



Integrated Country Strategy

Vatican

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The U.S. Embassy to the Holy See (Embassy Vatican) advances U.S. foreign policy through partnership with one of the world's greatest soft powers: the Catholic Church. We are a global engagement post, leveraging the impact and network of the Vatican to promote our common priorities in every region of the world. Embassy Vatican advances U.S. national security goals of defending and advancing religious freedom, safeguarding religious minorities from persecution, and combatting human trafficking.

Embassy Vatican's priorities include: (1) **Defending** human rights globally by combatting human trafficking, promoting religious freedom, and advocating for women, peace, and security; (2) **Advocating** for peaceful resolution of conflict and conflict prevention, including supporting mediation efforts by the Vatican and affiliated NGOs and promoting increased access to food, water, and advances in science and health; and (3) **Increasing** awareness of U.S. foreign policy goals and countering disinformation, including from Russia and China, among Holy See officials and the broader Catholic community.

The Vatican's extensive diplomatic presence includes membership in multilateral organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and observer status in others, such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization of American States. The Holy See seeks to maintain public neutrality in most international disputes but can be extremely effective when engaging diplomatically.

In recent years Embassy Vatican has become an inter-agency post. Primary staff are the Ambassador, seven U.S. Direct Hires, two eligible Family Members, and nine local employed staff. Personnel from DHS, FBI, DEA, DoD, and DOJ also engage in our bilateral relationship.

The Embassy has an annual operating budget of \$1,277,600 million dollars, and a Representational budget of \$17,700. We do not engage with the Holy See on religious matters but enjoy positive collaboration on many U.S. foreign policy priorities. The Embassy exchanges information regularly on areas of joint concern with Holy See diplomats and the substantial diplomatic corps accredited to the Vatican. In addition, Embassy Vatican maintains regular

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contact with individuals in Catholic religious orders, and Catholic-affiliated groups. Embassy Vatican's public diplomacy platform is wide-ranging due to the significant media focus on Pope Francis and the Holy See. Embassy Vatican has longstanding positive relationships with journalists and news outlets covering the Holy See and wider Catholic news. The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted more of our public diplomacy online, speeding the adoption of new techniques. It has also prompted new ties with faith-based organizations (FBOs), which receive substantial USAID assistance, fostered by support from Embassy Vatican.

Going forward, Embassy Vatican seeks to strengthen ties with Holy See officials on issues of mutual concern, including religious freedom, persecution of religious minorities, conflict mediation, health care, refugees, migration, and human trafficking. We will utilize inter-agency collaboration and the Vatican's global network to advance U.S. policy goals and public diplomacy efforts. Examples include working with USAID and FBOs to link aid providers with funding and working with the U.S. Treasury to explain U.S. sanctions to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches those most in need. We will work to improve U.S.-Vatican coordination and collaboration where policies align and seek to expand dialogue in areas of disagreement. We will employ visiting Congressional delegations and U.S. government officials to advance shared political, economic, and public diplomacy objectives. Finally, our Embassy seeks closer ties with the Vatican institutions and affiliated organizations, to advance shared global thematic interests in environment and climate change, health care, migration and refugees, impact investing, anticorruption, and technological innovation.

The Holy See's vast global influence makes it a critical partner to address a wide range of issues of mutual concern. Working together with the Holy See, Embassy Vatican will continue to promote peace, freedom, and human rights throughout the world.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: The Holy See, Vatican institutions, and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are increasingly engaged with U.S. efforts to secure and defend human rights globally.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Holy See leaders and FBOs collaborate with the United States to prioritize the elimination of human slavery and trafficking-in-persons throughout the world.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Advance and defend religious freedom and global human rights through partnerships with Holy See leaders and related organizations.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Encourage the Holy See and FBOs to diversify their leadership to include women and minorities in senior level positions.
- **Mission Objective 1.4:** Promote the inclusion and rights of the Roma minority in Europe, the safety and security of refugees and migrants, and the dignity of all LGBTQI+ persons.

Mission Goal 2: Capitalize on the Vatican's unique worldwide presence to promote U.S. policy objectives through soft power and non-governmental organizations.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Engage with Holy See leaders and Catholic FBOs to promote security and stability globally.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Leverage Pope Francis' position on climate change to encourage governments and the private sector to strengthen their commitments to environmental and climate goals.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Partner with the global network of Catholic health care facilities and FBOs to improve health care outcomes for underserved communities, including improved Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).

Mission Goal 3: On issues of agreement, align and coordinate embassy public messaging with the Holy See to further U.S. foreign policy goals.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Post strategically utilizes digital and traditional media, public outreach, grants, and cultural events to amplify Holy See messaging that advances U.S. foreign policy.

Management Objective 1: Improve workplace resiliency and flexibility, increase efficiency, and limit interruption of service delivery through adoption of modern management innovations, including implementation of situational telework, Cloud-based data collaboration, workflow tracking, and other software applications.

Management Objective 2: Implement an active program of recruitment and professional development to identify, attract, retain, and maximize a high quality, diverse, inclusive, and professional work force.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | The Holy See, Vatican institutions, and Catholic faith-based organizations (FBOs) are engaged with U.S. efforts to secure and defend human rights globally.

Description | The Catholic Church plays a key role in civil and political life in many countries where human rights are under threat and human trafficking is prevalent. Post works closely with the Vatican and affiliated groups to promote human rights, religious freedom, and identify and combat human trafficking in these countries through advocacy, policy coordination, and reporting.

Mission Objective 1.1 | Holy See leaders and FBOs collaborate with the United States to prioritize the elimination of human slavery and trafficking-in-persons throughout the world.

- **Objective 1.1 Justification** | The Catholic Church's global reach makes it an ideal partner for collaborating on efforts to respond to and prevent human trafficking, and to provide care to survivors. The Vatican is a willing partner in this work, as Pope Francis has made countering human trafficking a priority of his pontificate. Post collaborates with the Vatican to amplify efforts to counter human trafficking through initiatives like the Santa Marta Group, a coalition of law enforcement and Church officials who meet to share strategies on combatting human trafficking. Post also works with Vatican-affiliated organizations, including religious orders, to strengthen programs to counter human trafficking and provide rescue and rehabilitation services for survivors.
- **Objective 1.1 Linkages** | This goal aligns with Strategic Objectives 1.3 and 3.4 (goal 3 more broadly) of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Goal 4 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 1.1 Risks** | Failure to deliver on promises to end the scourge of human trafficking could diminish USG legitimacy as an institution that delivers change, damaging credibility. Strategic use of social media and events to amplify the stories of

victims and survivors of modern slavery and demonstrate law enforcement successes, can mitigate this risk.

Mission Objective 1.2 | Persuade the Holy See to publicly acknowledge restrictions on religious freedom in countries such as China and partner with the Holy See to defend religious freedom and global human rights through multilateral and bi-lateral diplomacy.

- **Objective 1.2 Justification** | Defending and advancing religious freedom is a shared priority for the United States and the Vatican. Post partners with the Vatican and affiliated groups to promote religious freedom worldwide by coordinating efforts in countries where religious minorities are under threat. Post will share information on specific human rights abuses, often associated with religious persecution, like arbitrary detention and forced labor. The Vatican's convening power and unique moral position globally will amplify U.S. messaging that promotes religious freedom and the rights of religious minorities.
- **Objective 1.2 Linkages** | This goal aligns with Strategic Objective 3.2 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Goal 2 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 1.2 Risks** | The Vatican's reluctance to publicly name governments engaged in well-documented abuses could limit the scope of cooperation. Partnering with the Holy See on select issues risks creating a perception of a religious preference or bias in the work of the U.S. Government and the Mission. This can be mitigated by ensuring Embassy Vatican prioritizes the inclusion of diverse religious leaders and perspectives in public events and seeks avenues to participate in inter-religious dialogue, a shared priority of Pope Francis.

Mission Objective 1.3 | Encourage the Holy See and FBOs to diversify their leadership to include women and minorities in senior level positions.

- **Objective 1.3 Justification** | Women play a key role for the Catholic Church in fields such as health care, education, and aid work, but as a matter of policy, are denied positions of authority in the male-dominated hierarchy. Pope Francis has endorsed a

greater role for women in the Church and the Vatican Curia. Pope Francis has already taken steps to elevate minority leaders in the College of Cardinals and across Vatican departments by making appointments from diverse geographies. The composition of the College is currently 42 percent European, down from 52 Percent when Francis became Pope.

- **Objective 1.3 Linkages** | This goal aligns with Strategic Objectives 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Goal 2 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 1.3 Risks** | A focus on women and the role of women religious could be perceived by Vatican leadership as a challenge to one of their bedrock principles, gender exclusion in the senior ranks of the church. The Holy See has a demonstrated rigidity on issues regarding gender. A balance of public and private messaging to the Vatican can prevent misunderstandings about the U.S. priority for diversity and inclusion and prevent disruption to areas of cooperation.

Mission Objective 1.4 | Promote the safety and security of refugees and migrants, the dignity of all LGBTQI+ persons, and the inclusion and rights of the Roma minority in Europe

- **Objective 1.4 Justification** | The moral position of the Holy See sets a worldwide benchmark for the treatment minority populations. A historical tradition of helping outcast groups, such as the sick or poor, creates an opening to work with the Vatican to advance the rights and protections of modern populations who are not fully accepted by large portions of society and often suffer from insecurity.
- **Objective 1.4 Linkages** | This goal aligns with Strategic Objectives 3.2 and 3.4 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Goal 2 the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 1.4 Risks** | The Vatican is a world leader in the care and protection of refugees and migrants. Efforts to extend this position to those ostracized due to gender identity have not resulted in a policy shift at the Vatican and are an irritant in the bi-lateral relationship. The Vatican aggressively defends traditional gender roles in multilateral for a in a manner that hinders U.S. policies. Attempts to get the Holy See to

extend its umbrella of care to the LGBTQI+ community may be so divisive as to eclipse other areas of cooperation.

Mission Goal 2 | Capitalize on the Vatican's unique worldwide presence to promote U.S. policy objectives through soft power and non-governmental organizations.

Description | Embassy Vatican can use the worldwide presence of the Catholic Church to serve as a global engagement post – promoting U.S. priorities in all regions of the world through information sharing and policy coordination with the Vatican and affiliated organizations. With a global constituency of over one billion Catholics spread across the globe, the reach of the Catholic Church is unparalleled. By cultivating relationships with the Vatican MFA, members of religious orders and Church-affiliated organizations, Post can provide timely and critical information to Washington policymakers. Cooperation with the Vatican and affiliated organizations on conflict mediation can help advance peace and democracy in countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. Post can also work with our Vatican partners to ensure that USG interests are represented in Vatican conferences and fora that help set the policy agenda on the latest developments in science, healthcare, technology, and economics.

Mission Objective 2.1 | Engage with Holy See leaders and Catholic FBOs to promote security and stability globally.

- **Objective 2.1 Justification** | The Catholic Church plays a critical role in fragile states where it is often the strongest and most organized sector of civil society, and acts in a conflict prevention and resolution capacity. Post can contribute to global security through relevant and timely reporting on conflicts where the Vatican and Catholic organizations are present as humanitarian workers and peacebuilders. Effective coordination with the Vatican can also help ensure that mediation efforts are successful. Regular, high-level engagement can increase Vatican officials' understanding of U.S. foreign policy priorities, improving coordination and policy alignment.

- **Objective 2.1 Linkages** | This Mission Goal supports Goals 1 and 3 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Goals 2 and 4 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 2.1 Risks** | The Roman Curia (Vatican government) and Second Section (Foreign Ministry equivalent) are professional but have limited staff and resources. An effort to engage the Vatican across multiple areas of concern could limit the impact of collaboration. Aligning U.S. engagement with known Vatican priorities will ensure a depth collaboration that is sustainable.

Mission Objective 2.2 | Leverage Pope Francis' position on climate change to encourage governments and the private sector to strengthen their commitments to environmental and climate goals.

- **Objective 2.2 Justification** | Pope Francis is a high-profile advocate for aggressive action to combat climate change. Through effective collaboration with the Vatican, Post can ensure that USG interests are represented and diverse stakeholders, from governments to corporate leaders, are encouraged to take concrete actions to minimize human contributions to climate change and mitigate the effects on vulnerable populations.
- **Objective 2.2 Linkages** | This Mission Goal supports Goal 1.2 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Objective 4.1 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 2.2 Risks** | Pope Francis has been critical of global efforts, including COP 26, for not going far enough to combat climate change. If U.S. efforts and commitments are considered insufficient, the Vatican could choose to limit high-level engagement. Including the Vatican in U.S. efforts and international engagements at an early stage will foster a sense of ownership in the process that will ensure lasting support and engagement.

Mission Objective 2.3 | Partner with the global network of Catholic health care facilities and aid organizations to improve health outcomes for vulnerable and underserved communities and improved Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).

- **Objective 2.3 Justification** | Catholic affiliated organizations and institutions provide an estimated 25 percent of all health care globally, with a particular focus on underserved communities and sub-Saharan Africa. Partnering with the Church provides a unique opportunity to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. grants and other aid resources, extending essential health resources to larger populations.
- **Objective 2.3 Linkages** | This Mission Goal supports Goal 1.1 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Objective 4.2 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 2.3 Risks** | Given the State Departments limited ability to provide direct resources, failure to coordinate and partner with USAID could result in underperformance that would undermine the confidence of the Vatican in the U.S. governments capacity as a partner. Maintaining interagency coordination and seeking the expertise of USAID prior to making any commitments will limit this risk.

Mission Goal 3 | On issues of agreement, align and coordinate embassy public messaging with the Holy See to further U.S. foreign policy goals.

Description | Pope Francis continues to make a number of media outlets' lists of "top" leaders of the world and influential people because of his direct influence on the lives of 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide, as well as his much-publicized prioritization of social justice, defense of the persecuted, and ministry to the poor. Post's social media platforms and outreach programs offer unique opportunities to reach parts of this vast audience.

Mission Objective 3.1 | Post strategically utilizes digital and traditional media, public outreach, grants, and cultural events to amplify Holy See messaging that advances U.S. foreign policy.

- **Objective 3.1 Justification** | Several key interlocuters for Embassy Vatican are located outside the Holy See. Post must creatively and actively seek outreach and grant proposals to overcome this challenge. In addition to Vatican officials, we must engage journalists who cover the Vatican for news agencies the world over, the academic and intellectual community comprising seven Vatican-affiliated universities and 13 other

institutes of higher education, and many Catholic associations, foundations, and NGOs based in Rome.

- **Objective 3.1 Linkages** | This Mission Goal supports Goal 1.3 and 1.5 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Objectives and 2.3, 4.3, 4.5 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework.
- **Objective 3.1 Risks** | Imprecise messaging could create the impression of religious preference in the work of the Embassy. To mitigate this, Embassy Vatican will actively seek out voices and representation from non-Catholic communities.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Improve workplace resiliency and flexibility, increase efficiency, and limit interruption of service delivery through adoption of modern management innovations, including situational telework, Cloud-based data collaboration, workflow tracking, and other software applications.

- **Justification** | Information produced, collected, and held by the Mission should be part of a comprehensive, shared, secure and remotely accessible knowledge management system. Mission Vatican will standardize the use of cloud-based applications and ensure remote working capabilities for employees. These enterprise and local changes will improve the ability of Mission employees to communicate and collaborate in real-time, improve resilience of the workforce, and improve remote data access. Additionally, leveraging workplace flexibilities, innovation, training, professional development opportunities, and work-life programs will support this objective.
- **Linkages** | This Mission Goal supports Goals 4.1 and 4.2 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Goal 5 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework. Employees.
- **Risks** | Failure to adapt our workstyle could result in critical staffing gaps in the event of an unanticipated staffing crisis (example: health emergency). Strong information sharing across sections and cross training will create flexibility to reallocate staff should it become necessary. A lack of modernization could also limit post's ability to attract top talent.

Management Objective 2 | Implement an active program of recruitment and professional development to identify, attract, retain, and maximize a high quality, diverse, inclusive, and professional work force.

- **Justification** | Embassy Vatican is a small team working with a religiously homogeneous state. Embassy Vatican will prioritize diversity to ensure our staff reflects the composition of the United States, and not that of the host country. Staffing disruptions

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can have an outsized effect given the lack of available resources to backfill positions. Creating a detailed training plan will improve the efficiency of the workforce and assure the capacity to backfill positions to facilitate work-life balance and accommodate unscheduled departures or absences.

- **Linkages** | This Mission Goal supports Goals 4.1 and 4.2 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and Goal 5 of the EUR Joint Regional Strategy by practicing performance management and training practices that support productive, effective, and respectful work environments.
- **Risks** | Failure to prioritize flexibility and retention could result in critical staffing gaps and decrease opportunities for advancement. A lack of professional development could result in challenges to attracting superior candidates for positions. The unique nature of foreign relations with a patriarchal and theocratic state could prompt officers to self-select out of pursuing positions with Embassy Vatican unless diversity is clearly communicated as a priority.