

# ASUTIL begins preparing for next year's Orlando summit with IAADFS, but still contemplates regional issues

By **Ronnie Lovler** on August, 7 2018 | Associations



ASUTIL is already hard at work in taking care of the preliminaries for next year's Summit of the Americas in Orlando, which it is hosting jointly with IAADFS.

But at the same time the organization is keeping close tabs on the changes that are upcoming in Brazil's duty free and travel retail industry with plans to open "lojas francas" or duty-free stores on the Brazilian side of that country's borders with other Latin American nations for the first time.

But ASUTIL Secretary-General José Luis Donagaray said he is looking forward to implementing lessons learned in this year's summit, to the upcoming 2019 event in an exclusive interview with *Americas Duty Free*.

"We had our first year. We had to combine a lot of things, not only the work, but also the different cultures," Donagaray said. "I think it is positive. We got some positive feedback. We are working (so that) next year in the new venue (we will) have a good show for everyone," he said.

Next year's Summit of the Americas, will be held March 24-27, 2019, at the Hyatt Regency Orlando, a break from the Marriott World Center, also in Orlando, where this year's conference was held.

Plans for the 2019 meeting are still being developed, but Donagaray said ASUTIL and IAADFS leadership have conference calls every 15 days to discuss things. Education sessions will be a primary focus, which are a big draw for attendees waiting to learn more about industry trends and developments from leaders in the field.

He also said ASUTIL is committed to the idea of one annual conference sponsored jointly by the two largest duty free and travel retail organizations in the Americas, rather than two separate events as had been done in the past. Donagaray said this means less travel, fewer costs and better use of time for the members of both organizations.

But the upcoming changes in Brazil's duty-free industry are also taking up a lot of ASUTIL's time, although Donagaray said ASUTIL is "optimistic" about the changes in Brazil that he hopes will bring more business to the border areas.

"It doesn't need to have opposition. It is a development decision," Donagaray said. "We make our suggestions to the government and make comments. It is a new way of business, so we welcome them. What we want is a fair competition between all the countries and all the stores. That's what ASUTIL wants.

"We (ASUTIL) have been in Brazil and have been to a lot of meetings," Donagaray said. "We have a good dialogue going on with the Brazilian authorities and are sharing our experiences."

In the meantime, ASUTIL is also putting finishing touches on its new website, which launched earlier this year, with the intent being to offer more to ASUTIL members online.

"The idea is to have a web of information not just for members but for all the industry and the idea is to have a dynamic view of the website with new information about the business," Donagaray said.

The website is bilingual with information available in English and Spanish. A Portuguese version of the website will also be available in the future.