



**United States Department of State**

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

March 23, 2020

Dear Foreign Mission Community,

During these unprecedented times, the Department of State deeply appreciates the coordinated efforts of the foreign missions in the United States to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The ability of foreign missions to conduct operations in the United States in a secure and efficient manner, and the safety and health of your employees, are of utmost importance to the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM).

To assist with the achievement of these goals, OFM has established a new webpage to serve as a one-stop compilation of all formal communications sent to the foreign mission community concerning the impact of COVID-19 on their operations in the United States. This new site is available at: <https://www.state.gov/office-of-foreign-missions-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-information-and-resources/>. We also encourage foreign mission members to follow OFM on *Facebook* @OFMDC and on *Twitter* @OFM\_Ambassador, as another means to receive information on a range of topics important to your mission and its members.

Please continue to send your questions or issues related to the operational impacts of COVID-19 or the efforts by the United States to combat its spread, by email to OFM-EmergencyMgt@state.gov. This is the most reliable means to ensure a timely and accurate response from OFM.

The safety and security of our workforce is among the Department of State's foremost priorities. We have issued interim guidance on leave and workplace flexibilities for our employees. The Department's circular diplomatic note No. 20-520, dated March 18, 2020, announces the operational changes OFM has implemented with respect to our facilitation of services and benefits to the foreign mission community. As evidenced by this note, OFM is ensuring continuity of

operations by enabling employees to telework and encouraging social distancing. Because a majority of OFM's workforce is now teleworking, all foreign missions should refrain attempting to contact us by telephone. Additionally, large meetings are being held virtually and the number of in-person meetings are kept to a minimum. We encourage all foreign missions to take the same measures.

By working both together and smartly, we will stop the global spread of COVID-19 and will be better prepared for defeating such challenges in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Akard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ambassador Stephen J. Akard  
Director,  
Office of Foreign Missions