



U.S. Strategy for Engagement in the Caribbean

Caribbean 2020: A Multi-Year Strategy To Increase the Security, Prosperity, and Well-Being of the People of the United States and the Caribbean

The Caribbean region is the United States' "third border," characterized by common interests and societal ties that yield daily, tangible benefits for U.S. citizens. The United States is the primary trading partner for the Caribbean, representing a vibrant economic partnership that in 2016 saw a \$4.6 billion trade surplus for the United States, 14 million U.S. tourist visits, and 11,042 Caribbean students studying in the United States. We also face many common threats across the region. Small, but significant, numbers of violent extremists from the region have joined ISIS. Caribbean countries have some of the highest murder rates in the world. Rising crime and endemic corruption threaten governments' ability to provide security and good governance. They also drive irregular migration to the United States. As the United States works to secure its southern border, we should prepare for transnational criminal organizations to shift more of their operations to the Caribbean as a transit point for drugs, migrants, weapons, and other illicit activity.

This strategy, coordinated with the interagency, identifies the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development's priorities for United States engagement with the Caribbean region in the areas of security, diplomacy, prosperity, energy, education, and health. On [security](#), we will work with our Caribbean partners to ensure ISIS is denied a foothold in the region, dismantle illicit trafficking networks, enhance maritime security, confront violent and organized crime, and increase the sharing of threat information among countries. Our [diplomacy](#) will both raise the political level of our dialogue with the Caribbean and focus it more tightly on this strategy's six priorities. We will increase our own and our neighbors' [prosperity](#) by promoting sustainable growth, open markets for U.S. exports, and private sector-led investment and development. On [energy](#), exports of U.S. natural gas and the use of U.S. renewable energy technologies will provide cleaner, cheaper alternatives to heavy fuel oil and lessen reliance on Venezuela.

On [education](#), we will focus our resources on exchanges and programs for students, scholars, teachers, and other professionals that provide mutual benefits to U.S. and Caribbean communities and promote economic development and entrepreneurship. In the area of [health](#), we will continue to partner with countries in the region in the fight against infectious diseases, like HIV/AIDS and Zika, recognizing deadly pathogens are threats that know no borders.

SECURITY

In partnership with Caribbean governments, we will strengthen our mutual national security and advance the safety of our citizens by pursuing programs to dismantle transnational criminal and terrorist organizations, curb the trafficking and smuggling of illicit goods and people, strengthen the rule of law, improve citizen security, and counter vulnerability to terrorist threats.

Countering Transnational Criminal and Terrorist Organizations

- **Law Enforcement and Defense Forces:** We will support law enforcement and border-control agencies, defense forces, and regional security institutions with training, equipment, institution-building programs, technical assistance, and operational collaboration to strengthen our partnership in the fight against transnational criminal and terrorist organizations. We will help improve cooperation, accountability, and trust between the security forces and public.

- Government, Justice Systems, and Civil Society: We will bolster partnerships with governments and civil society to prevent, investigate, and prosecute terrorism; to counter terrorist financing and facilitation networks; to reduce the vulnerability to radicalization; and to improve border security. We will increase governments' capacity to investigate and prosecute domestic and transnational crime, assist victims, dismantle criminal organizations, and expand rehabilitation options for juvenile offenders.
- Regional Cooperation: We will define a common operational framework to tackle shared threats, including combating maritime drug trafficking and promoting law enforcement information sharing.

Advancing Citizen Security

- Crime and Violence Prevention: We will help partner governments to build the resilience of at-risk youth and communities by providing educational, economic, and social opportunities.
- Governance: We will support efforts to prevent and prosecute corruption, increase government effectiveness, and build national and regional crime monitoring institutions to ensure crime prevention programs are well-targeted.

DIPLMACY

The United States-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act of 2016 reflects broad interest in more robust and regular engagement between Caribbean leaders and the U.S. government. Increased, institutionalized engagement will lead to more effective coordination of the disparate components of the U.S.-Caribbean relationship and forge greater multilateral cooperation at the Organization of American States and United Nations.

Enhancing U.S.-Caribbean Engagement

- U.S.-Caribbean Dialogue: The Department, with the support and participation of relevant interagency and Congressional leaders, will convene an annual consultative meeting with Caribbean leaders. The meeting will provide a venue for advancing the agenda outlined in this strategy.

- U.S. Diplomatic Engagement in the Eastern Caribbean: Were funding to become available in the future, the Department could explore expanding its diplomatic and consular presence in Eastern Caribbean countries that do not currently host a permanent U.S. diplomatic mission.
- Caribbean-American Diaspora Diplomacy: The Department will tap into the robust Caribbean diaspora community in the United States to promote the goals of this strategy.

PROSPERITY

We will support U.S. exports and job creation. Understanding the mutual benefit of a prosperous Caribbean basin, we will engage with our Caribbean partners to promote sustainable economic policies and job-creating, private sector-led growth, utilizing trade preference programs and key forums such as the U.S.-CARICOM Trade and Investment Council.

Improving the Trade and Investment Climate

- Regional Trade Conference: We will hold a trade and investment conference with Caribbean countries focused on increasing bilateral trade and improving the region's investment climate and regulatory environment.
- Promoting U.S. Exports: We will use the Direct Line program to highlight U.S. export and investment opportunities.

Supporting Business and Infrastructure Development

- Small Business Development: To increase private sector job growth and create new markets for U.S. businesses, we will advance the growth and formalization of small- and medium-sized enterprises and seek opportunities to empower women and youth entrepreneurs.
- Connectivity: We will help expand internet access in the Caribbean by increasing engagement with policy and regulatory authorities, as well as U.S. information-technology leaders, to promote broadband development and deployment.
- Agriculture: We will support compliance with regulations and standards to increase agricultural trade and improve food safety for U.S. consumers.
- Open Skies: We will work to conclude more Open Skies agreements with Caribbean nations by the end of 2020 to facilitate travel and commerce.

- Sustainable Tourism: We will foster healthy, well-managed, and productive marine and coastal ecosystems- the backbone of the Caribbean tourism industry.

ENERGY

Caribbean consumers pay on average three times as much for electricity as U.S. consumers, creating a drag on their economies and an opportunity for mutually beneficial cooperation. The United States seeks to increase the use of low cost, reliable sources of energy, including renewables and natural gas, to spur economic development that will create new opportunities for globally competitive U.S. energy firms and exports.

Strengthening Energy Governance and Improving Energy Planning

- Energy Sector Reforms: We will provide targeted technical support to countries with the capacity and interest in pursuing energy sector and utility reforms to spur private investment and U.S. energy technology exports.
- Regulatory Reforms: We will continue integrated resource planning efforts and regulatory reforms to encourage governments and utilities to make transparent and economically viable decisions regarding capacity improvements that mitigate risk for U.S. investors and lower costs for consumers.
- Regional Energy Planning: We will support efforts by CARICOM and others to strengthen the regional platform coordinating energy planning to achieve economies of scale.

Leveraging Public Finance to Mitigate Energy Investment Risk

- Public Finance Resources: We will leverage U.S. and international public finance resources to help energy project developers mitigate technical and political risks, thereby reducing the region's reliance on imported fuels and creating openings for U.S. private sector investment and public-private partnerships.

EDUCATION

Educational and cultural programs between the Caribbean and the United States build stronger economic partnerships, counter vulnerability to crime and extremism, promote the export of U.S. higher education services, and advance cooperation on science, technology, and development.

Advancing Economic Partnerships to Promote Growth

- Public-Private Partnerships: We will support public-private sector collaborations that facilitate higher education and workforce development strategies in the United States and the Caribbean, as well as the efforts of U.S. colleges and universities to recruit qualified students from the region.

Building Security Capacities and Messaging

- U.S. Speaker Programs: We will leverage U.S. experts, digital communication, and other messaging resources to reduce crime and counter violent extremism.

Enhancing Competitiveness in the Hemisphere

- Early Learners: We will send U.S. academic experts to the region to develop early literacy curricula.
- Exchanges: We will foster educational collaboration between U.S. and Caribbean professionals, students, and scholars.
- Education Policy Training: We will provide technical assistance programs and virtual tools to teachers, policymakers, and civil society.

HEALTH

Improving health security, advancing public health, and strengthening resilience to emergencies and disasters in the Caribbean serves U.S. national security and economic interests. Secure and stable health systems build the productivity of Caribbean populations and contribute to economic prosperity.

Improving America's Safety by Strengthening Global Health Security

- Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA): To improve the safety of U.S. citizens and promote the health of Caribbean citizens, we will assist CARICOM countries through the GHSA to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats and comply with the International Health Regulations.

- Resilience: We will also work with Caribbean countries to combat non-communicable diseases and to develop their emergency response capacity and infrastructure resilience to natural and man-made disasters.

Advancing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

- PEPFAR: We will assist Caribbean countries to achieve the “90-90-90” goals of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS by 2020, including focused HIV/AIDS programming, effective partner management, and implementation of new policies.

<https://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/caribbeanstrategy/>