



Integrated Country Strategy

Venezuela

2018-2022

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Venezuela at a Glance

Venezuela is currently suffering an historic political, economic, and social crisis, one that is generating unprecedented collateral damage – mostly in the form of mass migration -- throughout the Western Hemisphere. Hunger, malnutrition, disease, and poverty have spiked in the last 24 months, leading countries such as the United States to characterize the Venezuelan situation as a manmade humanitarian crisis. At the core of Venezuela’s calamity is a destroyed economy, one built around corruption, cronyism, farcical policies, and incompetent management. The Maduro regime remains the steward of this unfolding disaster via the political chokehold it has on the Venezuelan people, and its repression is fed by the intentional disintegration of democratic institutions and the near-elimination of dissent, free expression, and electoral competition. Woven within the political and economic catastrophe is a social implosion characterized throughout the country by increasing crime, tension, disorder, and disappearing norms. Given the millions who live without reliable electricity, clean water, transportation, phone services, functioning hospitals, and even cash to make purchases, there is an overwhelming agreement in public-opinion surveys that Venezuelans are ready for a change.

It is within this challenging context that the United States Embassy in Caracas operates and advocates for changes that will lead to a peaceful and prosperous Venezuela, thereby increasing security and prosperity for American citizens and the Western Hemisphere. We support democracy, private property, free-markets, self-determination, rule of law, and peace, countering through our programming and actions the Maduro regime propaganda that says otherwise. Our country strategy is based upon these values, while taking into consideration the complicated, mitigating conditions under which we operate.

U.S.-Venezuelan Relations

U.S.-Venezuelan relations are complicated and antagonistic. The Maduro regime has taken increasingly authoritarian measures, culminating with a Maduro “victory” in sham elections held on May 20, 2018. In an effort to pressure the regime to change its antidemocratic postures, the United States levied a series of sanctions against the Venezuelan government and key regime insiders and has led international efforts to condemn and isolate the regime through targeted diplomatic and economic measures. The international community has largely followed the U.S. lead, but Maduro’s grip on power and his intransigence in the face of his failed policies appear firm.

Our chief priority is contributing to Venezuelans’ own efforts to return the country to a democratic, stable, prosperous, and inclusive Venezuela.

Political and economic uncertainty characterizes the short- and medium-term outlook for Venezuela. Accordingly, the U.S. government should maintain a consistent, firm, and open public posture that calls for measures to put an end to the country's interlocking crises and puts the country back onto a path toward good governance.

President Maduro has publicly criticized the United States at every opportunity. In May 2018, he declared the former Chief of Mission and DCM personae non gratae. Maduro continues to accuse the U.S. government of involvement in a supposed "economic war" to destabilize Venezuela, and has gone as far as accusing the U.S. government of backing a coup d'état. On the few occasions that Maduro has agreed to meet with U.S. government officials, he has expressed willingness to engage on bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest, but follow-through has been nonexistent. U.S. government officials must simultaneously counter the false Maduro narrative while attempting to sustain some form of government-to-government communications and efforts to improve the situation in Venezuela.

Upholding Democracy and Human Rights

President Maduro's regime portrays itself as an extension of the Chavez legacy. In the name of this "Bolivarian Revolution," Maduro and his regime have taken a series of steps to tear down democratic institutions and to undermine the Venezuelan peoples' faith in their democracy. He has done so by consolidating power under the executive branch and by the subversion of legislative, judicial, and electoral authorities. The government has starved the country's only democratically-elected authority – the opposition-controlled National Assembly – of resources and has undermined its authority by establishing parallel entities.

In answer to the months-long nationwide protests in 2017, the Maduro regime thwarted the legitimately elected National Assembly and called for an unconstitutional referendum that justified installation of the illegitimate Constituent National Assembly, composed exclusively of regime loyalists. The government has seized private business assets and muzzled the free and independent press. Maduro's regime also regularly threatened opposition politicians, media, the private sector, and civil society by warning them against criticizing government actions and often accusing them of being imperialist lackeys, infrastructure vandals, and traitors. The regime has jailed opposition leaders and businesspeople without due process for their political beliefs. The government has reinforced its threats by beating student protestors, jailing non-conforming judges and bankers, and intimidating opposition leaders with investigations and lawsuits.

The United States should support programs that strengthen democratic institutions, transparency, education, social inclusion, economic empowerment, and access to information. The legitimately elected National Assembly needs and deserves our support. We should continue to build on momentum gained from diplomatic efforts in the region and in international organizations to press the Venezuelan government to uphold democratic principles. We should continue to speak out publicly against violations of democracy, human

rights, and the rule of law. We should seek, where possible, to preserve and expand space for democratic voices among regional and local leaders, authorities, and institutions.

Encouraging Market Economic Principles

Maduro has continued to disassemble Venezuela's market economy in an attempt to build a socialist "command" economy. Stringent foreign exchange and price controls and misguided distribution schemes have produced devastating negative economic and social effects: poverty has skyrocketed; basic goods and medicines are scarce throughout Venezuela; and emigration is increasing and depleting the country of its talent. The situation affects many non-immigrant visa (NIV) applicants, because most Venezuelans now lack the economic and financial means to demonstrate sufficient tie to Venezuela as well as sufficient resources for travel to the United States. The government's own ideology and mismanagement are to blame for the untenable economic and political environment, the humanitarian crisis, and the mass exodus of its people. Beginning in November 2017, Venezuela defaulted on many of its debt commitments. Maduro continues to pay lip service to restructuring its unsustainable debt load, but his government has made no effort to undertake the needed reforms to garner serious attention from creditors.

The government increasingly controls major and strategic sectors of the economy, including petroleum, mining, electricity, telecommunications, and imports and distributions of food and healthcare items. It has created parallel, government-affiliated unions, business associations, universities, supermarkets, banks, and health clinics to ensure the central government's direct involvement in these areas. It has selectively attacked private property, taking away people's homes and businesses. It has used its tax authority, port operations, and foreign exchange allocations to control and weaken the private sector. It has created price controls and passed restrictive laws that have paralyzed industries such as the automobile, manufacturing, housing, construction, and banking sectors. The government-asphyxiated petroleum industry is in dire straits with production at 50-year lows.

The United States remains Venezuela's largest trading partner, but many U.S. companies have put operations on standby or in complete shutdown. The U.S. government should make the case for a market-based economy, the importance of trade, the protection of private property, the enforcement of contracts, and respect for rule of law, as well as encourage entrepreneurship – and the adoption of innovative technologies to turn the economic tide and move Venezuela back on the path to prosperity. We will continue to use public diplomacy outreach, examples of effective U.S. business practices, and agricultural-trade expertise to advocate for trade and investment that will lead to shared prosperity. We will continue to facilitate the legitimate travel of Venezuelans who will invest in and contribute to the U.S. and Venezuelan economies.

Combating Crime, Drugs, and Terrorism

Powerful narco-trafficking networks transport drugs from Colombia through Venezuela to the United States and beyond. Narcoterrorists such as the FARC and ELN recruit and operate in the region and represent a threat to the security of the United States. To confront those threats to our nation's citizens, the Embassy's law enforcement and security offices can look for opportunities to work with Venezuelan partners to cooperate and combat organized crime, drug trafficking, and international terrorism. We will continue to identify and deny visas to those who might do harm to the United States.

Rebutting False Rhetoric about the United States

As the country enters its sixth consecutive year of economic decline, President Maduro and regime officials have chosen to spread a false narrative of victimization rather than address the root causes for the failure. Scapegoats include the U.S. government, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Panama, Spain, Mexico, Chile, and Venezuela's political opposition. Venezuelan youth understand less than previous generations about the United States and have grown up knowing only the Bolivarian Revolution and Chavista rhetoric, which regularly questions the patriotism of Venezuelans who have strong ties to the United States. NIV refusals exacerbate negative perceptions and misconceptions.

Even so, there is a wellspring of fascination with U.S. culture, and there remains goodwill among Venezuelans towards the United States. Our challenge is to offer all Venezuelans – including youth, civil society, and non-elites – accurate information about the United States. By offering impartial access to information about U.S. policies, values, history, art, music, sports, and culture, as well as our immigration policies and procedures, Venezuelans may evaluate for themselves U.S. actions and beliefs. Educational and cultural exchanges, as well as other Public Diplomacy programs, social media outreach, and active engagement by U.S. government employees, continue to be key instrumental for educating and informing Venezuelans, particularly the youth, about the United States.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Democratic governance and human rights are more widely respected and embraced in Venezuela, along with institutions like free elections, free press, and vibrant civil society, to help create a stable and secure environment.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen capacity within civil society and domestic NGOs and independent media to exercise their constitutional rights of association and free expression.

Mission Objective 1.2: Increased fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity in political processes, including elections, and institutions, including the National Assembly.

Mission Objective 1.3: International standards of human rights are met, with respect for historically marginalized groups. .

Mission Goal 2: Support market-based economic principles and trade to create shared prosperity and advocate for the protection of U.S. private business interests.

Mission Objective 2.1: Enhanced U.S. and Venezuelan economic prosperity through the promotion and protection of principles of a market-based economy, including respect for rule of law, protection of private property rights, trade, and entrepreneurship.

Mission Goal 3: Support resolution of Venezuela's humanitarian crisis.

Mission Objective 3.1: Expose nature of humanitarian crisis and advocate for international assistance, where possible.

Mission Goal 4: Build positive image and understanding of U.S. policies and values.

Mission Objective 4.1: Broaden Venezuelan understanding and support of U.S. policies, values, history, and culture, particularly among target audiences including youth, persons with disabilities, girls, indigenous, and minority communities, among others.

Mission Objective 4.2: Strive for an improvement in the accuracy of Venezuelan media portrayal of U.S. engagement and activities both in Venezuela and worldwide to the public at large.

Mission Goal 5: Increased U.S. and Venezuelan citizens' security.

Mission Objective 5.1: Increase two-way communication with U.S. citizens in country and increase law enforcement and security efforts to fight drug trafficking, terrorist networks, and other transnational crime.

Management Objective 1: Provide a safe and secure environment at work and at home and build a resilient embassy community by enhancing physical security and addressing family quality of life issues.

Management Objective 2: Provide a robust and sustainable operational platform that can adapt to Venezuela's unpredictable economic and political environment and accommodate changes in the U.S.-Venezuelan relationship.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Democratic governance and human rights are more widely respected and embraced in Venezuela, along with institutions such as free elections, free press, and vibrant civil society, to help create a stable and secure environment.

Description and Linkages: Stable, friendly, and prosperous states in the western hemisphere enhance our security and benefit our economy. Governments that respect the rights of their citizens remain the best vehicle for prosperity, human happiness, and peace. Critical institutional capacity-building, good governance, strengthened rule of law and civil society, citizen-responsive governance, and protection of rights are critical to security and prosperity. Democratic states connected by shared values reduce violence, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration that threaten our common security, and limit opportunities for adversaries looking to operate in area of close proximity. This goal supports Goal 1 (Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad) and Goal 3 (Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement) of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and the 2017 National Security Strategy pillars of protecting the U.S. homeland and advancing U.S. influence.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen capacity within civil society and domestic NGOs and independent media to exercise their constitutional rights of association and free expression.

Justification: Civil society in Venezuela is embraced only when it supports government narratives and does not attempt to push too hard for information and data that can shed light on misgovernance, corruption, human rights abuse, or societal problems. Groups or individuals – including media and labor unions – whose ideas and vision deviate from the ruling party's line or government narrative are restricted in their work, cast as enemies of the state, undermined, and threatened. Additionally, Venezuelans of all social strata should be able to evaluate information and opinions originating from these civil society sectors—including those related to Venezuela's humanitarian crisis -- thus warranting a need to help increase access in the event their media and news sources continue to be biased and restrictive.

Mission Objective 1.2: Increasing fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity in political processes, including elections, and institutions, particularly the National Assembly.

Justification: The Maduro regime has worked tirelessly through a co-opted National Electoral Council to ensure it never loses another election after its resounding defeat in the 2015 National Assembly elections. This tilted playing field was evident in the regime's lopsided victories in the 2017 gubernatorial and municipal elections and in 2018 presidential elections. As a direct result of the Maduro regime's cynical maneuvering, the level of distrust in the electoral process among Venezuelans has reached troubling levels. Many now simply refuse to vote; the 2018 presidential vote was marked by historically low turnout. The executive branch's control over the majority of government institutions – including the Supreme Court, national electoral body, and the installing of the illegitimate Constituent National Assembly – has eliminated public confidence in any semblance of checks and balances needed to guarantee truly free, fair, and transparent elections. The sidelined but legitimately elected opposition-controlled National Assembly desperately needs capacity building if it is to play an important role restoring Venezuela's democracy, civil liberties and prosperity. Political parties are eliminated and opposition leaders are barred from office at the government's whim. Elections can be either a release of tension, when Venezuelans are allowed to express their will through a vote, or a flashpoint of tension and instability in Venezuela, when their votes are manipulated. A trustworthy process – one that is perceived to be fair – is important to citizens of the country, as well as neighbors in the region.

Mission Objective 1.3: International standards of human rights are met, with respect for historically marginalized groups.

Justification: Venezuela's disregard for human rights is increasingly recognized by the international community. The executive branch's absolute control over most institutions – especially the human rights ombudsman and the attorney general's office – has led to a majority of Venezuelans losing faith in the principles of human rights and due process. Support for human rights defenders is essential to protecting the rights of the unprotected in Venezuela. Despite the government's assertion that all Venezuelans benefit from the nation's "21st Century Socialism," many sectors of the population continue to be marginalized. As international oil prices remain low, Venezuela has fewer dollars to devote to its now dwindling social programs. The gains previously made for marginalized groups, namely women, children, and minorities, are quickly eroding. Venezuela has made largely symbolic strides towards combating the historical legacy of racism and recognizing the national importance of African heritage. However, Afro-Venezuelans are underrepresented politically and remain at the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy indicating considerable work remains to be done.

Mission Goal 2: Support market-based economic principles and trade to create shared prosperity.

Description and Linkages: Promoting entrepreneurship creates jobs and openings for U.S. businesses worldwide, strengthening global political stability, and economic prosperity. Conversely, weak labor, environment, intellectual property rights systems and state subsidies distort markets and hurt American firms, ultimately hindering shared prosperity. U.S. security and prosperity are bolstered when other countries achieve economic and political stability, resilience, and self-reliance through investments in areas such as food and water security, good governance, health, education, and economic growth. This goal supports the 2017 National Security Strategy pillar of promoting American prosperity, as well as Goal 2 (Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation) of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.

Mission Objective 2.1: Enhanced U.S. and Venezuelan economic prosperity through the promotion and protection of principles of a market-based economy, including speaking out for U.S. business interests, respect for rule of law, protection of private property rights, trade as essential to prosperity, environmental stewardship, and adoption of innovative economic technologies.

Justification: Over the last 20 years, the Venezuelan government has assaulted the basic principles of a market-based economy. Private property rights, freedom to set and adjust prices according to supply and demand, or even how, when, and where to ship products for sale, are subject to control and interference by the government, which has resulted in five years of sustained and disastrous economic depression, tremendous inefficiencies, including chronic and pervasive shortages (including of food staples and basic medicines), massive shutdown of productive industries, and widespread corruption. This has diminished economic opportunities and prosperity for Venezuela and U.S. businesses. Embassy Caracas will continue to counter the anti-market propaganda spread by the Venezuelan government by working with pro-market NGOs, businesses, educational centers, and media to provide politically neutral, pro-market information to the Venezuelan people. Younger Venezuelans are a particularly important target, as those 20 years of age and under have lived their entire lives without exposure to any alternative to the state-dominated economy.

Mission Goal 3: Support resolution of Venezuela's humanitarian crisis.

Description and Linkages: The United States is stronger and more prosperous when our hemisphere is safe, stable, and secure. Large migration flows place burdens on the United States, as well as our regional partners. The humanitarian crisis is the primary driver of migration of millions of Venezuelans, and it is defined mainly by lack of access to food, medicines and healthcare. Addressing this government-made humanitarian crisis – even if only through modest assistance -- depends on creating reliable channels for delivery of desperately needed food and medicine. Ultimately, the crisis facing approximately 85-90% of Venezuelans will only be adequately and sustainably addressed when a national government – new or incumbent – acknowledges the problems, fully embraces international support, and redesigns their national framework to solve the country’s many problems. But in the present, the United States seeks to accomplish what it can to help Venezuelans. Support for a resolution to Venezuela’s humanitarian crisis supports the 2017 National Security Strategy’s pillar of protecting the homeland and Goals 1 (Protect America’s Security at Home and Abroad), Goal 3 (Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement), and Goal 4 (Ensure Effectiveness and Accountability to the American Taxpayer) in the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.

Mission Objective 3.1: Expose nature of humanitarian crisis and advocate for international assistance, where possible.

Justification: Venezuela not only continues to deny that a humanitarian crisis exists, but it also refuses to publish government-controlled data that would likely serve as proof of the health and nutrition disaster. In our ongoing support for civil society, we will continue to empower organizations and researchers who seek to uncover the facts about malnutrition, medicine shortages, faulting services, and social programs access. This information is important for Venezuelans to know, as well as the international community.

Mission Goal 4: Build positive image and understanding of U.S. policies and values.

Description and Linkages: The United States is made stronger and more secure when people – especially women and minorities – are connected to the global economy; when citizens are educated and empowered; and when children are saved from diseases. Promoting healthy, educated, and productive populations in developing countries drives inclusive growth that opens up markets for U.S. investment and counters violent extremism. Investing in women’s economic empowerment has transformative effects

for families and communities. This supports the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1 (Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad), Goal 2 (Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation), and Goal 3 (Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement), as well as the 2017 National Security Strategy pillar of advancing American influence.

Mission Objective 4.1: Broaden Venezuelan understanding and support of U.S. policies, values, history, and culture, particularly among target audiences, including youth, persons with disabilities, girls, indigenous, and minority communities, among others.

Justification: Venezuelans with a memory of the pre-Chavez era, typically 30 years-old and over, tend to have a positive image of the United States. Their experiences traveling between the two countries for business, shopping, and tourism are still alive and relevant to them. Many from those generations still look to their northern neighbor as a cultural point of reference for everything from entertainment to fashion. However, Venezuela's millennial generation, who have grown up under Chavez and Maduro, do not regard the United States as favorably as their parents do. They have been exposed to a constant barrage of anti-imperialist and anti-American rhetoric. The worldview of most millennials, with exception of some youth from wealthier families who have traveled to the U.S., has been largely shaped by a government that blames their condition on outside forces – predominantly the United States. Venezuela's deteriorating finances means that there are ever-fewer dollars to devote to its now dwindling social programs.

Mission Objective 4.2: Strive for an improvement in the accuracy of Venezuelan media portrayal of U.S. engagement and activities both in Venezuela and worldwide to the public at large.

Justification: During the Chavez and Maduro presidencies, democratic space for non-state actors steadily shrank. Currently, it is at the lowest point since the Perez Jimenez dictatorship of the 1950s, and by some assessments actually worse. Foreign news media and non-governmental organizations have been banned or had their ability to operate severely circumscribed. Local NGOs are enjoined from accepting funds from foreign sources. In the midst of a worsening economic crisis and declining popularity for President Maduro, the government has increased efforts to maintain control of the media including government-ordered blocking of opposition websites by the government-owned internet service provider, CANTV. Venezuelan media have had their operating licenses revoked or not renewed, and those that survive are kept on a short

leash. Journalists are harassed and intimidated; media outlets are threatened through fines and lawsuits. The Maduro government has continued to ratchet up the pressure on media and reporters that do not conform to the official line. The end result: the government has a near-monopoly on discourse about the United States, our activities in Venezuela and abroad. The Venezuelan government uses this domination of the airwaves to paint a starkly negative portrait of the United States.

Mission Goal 5: Increased U.S. and Venezuelan citizens' security.

Description and Linkages: Terrorists and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) thrive where governments are weak, corruption is rampant, and faith in government institutions is low. Law enforcement capacity-building programs are the bedrock to strengthening partnership to combat TCOs. Capacity building and cooperation facilitates law enforcement development and shuts down illicit pathways to the United States, therefore enhancing shared security. Crime, terrorist attacks, civil disorder, health and natural disasters threaten U.S. government personnel and facilities around the world. We are best protected when security programs, protective operations, and physical infrastructures are strengthened. This goal supports the 2017 National Security Strategy pillar of protecting the homeland and Goal 1 (Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad) of the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) .

Mission Objective 5.1: Increased two-way communication with U.S. citizens in country and increase law enforcement and security efforts to fight drug trafficking, terrorist networks, and other transnational crime.

Justification: As Venezuelan authorities have decreased ability to provide protections; U.S. citizens will continue to seek assistance from the Embassy. We must proactively advocate for and engage with the U.S. citizen community to prepare them to provide for their own security.

Drug trafficking, rampant crime, corruption, and lack of rule of law have significant negative impact on U.S. interests in Venezuela, which is on the U.S. list of major drug-transiting countries. The potential use of Venezuelan territory for the transit of terrorists, terrorist operations, and terrorist fundraising is also a concern. We watch for laundering of proceeds from drug trafficking and other illicit activities that might affect U.S. interests.

We will take steps to combat drug-trafficking, terrorist, and transnational criminal organizations operating through Venezuela. We will work to increase cooperation and information sharing with Venezuelan security and law enforcement institutions and

strengthen our law enforcement and military relationships with appropriate partners. Should the Venezuelan government demonstrate its willingness for improved bilateral law enforcement cooperation, the Mission will seek the resumption of funding for collaboration, beginning with training. We will further seek to renew a Bilateral Counternarcotics Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Venezuelan government. The Mission will support the safety of American citizens residing in Venezuela and will take steps to improve two-way communication with them.

The endemic corruption in Venezuela has had an impact on the availability of passport materials, resulting in delays of up to a year in passport issuances. Expedited issuances are often the result of bribing officials and, in some cases, are malafide issuances. Surrounding countries have tentatively agreed to accept expired documents.

As outlined in Sections 5 and 12 of Executive Order 13768, the U.S. government believes that, under international law, every state is obliged to accept the return of all its nationals that another state seeks to expel, remove, or deport. It is imperative that countries identified by ICE as Uncooperative or at risk of non-compliance (ARON) make significant efforts to (1) issue travel documents within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standard of 30 days; (2) agree to accept the physical return of their nationals by commercial and charter flights, as appropriate (3) agree to conduct interviews to confirm nationality, as appropriate; and (4) develop an enduring and consistent system through which ICE officials can work directly with consular officials in the United States to obtain travel documents expeditiously for nationals subject to orders of removal.

Executive Order 13780 required the Department to “review all nonimmigrant visa reciprocity agreements and arrangements to ensure that they are, with respect to each visa classification, truly reciprocal insofar as practicable with respect to validity period and fee.” INA sections 221(c) and 281 require that the Secretary of State establish visa validity and fees, respectively, according to what foreign governments provide to U.S. citizens. As such, the Department of State must match visa validity and fees to match the visa issuance practices of the government of Venezuela.

Presidential Proclamation 9645 states that, “It is the policy of the United States to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks and other public-safety threats,” and “information-sharing and identity-management protocols and practices of foreign governments are important for the effectiveness of the screening and vetting protocols and procedures of the United States.” Under the Proclamation, the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Department of State and other agencies,

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must report regularly to the President on the status of foreign government performance against baseline information-sharing and identity-management criteria. Nationals of countries deemed deficient in these areas may be subject to entry and visa restrictions under the Proclamation.

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4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Provide a safe and secure physical environment at work and at home and build a resilient embassy community by enhancing physical security and addressing family quality of life issues.

Justification: Failure to provide a safe and secure physical environment and build a resilient community may expose personnel to risks that will diminish post's ability to achieve Mission goals and objectives. Given Venezuela's pervasive criminal environment and deteriorating economic and security situation, one of the Mission's top priorities is to ensure optimal security for all Mission personnel. Maintaining adequate physical security at the Chancery and Mission residences and fostering relationships with local law enforcement will enable post to maintain operations and enhance productivity. The Mission has developed a robust emergency preparedness and crisis management program, with complete buy-in from COM personnel. Post will continue to promote crisis management training, security training, personal preparedness measures, and maintain redundant communication systems to enable the quick dissemination of security information and instructions to all Mission personnel. To improve the Mission's crisis management posture, post will ensure staffing is aligned with Mission needs and adequate and appropriate resources are available, including vehicles and emergency supplies. Venezuela's crumbling medical infrastructure presents challenges to the Mission. In response, post continually expands the stock of medication available in the Health Unit and has built relationships with local hospitals and medical providers to expand the availability of specialty care for the Mission. By being proactive and taking these preventive measures ahead of time, we will build a confident and resilient community.

Management Objective 2: Provide a robust and sustainable operational platform that can adapt to Venezuela's unpredictable economic and political environment and accommodate changes in the U.S.-Venezuelan relationship.

Justification: The economic and political environment in Venezuela is chaotic and tense, complicated, and increasingly devolving. The lack of host nation cooperation on a wide range of routine administrative matters is a serious impediment to post's management operations. In particular, difficulty obtaining visas for U.S. direct hires and temporary staff severely diminishes post's ability to carry out its core mission and maintain a 20

year-old Chancery with increasingly obsolete building systems. Venezuela's ineffective government-controlled exchange rate regime, in addition to a black market rate, makes Venezuela one of the most expensive operating environments in the world and poses serious challenges to post's compliance with financial management internal controls. Controlling costs, especially spiraling local salary outlays, and ensuring a well-functioning financial management operation will enable post to adapt to Venezuela's dynamic economic environment. An inadequate warehouse facility and Chancery compound out-buildings hinder post's management readiness and ability to maintain a robust operational platform. Strengthening post's in-house medical capabilities, including maintaining a trauma response level adequate to manage casualties and establish alternative air emergency transport capabilities, are essential given the failing medical infrastructure in Caracas.