomed El Salvador's requirement for independent audited reports, noting such measures are essential to ensure these entities truly hold the dollar reserves they claim, particularly as stablecoins now facilitate up to 70% of international trade in Latin America.

She also warned about the growing prevalence of fraud and criminal exploitation, including sophisticated cyber-thefts, pig-butcher scams targeting individuals, and large-scale hacks

perpetrated by hostile states such as North Korea—responsible for an estimated \$1.5 billion heist this year.

Finally, she urged strong caution regarding Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). While technologically efficient, CBDCs carry severe risks of governmental overreach, surveillance, and potential misuse—similar to how China employs its digital currency to monitor and punish citizens. Even democratic governments, she warned, may eventually find such tools “too tempting” to resist. She concluded by calling for robust regulation, vigilant enforcement, and enhanced training to track illicit transactions, ensuring digital assets support economic development without enabling criminal activities or undermining individual freedoms.

Corruption, Money Laundering, and Governance

- **How legislators can strengthen legal security frameworks.**
- **Experiences of international parliamentary cooperation.**
- **Building regional consensus.**
- **Parliamentary Checks on the Judiciary as a Path to Structural Reform and Anti-Corruption: A Brazilian Perspective.**

Honorable Carlos González Yepes, Specialized Officer, IFCACC – INTERPOL Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre.

Hon. Carlos González Yepes outlined INTERPOL’s expanding role in combating financial crime, corruption, and money laundering, emphasizing that illicit financial flows underpin nearly all organized crime. Speaking for the INTERPOL Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre (IFCACC), he noted that the center was established in 2022 to address the rapid growth of scams, cryptocurrency-enabled crime, and systemic corruption.

He described INTERPOL’s global structure—196 member states linked through National Central Bureaus—and explained IFCACC’s three core pillars: online fraud and scams, asset recovery and money laundering, and anti-corruption. González stressed that many countries lack the technical capacity to investigate complex financial and crypto-related crimes, making INTERPOL’s training, intelligence, and analytical support essential.

González highlighted key tools supporting financial investigations, including cooperation with Financial Intelligence Units, the Global Rapid Intervention of Payments (GRIP) mechanism—which helped freeze approximately USD 190 million in illicit funds in 2023—the FIN-INT database, and the pilot Silver Notice for tracing criminal assets worldwide. He also referenced major INTERPOL-led operations that resulted in thousands of arrests and significant asset recoveries.

He concluded by underscoring that INTERPOL's capabilities exist to support member states and that effective disruption of transnational financial crime depends on sustained international cooperation and information sharing.

Cybersecurity and Cyber Defense

- **Cybersecurity: The Human Element.**
- **Protection of critical infrastructures (electricity, water, banking).**
- **Hackivism and ransomware as national threats.**

Dr. Paul Maurer, President & CEO, Montreat College – United States.

Dr. Paul Maurer warned that cybersecurity is the defining economic and national security threat of our time, with global cybercrime costs reaching an estimated \$10 trillion in 2024—surpassing all other major transnational crimes combined. He stressed that cybersecurity is ultimately a human, not technical, challenge, requiring ethical leadership and trustworthy professionals.

Under his leadership, Montreat College partnered with the U.S. National Security Agency to develop the nation's first ethics-centered cybersecurity curriculum for Centers of Academic Excellence, resulting in the book *Code of Honor: Embracing Ethics in Cybersecurity*, co-authored with Ed Skoudis. Dr. Maurer introduced the Cybersecurity Code of Honor, modeled on historic ethical frameworks, to guide professionals in issues such as integrity, privacy, restraint, and collaboration.

He concluded by urging governments to integrate ethics-based training into national cybersecurity strategies, offering the Code of Honor and Montreat College's programs as resources to build a resilient and trustworthy cyber workforce.

Dr. Diana Furchtgott-Roth, Director, Center for Energy, Climate, and Environment – United States.

Dr. Diana Furchtgott-Roth warned that modern economies are dangerously over-reliant on GPS and its Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT) services, which underpin transportation, banking, telecommunications, energy grids, aviation, and everyday navigation. She explained that GPS depends on a 32-satellite constellation vulnerable to jamming, spoofing, space weather, and hostile action—risks already demonstrated in incidents involving Russia, Ukraine, airports, and military operations.

Dr. Furchtgott-Roth noted that adversaries such as Russia, China, and North Korea have developed advanced capabilities to disrupt GPS, while societies have grown more exposed due to declining traditional navigation skills. Drawing on her experience at the U.S. Department of

Transportation, she highlighted that affordable backup PNT technologies already exist, including advanced geospatial mapping systems and atomic-clock-based timing, but lack policy support.

She urged governments to treat GPS resilience as a national security priority, calling for transparency requirements that compel critical sectors to disclose and adopt certified GPS backup systems. Dr. Furchtgott-Roth concluded that without proactive action, hostile powers could exploit GPS vulnerabilities to destabilize nations, warning that societies risk being “lost in space” if GPS fails.

Countering Hybrid and Transnational Threats in the Americas: Building Integrated Resilience through Intelligence, Partnership, and Adaptation

- **Identifying new hybrid tactics (cyber, disinformation, economic influence).**
- **Regional resilience and deterrence strategies.**
- **Joint strategies for border and maritime security.**
- **Maritime challenges including narcotrafficking, piracy, and irregular migration routes.**
- **Interoperability and cooperation among regional armed forces and with the U.S. and neighboring countries.**

Honorable Abraham Lugo, Advisor on Transnational Crime, Border Security and Anti-corruption, Puerto Rico.

Hon. Abraham Lugo drew on decades of service with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice to explain how transnational and hybrid threats evolve rapidly when governance weakens. He contrasted El Salvador’s transformation—driven by strong political will and hard security decisions—with Ecuador’s swift collapse during the pandemic, when international cartels filled state vacuums, seized key corridors, recruited marginalized populations, and imposed criminal governance through extortion and violence.

Lugo emphasized that security can deteriorate or be rebuilt quickly. He distinguished profit-driven criminal organizations from emerging hybrid actors that blend crime with political, territorial, informational, and cyber tools to gain power, destabilize governments, and erode public trust. Examples included Ecuadorian gangs evolving into cartels, Hezbollah activity in the tri-border area, and fentanyl networks with potential political backing.

He argued that only integrated, multinational cooperation can counter these threats, built on three pillars: strong legal frameworks, institutional integrity, and operational integration. Citing work in Ecuador and El Salvador, Lugo highlighted how coordinated border strategies and

regional intelligence sharing enabled early identification of emerging threats. He concluded by underscoring the need for parliamentary cooperation and legislative harmonization to shift from reactive responses to proactive, intelligence-driven regional security.

Terrorism and Illicit Financing

- **Global terrorist threats and their links to Latin America.**
- **Illicit financing mechanisms: Cryptocurrencies, hawala, illegal remittances.**
- **Interparliamentary cooperation for asset control and sanctions.**

Mr. John Walsh, President & CEO, SightSpan Inc. – United States.

Mr. Walsh reaffirmed his strong opposition to terrorism and praised the young cadets for choosing a path of integrity and service. He highlighted El Salvador's years-long transformation toward security and stability, noting that its success now brings new responsibilities—particularly in modernizing financial systems, strengthening banking infrastructure, and embracing emerging digital assets such as stablecoins and cryptocurrencies.

Mr. Walsh stressed the urgency of updating transaction monitoring, artificial intelligence, and compliance frameworks to stay ahead of rapidly evolving criminal networks. He emphasized the importance of transparency, information-sharing, and public-private cooperation, warning that secrecy weakens collective security. Drawing on his international experience, he noted that El Salvador's progress positions it as a regional leader with a duty to support other nations.

He warned that terrorist groups, organized crime, and hostile actors seek to undermine El Salvador's success, underscoring the need for coordinated global responses. Mr. Walsh concluded by urging regulatory modernization, greater financial inclusion, and continued international cooperation, affirming that El Salvador's achievements are closely watched and widely supported worldwide.

Dr. Varun Suthra, Director International Relations, KIIT University.

Dr. Varun Suthra expressed appreciation for the forum, noting his long-standing participation and the professional and personal value it has brought him over the years. He shared a brief personal anecdote about being unexpectedly recognized as a citizen of Suriname upon arrival, reflecting the warmth of the international community.

Drawing on his lived experience growing up in Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Suthra spoke powerfully about India's decades-long struggle with terrorism, citing atrocities such as the 1998

Wandhama massacre. He emphasized that terrorism has evolved into a global, highly organized threat, now employing hybrid warfare and advanced technologies.

Dr. Suthra underscored that terrorism anywhere is a threat everywhere and called for global solutions. He outlined India's multi-layered counterterrorism framework, including robust legislation, intelligence coordination, and institutions such as FIU-IND and the National Investigation Agency, alongside cooperation with FATF, INTERPOL, and the G20.

He also highlighted India's ban on cryptocurrency due to its misuse in terror financing and referenced Kautilya's Arthashastra to illustrate how ancient principles of intelligence and prevention remain relevant today. He concluded by stressing the importance of unity, information sharing, and interparliamentary cooperation, quoting: "When kings are united, enemies tremble."

Corruption as a Threat to National Security

Honorable Volodymyr Kreidenko – Member of Parliament of Ukraine, Deputy Chair of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

The Honorable Volodymyr Kreidenko thanked the organizers of the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum and expressed gratitude to participating nations for their continued support of Ukraine, which remains engaged in a full-scale war against Russia's efforts to seize its territory and destroy its people. He reaffirmed Ukraine's determination to defend its sovereignty alongside the European Union, the United States, and the broader democratic community.

Drawing on his experience in anti-corruption work, Mr. Kreidenko emphasized that corruption is not merely a governance issue but a serious national security threat. He explained that corruption—through bribery, state capture, and institutional decay—weakens governments from within, erodes public trust, and creates vulnerabilities that hostile actors exploit to bypass sanctions and influence political systems.

He noted that corruption deprives nations of critical defense resources and fuels shadow economies that finance organized crime, extremism, and terrorism, making it a global and borderless threat. Combating it, he stressed, must be central to the global security agenda.

Mr. Kreidenko concluded by calling for stronger accountability, transparency, independent media, and international cooperation, underscoring that integrity and rule of law are essential to democratic resilience and collective security. He closed by thanking the audience for their solidarity and continued support for Ukraine's freedom and sovereignty.