



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PALMER TO HEMISPHERE MAYORS:
“THE GRASSROOTS CAN DRIVE COMPETITIVENESS”**

Arlington, VA—Ambassador Larry Palmer, president of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), believes that supporting grassroots initiatives will help make Latin American communities and countries more competitive in the global market place— and he will share his belief with the 500 municipal officials at the XIII Inter-American Conference of Mayors and Local Authorities opening June 12 in Miami.

“Competitiveness presented at the national level elicits an abstraction, yet it can be made real with concrete action at the local level,” insists Palmer. “We must talk about competitive municipalities, not just competitive countries. Innovation and creativity are born and bred in the local environments, where people live and face their daily problems.”

The IAF encourages such innovation and creativity at the grassroots by responding with development grants to ideas from the organized poor in Latin America. Mayors in Miami will hear from IAF staff and others about a new approach to addressing poverty: Opportunity Zones, inspired by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s experience with “renewal

communities,” whose residents define their goals and the program to accomplish them before approaching HUD for assistance. A representative from Chattanooga, Tenn., will explain how her community pursued a development plan that resulted in new businesses launched and the relocation of industries from outside. “Once a community identifies its niche it can become a major player in the global economy,” said Palmer.

The Inter-American Conference of Mayors and Local Authorities is organized annually by the Miami-Dade County government and Florida International University. This year’s conference, whose theme is *Building the Competitive Municipality: Promoting Collaboration for Development*, opens at 9:00 a.m. at the Radisson Hotel, 1601 Biscayne Blvd.

Since its founding in 1969, the Inter-American Foundation has awarded 4,632 grants worth more than \$600 million. Together, the IAF and its grantees have improved conditions for hundreds of thousands of families. To learn more about the IAF, log onto the IAF Web site, www.iaf.gov.

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For more details, call 703-306-4319.