

# GLOBAL MEXICO

## ENRIQUE PEÑA NIETO'S ADMINISTRATION CHANGES

This month, after two years since he took office, President Enrique Peña Nieto has made the Administration's first four major Cabinet and staff changes. Jesús Murillo Karam has departed from the Attorney General's office (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR) so that former Senator Arely Gómez González could take his place; former Ambassador at the U.S. Eduardo Medina Mora has been named justice of the Supreme Court; and Eduardo Sánchez has become Head of the Presidential Social Communication Department.

Mr. Murillo is now leading the Land Development Ministry, succeeding

Jorge Carlos Ramírez Marín who left his post in order to pursue a Proportional Representation nomination for the Chamber of Deputies. Mr. Ramírez took charge of the Ministry under one of the worst crises in Mexican construction sector; nonetheless, he managed to establish a program to set the rules for better quality housing. Nowadays, the sector is growing at higher rates than those of the economy as a whole (Páramo, 2015).

Partially, Murillo Karam's departure, foreseen since last December, came as a result of the events in Ayotzinapa last September when 43 students were kidnapped and killed. Public cri-

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ticism over the federal government's handling of the crisis deteriorated the Attorney's image. However, the investigations led by Mr. Murillo were the most complex in the country's criminal prosecution history and he accomplished to capture José Luis Abarca and his wife, intellectual authors of the kidnappings. Also, during his leadership the PGR captured Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán and Servando "La Tuta" Gómez, two of the most-wanted drug lords, and dismantled the main organized crime network in Michoacán, Los Caballeros Templarios. Former Senator Arely Gómez González was nominated by President Peña Nieto to succeed Mr. Murillo as the new Attorney General and on March 3 her former colleagues at the Senate approved her nomination,



In this picture, the New Attorney General Arely Gómez and the former one, Jesús Murillo Karam.  
<http://regeneracion.mx/sociedad/televisa-anuncia-cambios-sale-murillo-karam-de-pgr-y-lo-sustituye-arely-gomez/>

becoming the second female Attorney General in Mexico's history. Mrs. Gómez has previously worked as prosecutor at the institution she now leads and at the Mexican Supreme Court.

A further change, at the federal authorities' higher rank, took place on March 10, when the Senate approved the nomination proposed by President Peña Nieto of Eduardo Medina Mora to become a justice of the Mexican Supreme Court. Mr. Medina was the Attorney General, Minister of Public Security and Head of the National Security and Research Centre during Felipe Calderón Hinojosa's Administration, as well as Ambassador to the UK and, until now, the U.S. Despite the mixed opinions his designation received from different sectors of the public and political spheres, the Supreme Court justices, the Federal Electoral Tribunal's judges and the directors of the Council of the Federal Judiciary celebrated the solemn joint public session of the imposition of the toga and swearing of the post.



Eduardo Medina Mora taking oath as the new member of the Supreme Court. Photo: Notimex

It is foreseeable that Gerónimo Gutiérrez, former Deputy Foreign Minister for North America during Vicente Fox's presidency, will become the new ambassador of Mexico in the United States. He is currently the Managing Director North America Development Bank (NADB), headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, and has the experience and knowledge to take care of the Mexican-U.S. bilateral relation.

Mr. Gutiérrez, who has a BA in Economics from ITAM and a Masters' degree in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, has a broad background and deep knowledge of the Mexico-US relation, as his experience at the Mexican Foreign Ministry shows. He also has been appointed as Deputy Minister for Latin American and the Caribbean and, at the Ministry of Interior, as Deputy Minister of Government. Furthermore, he was the Head of Advisors at the Finance Ministry from 1992 to 1994 and an advisor at the Public Works and Services Bank (BANOBRAS).

On behalf of his staff, on March 6 President Peña Nieto's long-time colleague David López Gutiérrez stepped down as his Head of Social Communication, as he will pursue a candidacy for federal representative for ruling party PRI. The President's spokesman Eduardo Sánchez succeeded him.

These changes come as a need, due to the vacancy of some posts, but also as the administration's action to restore credibility and trust among the Mexican society and strengthen institutions, especially Murillo's and Medina Mora's changes. As assured recently in a contribution for the Financial Times, the Secretary of Finance Luis Videgaray explained that the government is not only



Gerónimo Gutierrez, possibly the next Mexican ambassador in the U.S.

worried about reforms, they have an urge to restore public trust: “We have to deal with what is really important for Mexican society, which is not only corruption and transparency. It goes beyond that, it is a matter of trust. We can do ten energy reforms, but if we don’t add confidence, we will not realize the full potential of the Mexican economy”<sup>1</sup>.

## ▶ 2015, YEAR OF MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Officially referred to as the Federal Electoral Process of 2014-2015, midterm elections are going to be held on June 7 to renew the following positions at the federal level in México:

- 500 members of Congress: 300 by relative majority and direct vote in each of the five constituencies throughout the country and 200 by proportional representation.
- 9 governorships in the states of Baja California Sur, Campeche, Colima, Guerrero, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí and Sonora.
- 1,009 city halls.

These are the elections with the largest number of post renewals in the history of the country, with a total of 2,179 posts and an estimated of 82.5 million voters in the nominal list. Over 152,515 voting booths will be deployed under the sight of the new National Electoral Institute (INE), succeeding the former Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) after the structural political reform approved in the early months of 2014. Also, these are the elections with the largest number of parties competing: Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), Partido Verde Ecológico de México (PVEM), Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), Partido del Trabajo (PT) Movimiento Ciudadano, Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (Morena), Nueva Alianza (PANAL), Partido Humanista and Partido Encuentro Social.

For every state holding midterms the candidate registration ends on March 29th, and the campaign comes to an end on



June 3. Until now, six states have already started the governor campaign: Sonora, San Luis Potosí, Campeche, Nuevo León, Colima, and Guerrero. All the other campaigns will start according to its particular calendar in the early days of April, except for Chiapas that will hold election in two dates: on June 7 for federal deputies and on June 19 for local authorities.

These elections represent an assessment of President Peña Nieto’s Administration and his party PRI’s performance at Congress and local authority posts. Right-wing PAN will be the ruling party’s main challenger for citizens’ votes. Furthermore, former presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López’ Morena party will compete against PRD for the left-wing’s hegemony. However, the importance of this date rests on its setting up of the political scenario towards the 2018 Presidential elections.

<sup>1</sup> Webber, Jude, and Rathbone, John Paul. “Mexico urged to rebuild public’s trust”. Financial Times: 16/02/2015. Available in: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/2ecd8264-b4eb-11e4-8362-00144feab7de.html#axzz3VEflEUO9>

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