

DANIELA VAYAS

Featured Alumna

Current location: Washington, DC

Dialogue Role: Intern, Summer 2018

Energy, Climate Change, & Extractive Industries Program



What is your occupation or most recent work experience?

I currently work at the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) at the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS). I am the Program Officer in charge of the Inter-American Counter-terrorism Network project. To give you some context, CICTE is the only regional entity whose sole purpose is to prevent and counter terrorism in the Americas. CICTE supports and works closely with OAS Member States, and its main programs include: cybersecurity, maritime and port security, cargo and container security, tourism security, UNSCR 1540 implementation (prevention and combat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), terrorism financing, prevention of violent extremism and the Inter-American Counter-Terrorism Network. Each program is unique and important as they deal with different security issues affecting the region. On June 3, we commemorated the Inter-American Day against Terrorism, a day to reflect on the challenges and threats that our region faces. My work experience at CICTE has been exceptional and I have been able to work with a great cohort of professionals and experts.

What has surprised you most about your career?

I honestly never really thought I'd be working on terrorism issues. My past work experience was mostly related to energy, but as I pursued the Master of Science in Foreign Service at Georgetown University, I realized I wanted to explore other career opportunities. I realized that now more than ever regional security in the Americas is crucial for international security. This past year has been very challenging to all of us. Covid-19 reshaped the world order and our lives. We experienced loss, we learned to work remotely, and we stopped traveling. But as our lives changed, terrorists didn't stop, they continued working. I currently have the opportunity to work in this field focused on terrorism prevention and cooperation among Member States, other international organizations, civil society, private sector, and academia.

What advice would you give to a young professional?

Don't be afraid to explore new career opportunities or change your line of work. If there is an issue you are passionate about, go for it. We live in a world that is constantly changing and new opportunities are open for those who seek them. In my case, though transitioning from the energy to the security sector was definitely a challenge, I couldn't be happier of what I am currently doing. Don't forget that it is never too late to pursue a new career path; you build your own way.

What was your most impactful Dialogue moment/experience?

Interning at the Dialogue was my first work experience in DC, so every moment was impactful! But I will say that meeting high-level political leaders in the region was definitely an important one. I remember we hosted a conversation with Carlos Alvarado, Costa Rica's president. Once he arrived to the office, he stopped at the front desk to say hello and speak to us for a couple of minutes. I would also say that the people I met during my internship were VERY impactful. I am still in touch with them, and they have become mentors, close friends and even teachers.

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