



Integrated Country Strategy

Equatorial Guinea

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The Mission's priorities directly support the pillars of the President's National Security Strategy to protect the American way of life, promote American prosperity, preserve peace through strength, and advance American influence in Equatorial Guinea. These priorities are to promote an expanded democratic space in country; assist the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (GREG) to diversify its economy and increase the economic, health, and educational opportunities for all of its citizens; and protect the safety and well-being of U.S. citizens and companies in the country. The U.S. relationship with the GREG will be dependent on advancing in these areas. While relations between the U.S. and GREG remain modestly positive, and U.S. citizens enjoy visa-free travel to Equatorial Guinea, the U.S. Embassy has serious concerns about civil liberties, democratic governance, and respect for the human rights of both the citizens and resident foreigners in country. The ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) controls virtually all aspects of political and economic life in Equatorial Guinea. Concerns about succession of power from the longest serving, non-royal head of state potentially to his son threaten the stability and economy of the country. The few genuine opposition parties and civil society organizations in country face severe restrictions on their activities and are frequently halted in public meetings from expressing their sentiments about improving the conditions in country. The media and the judiciary are not fully independent and are susceptible to government and political interference and influence.

Equatorial Guinea will only continue to benefit from solid relations with U.S. companies if it takes steps to improve its governance and overall business climate. In 2017, Equatorial Guinea attracted significant investments from a new U.S. oil exploration company. We will continue to encourage U.S. investment, including in areas outside the energy sector. As a middle-income country, Equatorial Guinea is not eligible for development assistance from international institutions or foreign donors and often relies on the social responsibility projects of the U.S. companies. In 2008, the GREG began a development program, investing heavily in capital infrastructure. The country has modern highways, airports, ports, power-generating facilities, communications networks, government buildings, and some government backed housing developments. Equatorial Guinea's economy, however, shares many similarities of a lower income economy. Citizens suffer from high levels of unemployment and underemployment, with an estimated 20,000 new entrants to the labor market each year for the next 10 to 15 years. The U.S. Embassy will support entrepreneurial engagements designed to encourage the GREG and civil society to improve the doing business indices and address its own impediments to growth.

For the Mission to achieve its goals, the Embassy also has to deal with the history of Equatorial Guinea in the international sphere, including the fact that it was the first country delisted from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2010 and has a series of anti-kleptocracy or ill-gotten gains cases against members of the ruling regime over the last twenty years. Sparsely populated and relatively safe, Equatorial Guinea's breadth of natural beauty and unique biodiversity makes it rich with ecotourism possibilities. And, there is a strong sense of Equatoguinean identity, nationalism, and patriotism among its citizens, 60% of whom are below age 25. Greater economic transparency, with civil society input, would enable a healthy debate about public spending, improve GREG international credibility, and allow for a better business climate where investors have access to reliable data and information to make investment decisions.

Equatorial Guinea is celebrating 50 years of independence from Spain in 2018 and is stepping up its international participation to improve its reputation. EG is now a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and began a two year term as one of the African chairs in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2018. While it is on a larger international stage, EG will need to show the political will to abide by the rule of law, increase the civil and human rights efforts in country, improve its fiscal transparency, and set the GREG on the correct path for future international respect. The Embassy will encourage the GREG to take specific actions that will improve prevention, protection, and prosecution activities on Trafficking in Persons by focusing the GREG on activities that will improve the government's overall performance in areas related to civil and human rights and good governance. Without improvements in governance and social welfare in country, however, the Embassy cannot expect to carry out future security or justice sector activities.

Embassy Malabo is a single-agency post with regional coverage out of a half-dozen other posts for both State and other agencies' responsibilities. Equatorial Guinea is the only Spanish-speaking country in the region. Between 300-500 U.S. citizens live in Equatorial Guinea at any given time. The safety and well-being of U.S. citizens are our highest priorities. The Embassy will continue to provide services to all U.S. citizens in EG both those in and those located outside Malabo. With its small population and abundant natural resources, Equatorial Guinea could become a model for the region. However, this will come about only if the GREG engages in genuine political and economic reforms that benefit its citizens and lead to the country's becoming a true democratic state governed by the rule of law.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Promote American Leadership and Values by Strengthening Democracy, Human Rights, and Good Governance

Mission Objective 1.1: All political parties are allowed to fully participate in the 2021 municipal and legislative elections with unrestricted access to media and the electorate; civil society permitted to inform voters on key issues.

Mission Objective 1.2: Equatorial Guinea improves the administration of security and justice and counters domestic and regional threats in a transparent, efficient, and humane manner.

Mission Goal 2: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment

Mission Objective 2.1: Equatorial Guinea improves economic governance related to budgetary transparency, government accountability, and fiscal management as measured by doing business indices.

Mission Objective 2.2: Equatorial Guinea diversifies its economy, reducing overdependence on hydrocarbon sector.

Mission Goal 3: Protect the Lives and Interests of U.S. Citizens and Companies

Mission Objective 3.1: Improve customer service for U.S. citizens and applicants for nonimmigrant visas.

Mission Objective 3.2: Ensure fair treatment of U.S. firms in country.

Management Objective 1: The ICASS platform responds to Mission needs, as measured by ICASS survey.

Management Objective 2: The Embassy's human resources meet Mission needs for effectiveness as diplomatic platform by providing professional development training to 100% of the Mission's staff by 2020.

Management Objective 3: Every employee has a desk or other appropriate workspace by 2020.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Promote U.S. Leadership and Values by Strengthening Democracy, Human Rights, and Good Governance.

Description and Linkages: Democratization, human rights and other reforms in Equatorial Guinea will have to be Equatoguinean-led, but the U.S. Embassy will play an important role with other international organizations and diplomatic missions in country to encourage the GREG to open up space for genuine political involvement. The Embassy's continual contact with a wide range of civil society actors and opposition political parties will help maintain a certain degree of that space and thereby directly demonstrate U.S. leadership and promote our values. As a middle-income country, and a Trafficking in Persons Tier 3 ranked country, Equatorial Guinea is not eligible for most donor assistance or U.S. bilateral foreign assistance. The U.S. Embassy will work with partners in country to improve the country's rankings. International and diplomatic missions in country will continue to pursue developmental activities on a limited basis.

Mission Objective 1.1: All political parties are allowed to fully participate in the 2021 municipal and legislative elections with unrestricted access to media and the electorate; civil society permitted to inform voters on key issues.

Justification: Good governance and democratization in Equatorial Guinea requires the GREG to allow for space for civil society leaders and political opposition parties to participate in the national debate on how to address some of the country's societal challenges. The U.S. Mission will encourage the GREG to permit wide-ranging dialogues in various traditional and new medium and to empower Equatoguineans to discuss traditionally sensitive topics. The Mission will also develop the expertise and awareness in Equatoguinean civil society through Public Diplomacy programming, including exchange programs and visits by U.S. speakers. An inability to create legitimate space for political dialogue and consensus around critical issues could lead to political instability as presidential transition looms.

Mission Objective 1.2: Equatorial Guinea improves the administration of security and justice and counters domestic and regional threats in a transparent, efficient, and humane manner.

Justification: The GREG has responded to many international and domestic threats using techniques that have received condemnation due to accusations of mistreatment, abuse, and torture of Equatoguineans. As part of the Mission's objective to promote human rights and good governance, the Embassy will urge the GREG to enable greater scrutiny of their facilities and treatment of prisoners; accurately report the condition of prisoners; and to develop law enforcement techniques that promote the rule of law

while respecting international norms of the treatment of prisoners. We will also press for the legitimate use of due process under Equatoguinean law. Lack of progress could result in an uptick in human rights violations and the GREG attempts to address legitimate domestic and regional threats and little progress on countering trafficking in persons.

Mission Goal 2: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment

Description and Linkages: The government has seen a considerable shortfall in revenue – as much as 90% of which is believed to have been coming from the hydrocarbon sector. Despite the government’s desire to reduce its dependence on the hydrocarbons sector, progress is hindered by a poor business climate. Significant public infrastructure investments during the oil boom could support efforts to diversify the non-hydrocarbon sector, but greater long-term social investments in education, health, and other areas are needed. As a member of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), the government entered into discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on possible financial relief, which could also bring in technical assistance from the World Bank and the African Development Bank. An IMF program would aim to improve governance and reduce corruption, improve the business climate, and focus on increasing human capital. Equatorial Guinea does have strong anti-corruption laws, but there is an enforcement gap. Weak governance and corruption remain serious impediments to the country’s development and affects American prosperity and security. Leveraging U.S. companies’ continued compliance with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act as an example of good business practice will counter the government’s strong tendencies away from transparency. The IMF program could serve as a force multiplier for Embassy efforts to increase mutually beneficial economic growth, trade, and investment.

Mission Objective 2.1: Equatorial Guinea improves economic governance related to budgetary transparency, government accountability, and fiscal management as measured by doing business indices.

Justification: Equatorial Guinea’s economic slowdown – the IMF predicts a 2018 drop of 8% -- has pushed the GREG towards an IMF agreement and cooperation with the World Bank in order to improve economic performance. The IMF extended facility program would focus on five core issues: anti-corruption, anti-money laundering, financial management, governance and rule of law. It will provide a scaffold for Embassy efforts to urge change in these areas. Absent reforms, the GREG will continue face budgetary shortfalls, thwarting economic growth and critical social investments. Corruption and a lack of transparency will also continue to permeate the government at all levels.

Mission Objective 2.2: Equatorial Guinea diversifies its economy, reducing overdependence on hydrocarbon sector.

Justification: Equatorial Guinea's economic slowdown – the IMF predicts a 2018 drop of 8% -- will push the GREG towards an IMF agreement and cooperation with the World Bank in order to improve economic performance. Diversification and increasing support for small businesses would help expand the base of EG's economy and create more jobs. Greater access to economic opportunities and societal investments will strengthen stability and prosperity, creating more opportunities for U.S. trade and investment in Equatorial Guinea. Overdependence on the hydrocarbon sector is a significant impediment to growth.

Mission Goal 3: Protect the Lives and Interests of U.S. Citizens and Companies

Description and Linkages: Between 300 and 500 U.S. citizens are regularly resident in Equatorial Guinea. Ensuring that those individuals are not subject to unfair practices or harassment by government officials and policies is a core Embassy function. U.S. companies represent the largest investments in Equatorial Guinea, exceeding \$14 billion dollars. The GREG has honored contracts with U.S. companies, but we continue to encourage the GREG to ensure it is fairly applying the rule of law in its dealings with U.S. citizens and companies wishing to come to EG or are already here conducting business.

Mission Objective 3.1: Improve customer service for U.S. citizens and applicants for nonimmigrant visas.

Justification: The Consular Section will incorporate better management practices to schedule information and service times separately and expand consular outreach using social media and town halls to explain the visa application process. Enhancing consular outreach will improve overall public knowledge of the nonimmigrant visa applicant process, while providing information for organized public inquires. Routine services for U.S. citizens are not in high demand because most U.S. citizens in country take care of their passport needs in the United States. Failing to achieve this will result in long waits, poor customer service reviews, and a general inability to effectively deliver consular service.

Mission Objective 3.2: Ensure fair treatment of U.S. firms in country.

Justification: The GREG has honored contracts with U.S. companies, but there have been issues involving questionable labor disputes and unreasonable court rulings. We will encourage the GREG to ensure it is fairly applying the rule of law in its dealings with U.S. citizens and companies wishing to come to EG or are already here conducting business.

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Approved: August 15, 2018

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4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: The ICASS platform responds to Mission needs, as measured by ICASS survey.

Justification: On average, LE staff members have only five years of employment with the Embassy. While the Mission has seen enormous improvements over the last few years in the level of service the ICASS platform is able to provide, the Management section struggles to perform consistently at a high standard. Identifying baselines and clear metrics that can be used to measure an improvement in services will improve the ICASS platform.

Management Objective 2: The Embassy's human resources meet Mission needs for effectiveness as diplomatic platform by providing professional development training to 100% of the Mission's staff by 2020.

Justification: As the ICASS platform works to improve the level of service it can deliver to the rest of the Embassy, the Mission as a whole needs targeted training and professional development for its workforce to meet the demands of its diplomatic platform. Embassy has relatively high retention rates, but difficulties recruiting highly educated and well-trained staff. We can best address this by instituting a strong internal training program to develop supervisors and leaders within the Embassy itself.

Management Objective 3: Every employee has a desk or other appropriate workspace by 2020.

Justification: The new Chancery is fully occupied, with no room for growth in office space, including for new EFM and LE Staff positions. Any growth in the number of USDH personnel, including the possible addition of a Marine Security Guard detachment, would require major reconfiguration of our limited space in the Chancery. In addition, the mission currently has no workshops or storage facilities for its General Services and Facilities Maintenance staff on compound. Although the Mission leases an off compound warehouse, the warehouse requires extensive and expensive upgrades to adequately meet Mission needs.