



Integrated Country Strategy

GABONESE REPUBLIC

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

A peaceful, oil-exporting country in a politically challenging subregion, Gabon has been a stalwart partner on the environment and security. About the size of Colorado, with 80% of its land covered by rain forests and a population of two million people, Gabon is a net absorber of carbon dioxide and forms part of the Congo Basin -- Earth's second lung. Gabon plays an outsized role on the international stage as a member of the UN Security Council (2022-2024 term) and UN Human Rights Council, and as Chair of the Africa Group at COP26 (2021). We will work to advance mutual peace and security, support Gabon's efforts to preserve the environment and counter climate change, increase mutually beneficial economic growth, strengthen rule of law and capacity to govern, and protect the lives and interests of U.S. citizens.

Gabon seeks robust engagement as we work to advance mutual peace and security on land and at sea. Gabon hosts a Cooperative Security Location to receive U.S. troops should they be needed to support U.S. personnel and facilities in the region. Our cooperation strengthens Gabon's capacity to enforce laws and provides a staging platform to expand U.S. influence. Gabon and the United States are active in the G7++ Friends of Gulf of Guinea (FOGG) that plays a leading role in combating piracy and strengthening maritime security. We will seek ways to expand this cooperation and to counter Russian and Chinese influence in the country.

We will continue to support Gabon's efforts to preserve its environment and counter climate change. As one of the few carbon-negative countries, Gabon has shown leadership in conservation and also in addressing and countering climate change. These efforts range from protecting the forests and offshore fisheries to research to understand the impact of climate change on the animals and plants and along the shoreline. As Gabon secures porous borders, it reduces various forms of illegal trafficking, including people, arms, wildlife and wildlife products, drugs, and non-commercial exports of natural resources such as timber, gold, and minerals.

In support of the two previous goals, we will continue working to strengthen rule of law and capacity to govern. As presidential elections scheduled for Summer 2023 approach, the

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government is starting to focus on reelection. We will need to assess how best to support and strengthen Gabon's democratic institutions and electoral process for the next election since they faced significant challenges during the 2016 elections. A well-functioning judicial system is essential to reducing corruption and prosecuting both foreign and domestic traffickers.

To adjust its economy to reduce dependence on oil exports and to create many new jobs for its largely young population, Gabon is working to develop its forestry sector in a sustainable manner as it seeks to diversify. Embassy Libreville will continue to project American values and leadership in promoting market-oriented economic and governance reforms and in helping to build mechanisms designed to combat corruption. As we encourage Gabon to diversify its economy and improve its business climate, we will continue to seek to increase bilateral trade and investment.

Embassy Libreville aims to ensure the effectiveness of its mission, accountability to the American taxpayer and provide services of American citizens and residents abroad. In addition, Post plans to modernize its management infrastructure, leverage information technology and analytical tools to increase transparency, and support a diverse and inclusive working environment for all Embassy staff.

Our mission is also accredited to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), based in Libreville. Although lacking the influence and stature of other regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the embassy will continue to encourage this organization to seek a greater role in the diplomatic, security, and economic arena in support of U.S. interests in central Africa.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Advance Mutual Peace and Security Interests in Gabon.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Strengthen Gabon's security capacity and bolster Gabon's capacity to detect, identify, prosecute, and convict transnational crime networks.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Constrain Russian and Chinese military and security influence via bilateral engagement and multilateral diplomacy.

Mission Goal 2: Develop capacity to preserve the environment and biodiversity.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Continue to encourage the protection of the forest and maritime environments in the efforts to counter climate change.

Mission Goal 3: Strengthen rule of law and capacity to govern in Gabon.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Strengthen democratic processes; promote transparency, free elections, and respect for the constitution; and support public education, gender equality, and human rights.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Increase professionalism in the media, support efforts to create a fair and just society, and encourage civic engagement to counter malign actors.

Mission Goal 4: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment in Gabon.

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Improve economic governance and champion anti-corruption activities, increase opportunities for U.S. companies, and promote U.S. business interests in Gabon.
- **Mission Objective 4.2:** Increase economic diversification, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development for Gabon and its underserved communities.

Mission Goal 5: Protect U.S. Lives and Border Security by Serving the Interests of U.S. citizens in Gabon and facilitating lawful travel to the United States.

- **Mission Objective 5.1:** Strengthen efforts to protect U.S. lives and interests during local, regional, or global crises and provide American Citizen Services to resident and visiting U.S. citizens, including reciprocity and equal treatment of U.S. citizens and businesses.

Management Objective 1: Create and implement an efficient management of infrastructure to provide operational platform improvements needed to support mission strategic goals in anticipation of increased interagency presence.

Management Objective 2: Leverage extensive information technologies and analytical tools to increase transparency in operations, management controls, and effective deployment of human resource capital to support mission strategic goals.

Management Objective 3: Create and support a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) program to advance priority goals and ideals.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Advance Mutual Peace and Security Interests in Gabon.

Description | Post's goal to advance mutual peace and security interests aligns directly with the State/USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1: Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad. For AFRICOM, Gabon, host to one of only a few Cooperative Security Locations, is a valuable partner for the U.S. military in the Central African region enabling the projection of forces in central and southern Africa. Post will continue to engage with Gabon as the country works to secure its borders and waters.

Objective 1.1 | Strengthen Gabon's security capacity to detect, identify, prosecute, and convict transnational crime networks in support of Africa Joint Regional Strategy objective 1.1, which champions the role of "multilateral and regional organizations, government institutions, and civil society to prevent worsening state fragility and the emergence of armed conflict."

- **Justification |** Gabon's security and prosperity depend on controlled borders and a safe maritime environment that assure international commerce. Gabon's stability is dependent on securing borders to prevent the entry of problems from abroad or the illegal export of its resources. In addition, Gabon is highly dependent on freedom of navigation as it imports most of its food and exports raw materials over the Atlantic.
- **Linkages |** This objective directly links to the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1.4: Increase Capacity and strengthen resilience of our partners and allies to deter aggression and malign influence by state and non-state actors. Militarily, this objective supports all five of AFRICOM's theater campaign plan lines of efforts. Supports Bureau of African Affairs JRS Sub-objective 1.2.3: Advocate for policies that strengthen women's recruitment, retention, and leadership at all levels of security institutions through diplomacy, messaging, and foreign assistance through engagement, training, or programing; Sub-objective 1.3.2: Develop, strengthen, or promote formal and informal mechanisms for local communities, in particular youth and women, to influence community policing, and security service policies, so that populations vulnerable to

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abuse have improved agency through engagement, training, programming, or exchanges; Sub-objective 1.4.1: Advise, train, and equip partners to increase respect for the rights of systemically marginalized populations such as women and girls, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous Peoples, and persons with disabilities, and to implement and publicize policies that prevent, investigate, and address trafficking in persons, use of children in armed conflict, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV).

- **Risks** | Risks of not achieving this objective have the potential to undermine several key Embassy Libreville strategic goals in Gabon. Notably, if Gabon does not increase its capacity to detect, identify, prosecute, and convict these crime networks, then the already challenging economic situation resulting from depressed oil prices will worsen as these crime networks are engaged in illegal harvesting and exportation of natural resources. As economic pressures mount, potential for political instability rises. These threats can be mitigated through active engagement with the Government of Gabon and identifying key targets for training and development opportunities.

Objective 1.2 | Constrain Russian and Chinese military and security influence via bilateral engagement and multilateral diplomacy in support of Africa Joint Regional Strategy Sub-objective 1.2.1, which favors “the development of bilateral information-sharing agreements between partners and the United States to enhance African governments’ response to transnational security threats and promote better regional coordination of defense and civilian security sector actors through engagement, training, or programming.”

- **Justification** | Competition among great powers is taking place as both China and Russia seek to deepen their relationship with Gabon in the military, security, and economic domains. Gabon is vulnerable to influence from malign actors. Likewise, as a developing country, Gabon’s population is similarly susceptible to mis- and dis-information campaigns launched by global competitors.

- **Linkages** | This objective directly links to the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1.4: Increase Capacity and strengthen resilience of our partners and allies to deter aggression and malign influence by state and non-state actors. Militarily, this objective supports all five of AFRICOM's theater campaign plan lines of efforts. Public Diplomacy programming promotes American leadership through people-to-people exchanges to advance American foreign policy objectives and deepen the mutual understanding that underpins U.S. relationships with foreign countries.
- **Risks** | Failure to provide meaningful training might lead Gabon to seek training from China, Russia, or other like-minded countries. Demands for participation in ECA programs may exceed our ability to respond to and meet requests.

Mission Goal 2 | Develop capacity to preserve the environment and biodiversity.

Description | In support of Executive Order 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, Embassy Libreville will work with Gabon to put the world on a sustainable climate pathway. The United States will also encourage Gabon to build resilience against the impacts of climate change that have already manifested and will continue to intensify according to current trajectories.

Objective 2.1 | Continue to encourage the protection of the forest and maritime environments in the efforts to counter climate change.

- **Justification** | This mission objective supports USG goals to limit the negative consequences of climate change. Specifically, this objective focuses on preservation, protection, and sound management of land and sea environments.
- **Linkages** | This objective directly supports Executive Order 14008 and Joint Regional Strategy Africa Bureau Goal 4.2. Supports Bureau of African Affairs JRS Sub-objective 2.2.2: Promote women's economic empowerment; Sub-objective 2.2.3: Promote the growth of MSMEs and entrepreneurship in a way that is inclusive of women and girls, youth, and other traditionally marginalized populations; Objective 3.1: Promote accountable, transparent, and democratic governance.

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- **Risks** | As one of the few carbon-negative countries in the world and home of the world's "second lung," degradation of Gabon's forest and sea environments could exacerbate global climate change and degrade regional fish stocks.

Mission Goal 3 | Strengthen rule of law and capacity to govern in Gabon.

Description | This goal aligns with the National Security Strategy, which states that rule of law protects the individual from government corruption and abuse of power while permitting the free market to flourish. A strong rule of law is a prerequisite to sustainable development and a pillar of a thriving business climate. It is also essential to protect citizens, residents, and natural resources in the country. Furthermore, this goal correlates with objective 1.3 of the Joint Strategic Plan to strengthen citizen-responsive governance, security, democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

Objective 3.1 | Strengthen democratic processes; promote transparency, free elections, and respect for the constitution; and support public education, gender equality, and human rights.

- **Justification** | Post will continue to urge Gabon to adhere to democratic norms and observe the will of voters as expressed at the ballot box. Failing to strengthen democratic processes in Gabon puts the authorities' development strategies at risk and could weaken our collaborative partnerships.
- **Linkages** | This objective correlates with objective 1.3 of the Joint Strategic Plan to strengthen citizen-responsive governance, security, democracy, human rights, and rule of law and DRL bureau goal 2 to support democracies' resilience, halt backsliding, and counter malign influence by strengthening civil society, independent media, political parties, and labor unions. Supports Bureau of African Affairs JRS Sub-objective 3.2.1: Support the protection, mitigation and responses to violations against human rights, in particular human rights violations affecting the most vulnerable, by strengthening human rights frameworks, institutions, and oversight; Objective 3.3: Protect and promote democratic values and leadership, competitive political processes, and the freedoms of speech and assembly; Sub-objective 3.3.1: Assist government partners to

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advance human, civil, and political rights, including the freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and access to information, and support the fair and impartial establishment and implementation of policies and laws, with a particular focus on women, youth, LGBTQI+, and minority and marginalized communities.

- **Risks** | Failure to improve rule of law and good governance risk social unrest, political turmoil, and lack of confidence in government institutions and leaders.

Objective 3.2 | Increase professionalism in the media, support efforts to create a fair and just society, and encourage comprehensive engagement to counter malign actors.

- **Justification** | While the Gabonese media is diversified and modernizing, it remains relatively underdeveloped and prone to self-censorship. Limited programming on state-sponsored radio and television generally serves the interests of the ruling party only. Freedom House ranked the media as “not free.” U.S. foreign policy interests are better served by a free press, which allows Gabonese citizens access to accurate, timely and varied information. Without a free and professional press, the risk of exaggerated, unfounded, or unsubstantiated articles increases, which may run contrary to U.S. foreign policy interests. Embassy Libreville utilizes digital engagement and visitor and exchange programs, alongside local community efforts that are largely led by U.S. program alumni, to build partnerships and encourage civic engagement that positively influence foreign publics in pursuit of U.S. interests.
- **Linkages** | Links to the Bureau of African Affairs Regional Strategy Objective 3.2 to bolster civil society capacity and support independent and professional media. Supports the Bureau of African Affairs JRS Sub-objective 3.1.3: Support the ability of civil society and independent and open media to provide oversight and foster government accountability; Sub-objective 3.3.2: Promote politically engaged and informed citizenries, active civil society organizations, organized labor, independent and open media, and representative political parties.
- **Risks** | Demands for support may exceed our ability to respond to and meet all public diplomacy requests.

Mission Goal 4 | Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment in Gabon.

Description | This goal supports JSP Goal 2: Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation. By advancing the bilateral relationship and leveraging international institutions to open markets, secure commercial opportunities, and foster investment to contribute to U.S. job creation, Post will also support host country's priorities to increase trade and investment with the United States. With significant debt and fiscal management challenges, IMF and other economic support programs can contribute to efforts to achieve sustainable economic growth. The Mission's goal to promote economic development will also serve to increase opportunities for U.S. trade and investment, promote inclusive growth, and improve food security.

Objective 4.1 | Improve economic governance and champion anti-corruption activities, increase opportunities for U.S. companies, and promote U.S. business interests in Gabon.

- **Justification |** Gabonese authorities continue to seek U.S. trade and investment, yet both formal and informal barriers remain. While the lack of English speakers makes conducting business difficult, government red tape, corruption, and a weak infrastructure, are significant barriers. To support U.S. companies interested in doing business here, Post will advocate for them and leverage tools available as a Foreign Commercial Service Partner Post.
- **Linkages |** Supports Economic Bureau Objective 2.2 in the 2022-26 Functional Bureau Strategy and Joint Regional Strategy Africa Bureau Goals 2.3 and 3.1. Supports the Bureau of African Affairs JRS Objective 4.4: Build the skills of Africa's current and next generation to adapt to longer-term economic, social, and environmental change; Sub-objective 4.4.1: Improve youth's skills needed to lead productive lives, gain employment and positively contribute to society; Sub-objective 4.4.2: Improve young people's literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future

learning and success; Sub-objective 4.4.3: Increase equitable access to youth-response services, information, and skills that youth need to lead healthy and productive lives.

- **Risks** | Failure to improve governance and reduce corruption will further disincentivize U.S. businesses from developing opportunities in Gabon. At the extreme, maintaining the status quo risks social unrest and political turmoil as Gabonese citizens could perceive a fracture of the social contract to improve their well-being and future prosperity.

Objective 4.2 | Increase economic diversification, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development for Gabon and its underserved communities.

- **Justification** | The economy in Gabon is heavily dependent on oil, although the country has developed a strategy for economic diversification in the 2021-2023 Transformation Acceleration Plan (TAP, or French acronym PAT). Unemployment and poverty are widespread, and there are multiple infrastructure challenges. In addition to economic diversification, the future depends on a strong private sector, a growing entrepreneurial class, and sustainable development. By increasing economic diversification, Gabon will also open opportunities for increased trade and investment, benefiting both the host country and the United States.
- **Linkages** | Supports Economic Bureau Objective 1.3 in the 2022-26 Functional Bureau Strategy and OES goals of combating conservation crimes and strengthening natural resource governance. Also support Joint Regional Strategy Africa Bureau Goal 4.3. Supports Bureau of African Affairs JRS Objective 4.4: Build the skills of Africa's current and next generation to adapt to longer-term economic, social, and environmental change; Sub-objective 4.4.1: Improve youth's skills needed to lead productive lives gain employment, and positively contribute to society; Sub-objective 4.4.2: Improve young people's literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success; Sub-objective 4.4.3: Increase equitable access to youth-response services, information, and skills that youth need to lead healthy and productive lives.

- **Risks** | At the extreme, failure to achieve economic growth through diversification risks social unrest and political turmoil as Gabonese citizens could perceive a fracture of the social contract to improve their well-being and future prosperity. Unsustainable development will deplete resources and limit future economic viability.

Mission Goal 5 | Protect U.S. Lives and Border Security by Serving the Interests of U.S. citizens in Gabon and facilitating lawful travel to the United States.

Description | Protecting the lives and interests of U.S. citizens is a core responsibility of U.S. embassies around the world. This responsibility extends to U.S. citizens living abroad. Embassy Libreville's efforts will include preparing for crises and emergencies that could affect U.S. citizens in Gabon, promoting fair and reciprocal treatment of U.S. citizens, and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States while protecting U.S. borders. This goal aligns with the Joint Strategic Plan Objective 1.5: Strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad.

Objective 5.1 | Strengthen efforts to protect U.S. lives and interests during local, regional, or global crises and provide American Citizen Services to resident and visiting U.S. citizens, including reciprocity and equal treatment of U.S. citizens and businesses.

- **Justification** | Protection of and services to U.S. citizens abroad is our most important mission. Post monitors any safety and security conditions and alerts U.S. citizens to all potential risks Embassy Libreville will continue updating consular databases on U.S. citizens residing in country and by engaging in outreach to American citizens, local government officials, and others who could assist American citizens in the event of a crisis or emergency. Embassy Libreville will also seek fair and reciprocal treatment of American citizens in Gabon.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1.5 and objectives 4.1-4.3. Additionally, this objective is in alignment with the Bureau of Consular Affairs Functional Bureau Strategy Objectives 1.1-3.3, including Goal 1.5, Strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad, Objective 4.1,

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Strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of our diplomacy and development investments, Objective 4.2, Provide modern and secure infrastructure and operational capabilities to support effective diplomacy and development, and Objective 4.3, Enhance workforce performance, leadership, engagement, and accountability to execute our mission efficiently and effectively. Finally, the objective addresses the Bureau of African Affairs' Joint Regional Strategy Goal 3, Strengthen democracy, uphold universal values, and promote human dignity to build strong, accountable, and democratic institutions, sustained by a deep commitment to human rights and to generate greater peace and prosperity. **Risks** | Identify any risk(s) associated with not achieve the objective and how to mitigate the risk. Among the most important risk associated with this objective includes the unpredictable nature of emergencies present risk to our ability to operate from a strategic posture. Further, resources would have to be quickly realigned in reaction to crisis events. Finally, reliance on technology that may not be available to U.S. travelers in all environments and situations they encounter continues to pose a challenge.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Create and implement an efficient management of infrastructure to provide operational platform improvements needed to support mission strategic goals in anticipation of increased interagency presence, directly supporting AF JRS Cross-Cutting Sub-objective Performance Milestone 1.2.3 of increasing online training capacity for staff.

- **Justification** | Post has identified that it has sufficient human resources at the LE Staff level overall to support the anticipated increase in agency staffing in the medium term. However, long-term absences at the USDH level continues to inhibit operations. Post needs to develop further the skills of these LE staff in order increase efficiency.
- **Linkages** | This objective links directly with the Bureau of Global Talent Management's (GTM) current Bureau Strategic Framework Goals 1 and 2. GTM's Bureau Goal 1 is to promote an agile work force, with Objective 1.4 highlighting the necessity to maximize staffing resource efficiency by aligning human capital resources to bureau strategies. GTM's Bureau Goal 2 is to retain this high-quality talent, with objectives 2.2-2.5 highlighting the need to empower employees, promote opportunities for career development, reward quality performance, and cultivate and train effective leaders and managers.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this object risks inefficiencies across the mission, Staff who do not receive proper support and training are ill-equipped to support post's projected expansion. In addition, continued prolonged absences as the USDH level risks breaking the continuity required to provide more substantial oversight and employee development. Post can mitigate this risk by ensuring that sections produce accurate and achievable training goals annually in each employee's work development plan.

Management Objective 2 | Leverage extensive information technologies and analytical tools to increase transparency in operations, management controls, and effective deployment of human resource capital to support mission strategic goals, directly supporting AF JRS Cross-Cutting Sub-objective 1.2 of leveraging data to inform decision-making.

- **Justification** | Informational technologies such as analytics portals, property management software, online personnel systems, and SharePoint sites provide greater transparency over operations, increased management oversight, and justification of services provided to all agencies at post in support of mission strategic goals. These tools allow the mission to advocate for needed resources, implement systems to increase morale such as merit-based compensation, and provide services more efficiently.
- **Linkages:** This goal directly supports the Bureau of Administration's (A) current strategic goal of delivering services using a programmatic and data-driven approach, as outlined in the 2022 draft Bureau Strategic Framework. In addition, the office of Management Strategy and Solutions (M/SS), the Department's leading guidance on management policy, highlighted data-driven management in its current Bureau Strategic Framework: Bureau Goal 2: Empower data-informed diplomacy.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve substantial progress in this area threatens efficiency of operations. Washington offices, including the ICASS service center council and A bureau, use these tools to justify allocation of budgets and resources to posts. Inefficient recording of work or underutilization of these tools risks post receiving under-allocations of critical resources. Post can mitigate this risk by committing resources to train its quality coordinator in becoming an expert in using the Department's data analytical tools.

Management Objective 3 | Create and support a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) program to advance priority goals and ideals, directly supporting AF JRS Cross-Cutting Management Sub-objective 1.1 of building and equipping a diverse, inclusive, resilient, and dynamic workforce.

- **Justification** | A robust DEIA program, inclusive of LE Staff, officers, and EFMs, will promote and advance priority objectives of mitigating unconscious biases, created an inclusive work environment, and serve as a model for our engagement with the host government. This program should have the authority to discuss and advocate for changes across the mission to support better these ideals.
- **Linkages:** Directly supports the Department of State's priorities of supporting DEIA programs. In addition, supports Strategic Objective 3.2 of the State-USAID 2022-2026 JSP to advance equity, accessibility, and rights for all.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this objective risks marginalizing swathes of Embassy employees. Furthermore, failure to achieve this objective creates the potential for less robust and comprehensive implementation of all facets of the ICS as valuable sources of potential input and expertise may go unnoticed. Post can mitigate this risk by ensuring support for these programs are codified by the Chief of Mission in writing and reinforced continuously at town halls, awards ceremonies, and other gatherings of mission personnel.