Science Diplomacy with Cuba: Advances and Opportunities

A Panel Discussion Hosted by
The AAAS Science Diplomacy Affinity Group

Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2015
5:00 – 6:00 pm Reception
6:00 – 8:00 pm Panel discussion

AAAS Auditorium
1200 New York Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20005

Summary
The historic reestablishment of U.S. diplomatic relations with Cuba after more than 50 years presents an exciting opportunity for an unprecedented level of bilateral engagement for mutual benefit. The U.S., Cuba, and other countries share an interest in many issues rooted in science and technology, such as advancing human health, protecting biodiversity, and countering trafficking. In spite of U.S. policies and with only modest investment in scientific research, Cuba has been globally recognized for its advances in medicine and biotechnology, disaster preparedness and response, and marine protection. Further, due to equipment restrictions resulting from the embargo, Cuban scientists have developed a culture of creativity and familiarity with working across disciplines. Please join us for an interactive panel discussion highlighting Cuban science & technology advances, and identifying challenges and opportunities for advancing bilateral and multilateral scientific cooperation with Cuba.

Panelists:
Frances Colón, Deputy Science & Technology Advisor to the Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State
Tim Wiley, Economic Officer, Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Cristina Rabadan-Diehl, Director, Office of the Americas, Office of Global Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Fernando Bretos, Director, Cuba Marine Research & Conservation, The Ocean Foundation, and Curator of Ecology, Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science
José Ramón Cabañas Rodríguez, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Cuba, Washington, DC

Tentative Agenda
6:00 – 6:10 pm Event and speaker introduction
6:10 – 6:30 pm Frances Colon (Plenary)
6:30 – 6:45 pm Tim Wiley
6:45 – 7:00 pm Cristina Rabadan-Diehl
7:00 – 7:15 pm Fernando Bretos questions)
7:15 – 7:30 pm Cuban Embassy
7:30 – 8:00 pm Panel discussion with audience Q&A

8:15 – 10:00 pm: Post-event networking happy hour at nearby restaurant
Speaker Bios

Plenary

Frances Colón, Ph.D.
Deputy Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

Dr. Frances Colón is the Deputy Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State at the U.S. Department of State where she promotes integration of science and technology into foreign policy dialogues; global scientific engagement for capacity-building; advancement of women in science; and innovation as a tool for economic growth around the world. Previously, Dr. Colón served the U.S. Department of State as the Science and Environment Adviser at the Western Hemisphere Affairs Bureau where she was responsible for advising on environmental and scientific issues that affected the U.S. Government's foreign policy objectives in the Americas. During that time, Dr. Colón coordinated climate change policy for the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas announced by President Obama in 2009. As a AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow (2006-2008), Dr. Colón led the OES Bureau’s program for Muslim world outreach through K-12 science and math education cooperation. Dr. Colón earned her Ph.D. in neuroscience in 2004 from Brandeis University and her B.S. in biology in 1997 from the University of Puerto Rico.

Panelists

Tim Wiley
Economic Officer, Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Tim Wiley is the lead officer at the State Department’s Cuba Desk for science and technology matters. In this capacity he has helped coordinate negotiations between the United States and Cuba on establishing a program for sister marine protected areas in the two countries. He traveled to Cuba twice in 2015 to meet with Cuban government officials. Prior to this assignment, he was posted to the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam. He has an MBA from the University of Texas at Austin and a BA from the University of Oregon.
Cristina Rabadán-Diehl, Ph.D.
Director, Office of the Americas, Office of Global Affairs, Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Cristina Rabadán-Diehl is the Director of the Office of the Americas in the Office
of Global Affairs, Office of the Secretary, at the United States Department of Health
and Human Services (HHS). She is involved with coordinating US Government
policy and functions related to HHS international activities in the Americas region.
She also serves as the HHS Secretary’s Representative to the US-Mexico Border Health Commission.
Prior to this position, Dr. Rabadán-Diehl served for 21 years at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH)
as a researcher and science administrator at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child
Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).
During her tenure, she was an NICHD Bench Research Scientist, NHLBI Program Director at the Division
of Cardiovascular Sciences, Deputy and Acting Director of the NHLBI Office of Global Health, and the NIH
Scientific Manager for the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD). She was also the director of the
NHLBI Collaborating Centers of Excellence program, a global network of research and training centers to
help combat chronic non-communicable diseases in developing countries. The program included
activities Africa, South Asia, East Asia and 15 countries in the Latin America region.

In addition to global health and policy, her areas of scientific expertise include cardiovascular disease,
diabetes, neuroendocrinology, bio-behavioral stress, early origins of adult disease, and implementation
science. She also holds an appointment with the Department of International Health at the Johns
Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Heath.

Fernando Bretos Trelles
Curator of Ecology, Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science
Director, Cuba Marine Research and Conservation Project, The Ocean Foundation

Mr. Bretos directs the Cuba Marine Research and Conservation Program
(www.cubamar.org), a project of The Ocean Foundation. He is the son of Cuban
Peter Pan migrants who left the island as teenagers in 1961. Throughout his career
he has collaborated on major marine biodiversity expeditions, coral reef health studies and marine
wildlife conservation programs. Mr. Bretos also directs the Trinational Initiative for Marine Science and
Conservation in the Gulf of Mexico and Western Caribbean, a multinational program initiated in 2007 to
restore coastal and marine resources shared by the three nations of the Gulf of Mexico: Cuba, Mexico
and the United States.

Since 1998 his work has built bridges between our countries through joint research on marine resources
shared by countries that are separated by only 90 miles of ocean. The biological links between the U.S.
and Cuba are considerable, particularly in a marine context where ocean currents pay no heed to
international maritime borders or embargoes. The larvae of fish, coral and crustaceans as well as
migratory sea turtles, sharks and marine mammals flow between our countries, depending on healthy habitats for survival. The US lies upstream from Cuba and hence depends on Cuban biodiversity for the health of its coastal habitats from south Texas to coastal Massachusetts.

Mr. Bretos is also Director of MuVE (www.miamisci.org/muve) at the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science (www.miamisci.org), a volunteer based habitat restoration project that empowers South Florida residents to restore urban coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, dunes and tropical hardwood forests. As Curator of Ecology he is also helping design marine science based exhibits for a 250,000 square foot state-of-the-art museum and aquarium where the Museum will move to in 2016. A 2011 Kinship Fellow and 2010 Audubon Together Green Fellow, he holds a Master’s degree in Marine Affairs and Policy from the University of Miami’s Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science and a bachelor’s degree in biology from Oberlin College.

José Ramón Cabañas Rodríguez
Ambassador of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba
Washington, DC

José Ramón Cabañas Rodríguez is the Ambassador of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in Washington, D.C., United States of America. He graduated from the Raúl Roa García Higher Institute of International Relations summa cum laude and currently holds a PhD in Political Sciences.

In 1984, he began to work as a Specialist Assistant at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1986, when he was promoted to Third Grade Specialist. From 1990 to 1992, he served as Third Secretary at the Cuban Embassy to Ottawa, Canada, and from 1992 to 1993, as Second Secretary at the aforementioned embassy. In 1993, he was appointed Deputy Director of the North American Affairs Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 1994 to 1998, he headed the Division of Cuban Residents Abroad and, from 1998 to 2001, the Division of Cuban Residents Abroad and Consular Affairs. During that period, as a member of the negotiating team, he participated in the migration talks held between Cuba and Mexico, the Bahamas, the United Kingdom (Grand Cayman) and the Dominican Republic respectively.

From 2001 to 2005, he was appointed Ambassador of Cuba to Austria (accredited also to Croatia and Slovenia) and Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna. From 2005 to 2006, he headed the Committee to implement a Comprehensive Document Management System at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 2009 to 2012, he was promoted to Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In November 2012, he was appointed Chief of Mission of the Cuban Interests Section in the United States. On July 20, 2015 he became Chargé d’Affaires a.i with the opening of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in Washington DC. On September 17, 2015 he became the first Cuban Ambassador to the United States in over 50 years.