

**Ambassador Steve Browning**  
**Remarks**  
**Flag Ceremony for Ambassador Charles Shapiro**  
**December 2, 2011**

I want to thank everyone for coming today to honor Ambassador Charles Shapiro. We are delighted to have with us the Ambassador's wife, Robin Dickerson. Unfortunately, their sons Jake and Tom could not make it - they are back at college studying for their exams.

Ambassador Shapiro joined the Foreign Service in 1977, and in the past 34 years he has distinguished himself as a "Latin Americanist." Most of his career was spent in the region or here in Washington working on Latin American issues in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

After an early non-WHA posting in Copenhagen, Charles served in San Salvador, as DCM in Trinidad and in Santiago, and then as Ambassador to Venezuela. When he returned from Caracas, he served first as Deputy Assistant Secretary with responsibility for the Caribbean and the Andes and then as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

In 2007 Ambassador Shapiro left the Front Office to lead a Bureau of Western Hemisphere (WHA) Task Force on the Peru Trade Agreement. In 2009, he traveled to Trinidad to head up preparations for President Obama's participation in the Summit of the Americas. Many say it is one of the most successful Summits we have had. When he returned, he became the senior advisor on a range of financial inclusion issues, working to ensure that the benefits of economic growth and increased trade reached the most disadvantaged.

Many of his colleagues say that Ambassador Shapiro is a visionary. Two years ago, he began to enthusiastically promote "Secured Transaction Reform" - a concept that few understood at the time. The idea behind Secured Transaction Reform is to establish systems that facilitate better access to credit, which allows more people to acquire assets, expand their businesses, and create jobs. This, in turn, enables them to educate their children, strengthen their families, and improve the quality of their lives. Recognizing the importance of this idea, Ambassador Shapiro developed a WHA-wide task force with the mandate of promoting Secured Transaction Reform and, more broadly, financial inclusion, in WHA's economic policy and programs. Through his work, Ambassador Shapiro shifted the Bureau's (and the Department's) understanding of the economic power of the poor. By the time he left, many in the Department referred to him as our Ambassador at Large for Financial Inclusion, a well-deserved (if not official) title.

Ambassador Shapiro is a consummate diplomat. There are few tasks as difficult as leading the U.S. Embassy in Venezuela during the Chavez regime. Charles did it with professionalism, enthusiasm, and dignity. Many Venezuelans agreed. Every day when he drove to work, Charles passed by graffiti on the highway that said, "Fuera Shapiro" but it was immediately followed by a passerby calling out in a friendly way, "Hola Shapiro !"

Ambassador Shapiro also understands the importance of mentoring the next generation of diplomats. His colleagues tell me that he always found time to offer words of wisdom or congratulations. One junior officer will never forget when Charles picked up the phone on the final day of the Summit of the Americas in 2009 to call her mother and started the conversation with, "Ma'am, this is Ambassador Shapiro and I wanted to let you know what your daughter did for the President of the United States here in Trinidad this week. You sure must have done something right. . . ' "

Ambassador Shapiro has touched the lives of many people - from the young FSOs he mentored to presidents. His departure is an enormous loss for the State Department. He is an exceptional colleague and friend, and he will be greatly missed. Thankfully, he will have an opportunity to remain involved in foreign policy as head of the Institute of the Americas.

Ambassador Shapiro, for these accomplishments and many others, we thank you for your endeavors. As we service bid you and wish you success in all your future a fond farewell, it is a pleasure to present these flags to you and your wife.

It is with great pleasure that I present you the Chief of Mission flag. The nation you served so well and the Department of State, which has so greatly benefitted from your service, are deeply appreciative of your service.