



International Affairs Coordinating Council (IACC)  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, August 18, 2025

Location: Fink Studio  
2506 Ponce de León Blvd., Coral Gables, Florida

| Members:                     | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | Commissioners                |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| <b>Olga Ramudo</b>           | - | - | - | - | - | X | X | E |   |   |   |   | Mayor Vince Lago             |
| <b>Vicky Rua</b>             | - | - | - | - | - | X | X | P |   |   |   |   | Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson   |
| <b>Alfonso Cueto</b>         | - | - | - | - | - | X | X | P |   |   |   |   | Comm. Richard Lara           |
| <b>Raoul Cantero</b>         | - | - | - | - | - | X | X | P |   |   |   |   | Comm. Ariel Fernandez        |
| <b>Richard Montes de Oca</b> | - | - | - | - | - | X | X | P |   |   |   |   | Comm. Melissa Castro         |
| <b>Ilsa Danielson</b>        | - | - | - | - | - | X | X | E |   |   |   |   | Peter Iglesias               |
| <b>Vacancy</b>               | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |   |   |   |   | Council-at-Large Appointment |

A = Absent P = Present E = Excused UA = Unexcused Absence X = No Meeting F = Former Member

The International Affairs Coordinating Council (IACC) meeting was called to order at 4:11 p.m. Vice Chair Richard Montes de Oca welcomed everyone to the committee.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**A motion to approve the minutes from March 17th, 2025, IACC meeting was made by Board member Cantero and Board member Rua seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.**

- The meeting began with a warm welcome to new Board member Alfonso Cueto. Mr. Cueto, a semi-retired resident of Coral Gables, shared his background noting his previous experience as a beer distributor and that recently he opened a third beer distributor where he works part time. Mr. Cueto expressed his appreciation for Coral Gables, noting that “there is no city in the world like the City Beautiful”.
- The meeting had also two guests, Estrellita Sibila, an attorney based in Coral Gables, who joined the meeting in person. Ms. Sibila has expertise in real estate development and international clients. She shared her diverse professional background, which includes travel writing with published articles on destinations such as India, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Morocco, and several U.S. regions. Having visited 56 countries, she also serves as a dame with the Knights of Malta and completed a diplomatic training program in Washington, D.C. Ms. Sibila expressed interest in

joining the committee as a potential member-at-large appointed by the mayor, highlighting how her professional and personal experiences align with the Sister Cities mission. An online guest, Sebastian del Marmol, a consultant with the Coral Gables Gazette, also joined. He explained that he has been observing different city boards and committees and would like to learn more about the committee's activities. Both guests were warmly welcomed.

- Next, the committee discussed the selection of Chair and Vice Chair for the new year. Since not all members were present, the decision was postponed to the next meeting to ensure full participation.

## COUNTRY REPORTS

### QUITO, ECUADOR

- The committee proceeded with country reports, starting with Quito, Ecuador. Despite repeated outreach efforts since 2023—including mayoral letters and reminders in 2024 and 2025—the city has provided little engagement beyond a vague response that they would “analyze the situation.” Quito was made an emeritus city after the February 25<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting. Historical context was reviewed: the partnership was first established in 1997 through a formal resolution and has been designated dormant or emeritus at times before reactivation, though sustained engagement has remained minimal.
- Following the discussion about Quito, Ecuador, **A motion to decline Manta, Ecuador as a sister city was made by Vice Chair Montes de Oca and seconded by Board member Cantero.** The motion carried. The committee noted that the City of Manta does not align with Coral Gables in terms of demographics, culture, community, architecture, as Manta is primarily a port city.

### SEVILLA, SPAIN

- Discussion then turned to the Feria de Sevilla. Members noted the challenges of hosting the event in the Alhambra area, the city's downtown and corporate corridor, because of the logistical burden on businesses, street closures require setting up a day before and cleanup a day after. An alternative venue in front of City Hall, near the farmers' market area, was suggested. A meeting will be arranged with organizers to finalize the location. Members emphasized that Sevilla remains an active sister city and is expected to continue hosting events in Coral Gables prior to the Feria, even if the main celebration is relocated.

### SAN ISIDRO, ARGENTINA

- The committee then reviewed preliminary engagement with San Isidro, confirming that communication has been established with the mayor's office and that follow-up correspondence is needed. Members discussed the broader importance of ensuring that partnerships are mutually beneficial—not limited to donations or symbolic exchanges but also incorporating meaningful programs such as education, culture, arts, culinary exchanges, and business opportunities. Suggestions included hosting cultural showcases in Coral Gables in partnership with consulates and organizing reciprocal activities abroad, thereby strengthening community and economic ties.

## OPEN DISCUSSION

- The committee also discussed expanding the board. A proposal was reviewed to increase membership from seven to nine, as suggested by Commissioner Fernandez. Members raised concerns about adding new seats without having sufficient active country partners. Currently, six members are serving, with one vacancy. Members agreed it may be more practical to fill the existing seventh seat first, rather than expand immediately.
- This led to a detailed discussion on the seventh board seat. Several resumes had been submitted to the City Clerk's office. The committee agreed that all applications should be shared with members for review, and applicants should be invited to the next meeting where a vote will be held. **A motion to schedule the Board as a Whole election for the next meeting was made by Board member Cantero and Board member Rua seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.**
- The committee then worked to set a date for the upcoming meeting. Multiple options in September were considered, but scheduling conflicts arose due to member availability and religious holidays. After discussion, the committee tentatively set the meeting for September 23, 2025.
- The next item was reported by Belkys Perez, the International Cultural Events Program. The city currently allocates \$100,000 annually, supporting up to five events with \$20,000 each. Historically, funds were distributed indirectly, with payments routed through city departments for services such as police, barricades, and electrical support. The committee discussed a proposal to streamline the process by converting this into direct \$20,000 grants to event organizers. This would simplify administration, reduce costs, and create clearer accountability. The program will now operate with formal guidelines covering application, approval, and implementation processes, which had previously been missing.
- Members clarified that three events are already confirmed for this year: Feria de Sevilla (Spain), Carnaval de Barranquilla (Colombia), and Día de los Muertos (Mexico). Additional events are being considered, including one from Peru featuring cultural songs and dances. Sister city consulates and cultural offices will continue to play a central role in proposing events, with final presentations made to the board before recommendations are forwarded to the City's Special Events Committee for logistics review and commission approval.
- **A motion was made by Vice Chair Montes de Oca, to approve the new International Cultural Event Guidelines. The motion was seconded by Board member Cantero and passed unanimously.**
- The committee also discussed the importance of promoting and documenting cultural initiatives. While the City's website is not directly controlled by the committee, members suggested adding a dedicated page to highlight sister city events, both current and historical, to showcase the committee's contributions and strengthen visibility. Other suggestions included featuring events in the city's e-news and capturing them in the annual report as a permanent record of the committee's work.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned. The meeting concluded with thanks extended to all attendees and guests.

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Respectfully submitted,  
Leticia Perez  
International Business Development Representative  
Economic Development Department  
City of Coral Gables