



Latin America needs sound institutions, leaders say

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Latin America needs solid institutions and "more transparent" leadership to build public confidence in the political class, the head of the Ibero-American permanent secretariat said here Thursday.

Rebeca Grynspan, a former vice president of Costa Rica, spoke during the inauguration of the Goberna Las Americas-Miami School of Good Government at Miami Dade College, which offers an program in Spanish for government leaders from throughout Latin America and Hispanics living in the United States.

The quality of a country's institutions and politicians has a greater bearing on national prosperity than the presence of valuable natural resources, she said.

While acknowledging that 50 million Latin Americans have emerged from poverty in the past decade, Grynspan said the region continues to be plagued by extreme inequality.

The roughly 37 percent of Latin American residents whose incomes hover just above the poverty line are at risk of rejoining the ranks of the poor if governments can't find a way to boost growth beyond the current median of 2 percent, she said.

The region's leaders need to strive for greater transparency and to assume a more active role in the battle against corruption, according to Grynspan, who also called for institutions capable of responding to the needs and demands of citizens.

Former Spanish Defense Minister Carme Chacon also spoke during Thursday's inaugural forum at the school, which is a joint initiative of Miami Dade College and Spain's Ortega-Marañon Foundation.

"We need better leaders" who are more sensitive to the needs of society, Chacon, currently head of international relations for Spain's main opposition Socialists, told the Democracy and Citizenship forum.

She also expressed concern about the gap between rich and poor.

"Economic inequality erodes confidence in institutions," and, by extension, in democracy itself, Chacon said.

The Goberna school, in the words of a statement from Miami Dade College, aims to be a "unique center of higher learning that would benefit elected government officials, and business and civil society leaders from Latin America and the larger Hispanic community in the United States." EFE

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