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REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF  
MANDATES FROM THE SEVENTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

(UNITED STATES)

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**2016**

## **Introduction**

The Seventh Summit of the Americas in Panama demonstrated the global importance of the region and the progress we, as a region, have made over the last two decades to improve people's lives. At the 2015 Summit, President Obama underscored democracy and citizen participation, economic growth and opportunity, a clean and sustainable energy future, and social inclusion as priorities for the United States, as well as crosscutting focus areas under which U.S. Summit implementation efforts would progress. He also highlighted the commitment of the United States to uphold the essential role independent civil society and the private sector play in contributing to a shared democratic agenda that benefits all of the people of the Americas. These priorities complement the commitments outlined by the Summit host, Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela.

The U.S. government continues its efforts to build a more prosperous, safe, sustainable, equal, and democratic Western Hemisphere by addressing the pressing issues facing the region through initiatives launched at the 2012 and 2015 Summits of the Americas and complementary programs. This report highlights both the new and ongoing efforts we have undertaken since these Summits.

As these efforts help solidify our collective gains in the region, we hope they will, in part, be what our region's leaders build upon at the 2018 Summit as they continue their important work together to benefit the people of the Americas.

Michael J. Fitzpatrick  
U.S. National Summit Coordinator

## **Democracy and Citizen Participation**

The United States is committed to promoting and protecting universal human rights, supporting and defending civil society, and working with its partners to advance democracy. At the 2015 Summit of the Americas, President Obama announced U.S. support for civil society's effort to establish a permanent, public consultative mechanism and role in the Summits of the Americas. He emphasized strengthening transparency laws to improve access to information and public disclosure, and prioritizing transparent and accountable public institutions in the post-2015 development agenda. Recognizing the importance of promoting active citizen participation and the necessity of democracy for social, political, and economic development, the U.S. government has launched new programming aimed at magnifying civil society's participation in the Summit process. The United States continues its efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and citizen participation in the region through a number of government-wide programs.

### **Democracy**

*“Recognizing that democracy is essential for the social, political, and economic development of our peoples, we agreed on a series of mandates to strengthen the rule of law, the separation of powers and the independence of branches of government, and respect for human rights, and thus we agreed on actions to promote and guarantee citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies, together with citizen empowerment free of all discrimination on grounds of gender or race.”*  
(Closing statement at the conclusion of the Seventh Summit of the Americas, President Juan Carlos Varela)

*“To strengthen democracy and the rule of law, the separation and independence of branches of government, respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, consistent with all relevant inter-American instruments, transparency, integrity and efficiency in public administrations, and the creation of conditions that enable the involvement of citizens in the entire public policy cycle.”* (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Democratic Governance, I)

### **Democracy and Human Rights Programs**

Democracy and human rights are fundamental U.S. government priorities: a lack of democratic governance creates an enabling environment for instability, abuse of power, and humanitarian crises, which often are a result of corruption, poor governance, and weak or nonexistent democratic institutions. Promotion of democracy and human rights is essential to the achievement of development and economic growth throughout the hemisphere. Democracy programs through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), and the U.S. Department of State bolster democratic practices, strengthen government institutions, and help civil society defend human rights and engage diverse constituencies to promote government accountability.

The U.S. government has many ongoing human rights programs, including programs in Colombia that focus on protecting populations affected by the armed conflict, and programs in Mexico that focus on protecting journalists and human rights defenders. In addition, USAID's Central America Regional Mission is developing a new human rights program to improve national human rights protection systems to protect vulnerable populations in the Northern Triangle. The U.S. government works with partner governments, civil society, and the private sector to protect the human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) persons. Trafficking in persons is also a major problem in the Americas, and of particular concern in the Northern Triangle, where migration patterns leave migrants – including unaccompanied children – vulnerable to being trafficked. The United States also provides core governance support, in collaboration with host country stakeholders, to address justice system transitions, security sector (including police) reform, civil society monitoring of public policies and elections, and accountable public financial management. Governance is a cross-cutting element of program design in all sectors, as governments struggle to provide basic services such as education, health and security to their citizens.

### **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)**

The United States continues to engage actively in the institutions of the independent inter-American human rights system (IAHRS), including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), to build multilateral support for the protection of human rights throughout the hemisphere, including within the United States. Ongoing U.S. funding for the IAHRS reflects strong U.S. support for the Commission's work, as well as the need for increased resources to support friendly settlement efforts, reduce case backlogs, fund special expert missions, and advance thematic initiatives of Commission rapporteurs, including support for the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Persons (LGBTI), which became fully operational in February 2014. The United States has participated in thematic hearings of the IACHR and facilitated site visits in furtherance of the Commissioners' work. The United States also continues to support the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, bolstering its efforts to defend civil society organizations, media, journalists, and individuals who have been victims of violations of the right to freedom of thought and expression.

*“To support institution building and modernization of independent electoral organs, in order to strengthen their capacity to guarantee the integrity of electoral processes, and the holding of free, fair and periodic elections, in accordance with each country's legal system, including, as appropriate, the regulation of financing of political activity. We ask the OAS and other organizations of the Hemisphere to provide advisory services and assistance for these purposes, when appropriate.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Democratic Governance, 2)*

### **Electoral Cooperation and Observation**

The United States supports the work of the Organization of American States (OAS) Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation and is the top contributor to its missions. The U.S. government supports OAS efforts to strengthen these missions in order to address current challenges to elections and ensuring transparent, open, and fair electoral processes. OAS electoral observation missions are vital in strengthening democracy and democratic institutions in the Americas consistent with the principles enshrined in the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

*“To promote open government and access to information as key tools for achieving greater transparency, better public administration, citizen participation and social inclusion, and to support initiatives currently under way in this regard. (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Democratic Governance, 4)”*

### **Open Government Partnership**

Since September 2011, the United States has worked both domestically and internationally to ensure global support for Open Government Partnership (OGP) principles to promote transparency, fight corruption, energize civic engagement, and leverage new technologies in order to strengthen the foundations of freedom in our own nation and abroad. The United States met 73 percent of its commitments from its second U.S. Open Government National Action Plan and presented its third National Action Plan in October 2015. The third National Action Plan includes 45 commitments related to open government in public services, access to information, public participation, government integrity, fiscal transparency, justice and law enforcement, open government at the subnational level, and open government to support global sustainable development. At the 2015 Summit of the Americas, President Obama highlighted the importance of updating transparency laws in the region to strengthen access to information and public disclosure, and prioritized transparent and accountable public institutions in the post-2015 development agenda. The United States is one of 13 countries that signed on to a “Joint Declaration on Open Government for Implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals” in September 2015.

### **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative**

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a global standard to promote open and accountable management of natural resources. EITI brings together governments, companies and civil society organizations in order to strengthen government and company systems, inform public debate, and enhance trust. In fulfillment of a major commitment of its first Open Government National Action Plan, the United States applied for and was granted candidate status by EITI in March 2014. Under the direction of the U.S. Department of the Interior, which leads domestic implementation of the EITI Standard, the United States published the first U.S. EITI report in 2015 and is working toward achieving compliance by 2017. The United States is the only country in the hemisphere that is both a supporting and an implementing country within EITI. The United States remains a strong global proponent of EITI and has worked to expand the multi-stakeholder organization into the Americas. Peru, which has complied with the EITI

Standard since February 2012, hosted the triennial EITI Conference and Members' Meeting in February 2016. In addition, Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago are compliant with the EITI Standard. The United States supported the candidatures of Colombia, Honduras, and, in February 2016, the Dominican Republic.

### **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data**

The United States, Mexico, and Colombia are anchor partners in the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (Global Partnership), launched in conjunction with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in September 2015. The Global Partnership is deploying the power of partnership to mobilize the full range of data producers and users – governments, companies, civil society organizations, international organizations, academic institutions, charities, official statistics and data communities – working to harness the data revolution for sustainable development. This multi-stakeholder network of data champions will leverage new and ongoing efforts to galvanize political commitments, align strategic priorities, foster connections and collaborations, spur innovations and build trust in the booming data ecosystems of the 21st century. The Global Partnership supports countries and regional institutions to engage stakeholders in developing open data platforms, filling data gaps, and using data to advance the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals through Sustainable Development Data Revolution Roadmaps. The Global Partnership is also supporting data collaboratives to engage stakeholders in building capacity to harness data to address key sustainable development challenges such as climate change, health and gender equality. The United States, through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), is providing \$3 million as part of a consortium of funders to seed this initiative. This builds on previous U.S. commitments to support data for development, including a \$4 million pledge through USAID and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to advance the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition initiative.

*“To strengthen regional and international mechanisms for combating corruption, recognizing the value and importance of national mechanisms and a multilateral approach based on reciprocal evaluations on equal terms. To request the OAS to continue supporting the countries in following up on the provisions of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Democratic Governance, 5)*

### **Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACAC)**

A number of U.S. technical assistance programs include components that foster good governance and help to combat corruption. The United States provides approximately \$400,000 annually to the Mechanism for Follow-Up on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (MESICIC), and also helps fund the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the UN Development Program, and other partners active in this area. Operationally, the U.S. government continually enhances its own legal system and institutions and is subject to peer reviews on its compliance with anticorruption standards in the MESICIC, the UN Convention

Against Corruption review mechanism, the Council of Europe Group of States Against Corruption, and the OECD Working Group on Bribery. In 2014-2015, the U.S. government underwent IACAC MESICIC review and subsequently submitted a report to the MESICIC expert committee meeting in March 2016 on follow-up measures taken in response to the review. The United States also participates in the MESICIC Committee of Experts, including as a reviewer in the on-site peer review of Uruguay in 2015.

### **Support for Independent Media**

The U.S. government supports efforts focused on team reporting by participating journalists and editors that leads to impactful stories on criminal activities, corruption, rule of law, and accountability – with a particular focus on cross-border reporting on issues of regional importance. To help journalists report on these sensitive issues, the U.S. government supports a digital platform that provides a cloud-based, secure, and collaborative working environment for investigative journalists in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Mexico and Paraguay.

### **Freedom Online Coalition**

Costa Rica chairs the Freedom Online Coalition (the first Latin American country to chair the Coalition) and will host the Freedom Online Conference in October 2016. Coalition members work closely together to coordinate their diplomatic efforts and engage with civil society and the private sector to support Internet freedom – free expression, association, assembly, and privacy online – worldwide. The U.S. Department of State is working through the Friends of the Chair group to assist Costa Rica in ensuring the conference’s success.

### **Citizen Participation**

*“To continue supporting participation by civil society and social actors in dialogue with the states as an ongoing mechanism for participation and consultation in order to contribute to the formulation and implantation of public policies and programs aimed at achieving prosperity with equity and social inclusion.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Citizen Participation, 1)*

### **Civil Society Council for the Summit of the Americas**

The U.S. Department of State provided a nearly \$1 million grant in 2015 to empower civil society to establish and implement a formal mechanism for civil society participation in the Summit of the Americas process. The mechanism will 1) initiate and facilitate a robust forum for civil society from across the region; 2) coordinate and lead formal engagement with leaders at the Summits of the Americas, in consultation with the host government; 3) formally submit input to the host government and the Summit Implementation Review Group; and 4) monitor



stakeholder Summit commitments. The grantee, Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe por la Democracia (REDLAD), is currently working with a consortium of civil society organizations from Peru, El Salvador, Paraguay, and Haiti to hold consultations with civil society representatives from throughout the region and establish a framework for a civil society council, known as PASCA (Participacion de la Sociedad Civil en la Cumbre de las Americas).

### **Civil Society Hubs**

As part of President Obama’s Stand with Civil Society Initiative, USAID has partnered with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and other donors to support the Civil Society Innovation Initiative (CSII). CSII is supporting the development of six hubs around the world – both physical and virtual – to aid civil society organizations operating in difficult environments or experimenting with innovative approaches to public policy issues. USAID expects one hub in the Americas to launch by September 2016. The exact location has not yet been determined, but its services will be open to organizations throughout the region.

### **The Global Equality Fund**

In December 2011, the United States launched the Global Equality Fund to support civil society organizations working to advance the human rights of LGBTI persons. The Global Equality Fund is a multi-stakeholder platform bridging like-minded governments, foundations, and corporations. The Fund leverages resources from the U.S. government, other governments, and private donors. The Fund also provides emergency assistance to LGBTI human rights defenders and civil society organizations who find themselves under threat from state or non-state actors. In 2014, Chile became the first government from South America to join the Fund as a partner, followed by Uruguay in 2015, and Argentina in 2016. The Global Equality Fund supports programs that promote and protect the human rights of LGBTI persons, to include efforts that respond to and prevent hate crimes and bias-motivated violence, increase access to justice for LGBTI persons; educate and train justice sector personnel, raise rights awareness, reduce stigma in healthcare contexts, and document human rights abuses in support of data-driven advocacy initiatives.

### **Building Constituencies for Democracy**

The U.S. government provides in-depth training and tailored technical assistance to civil society organizations in the Americas to build the capacity of strategically targeted civil society actors. These civil society actors are capable of influencing a strong grassroots base and public policies that protect democracy and human rights, bring selected civil society actors in the region together to learn from each other’s expertise through peer-to-peer coaching, and identify and remove barriers to collective action.

### **Supporting Marginalized Groups and the Practice of Democracy**

U.S. efforts have directly benefitted more than 300,000 people in poor and marginalized communities in 20 countries throughout the Americas through Inter-American Foundation grants active in fiscal year 2015. In preparation for the Civil Society Forum at the 2015 Summit of the

Americas in Panama, the IAF provided the U.S. Department of State with a report prepared by 43 representatives of IAF grantee partners on their lessons and recommendations regarding civil society involvement in social protection programs in Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Paraguay, and Peru. The IAF sponsored the participation of 13 grantee partners in the Civil Society Forum, which brought together civil society representatives from 32 countries to develop recommendations to leaders based on six Summit sub-themes: democratic governance, citizen participation, education, health, energy and environment, and migration and security. Two IAF grantee representatives were among the 15 civil society members selected to participate in a private roundtable discussion with President Obama, Costa Rican President Solis, and Uruguayan President Vazquez.

The United States also is working with bilateral partners to reduce racial and ethnic discrimination through the U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination (Joint Action Plan) and the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality (CAPREE). Both initiatives seek to share best practices in addressing racial and ethnic disparities in health, environmental justice, education, economic opportunities, and access to the justice system. U.S. embassies in the Western Hemisphere also commemorated the first year of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024). Activities included hosting political dialogues, publishing op-eds and social media content, developing speaker programs and exchange programs, and engaging with civil society as well as with African descendent entrepreneurs and professional associations.

In support of the U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity under the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention established a partnership with the Association of American Medical Colleges, the Brazil Ministry of Health, and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to host a series of collaborative events in 2015. Activities included a webinar series on medical education, health disparities, and racial and ethnic health issues as well as presentations and discussions during the 2015 PAHO Regional Meeting on Ethnicity and Health.

The Department of State works closely with the Colombian government to support the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality (CAPREE). At the third CAPREE steering committee meeting in Bogota in 2015, five working groups discussed the challenges faced by people of African descent and indigenous peoples in both countries. Colombia's Ministry of Interior hosted CAPREE's second plenary April 6 and 7, 2016, in Cali, Colombia, with approximately 250 government, private sector, and civil society representatives from the United States and Colombia. The plenary was a visible example of our binational commitment to improve social inclusion within our societies and better connect Afro-Colombian and indigenous civil society representatives to share common challenges and best practices. In support of CAPREE, the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, in partnership with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), hosted the 2015 African-American Culture Series, a six-month campaign of cultural programs.

In addition to the activities undertaken under the auspices of CAPREE, U.S. Embassy Bogota engaged women and LGBTI communities. The Embassy coordinated with a leading activist on

women's rights to create a video in honor of International Women's Month and hosted an Olympic softball player, elevating Post's sports diplomacy as a tool for conflict resolution and women's empowerment. Through the Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas) initiative, the Embassy launched WEConnect International in Colombia, linking women-owned and women-run businesses with multinational corporations. USAID supported the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) to empower emerging women leaders to become conflict mediators in their respective regions. Embassy engagement with the LGBTI community has largely focused on USAID support for the Colombian LGBTI Chamber of Commerce, which currently has a presence in six cities across Colombia and over 150 members. The organization hosts a series of events throughout the year, including quarterly regional expos to activate LGBTI leadership; promote employability skills for LGBTI people and provide access to quality jobs; and promote entrepreneurship by providing the necessary tools, methodology, and support.

Observance of the United Nations' 2015-2024 International Decade for People of African Descent is a priority for the United States, as it supports U.S. foreign policy objectives in the Americas, including the promotion of social and economic opportunity, social equity, and the human rights of historically marginalized populations. The Department of State is working to generate awareness of the diverse heritage, unique challenges, and contributions made by people of African descent, including African-American, Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean, and African-Canadian communities through activities focused on economic empowerment, political participation, civil society engagement and strengthening, government-to-government dialogue on inclusion and equality, education and cultural exchanges, engagement with law enforcement and the justice sector, and public support for human rights. Examples of activities carried out by U.S. embassies in the Americas included:

- Embassy Lima hosted a delegation of U.S. Census Bureau experts to share the U.S. experience on collecting and analyzing race and ethnicity census data with key stakeholders;
- Embassy Paramaribo hosted a film screening of *12 Years A Slave* at the American Corner to commemorate the U.S. celebration of abolition Juneteenth and the Surinamese Ketikoti celebration (Chains are Cut);
- Embassy Mexico City collaborated with the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED) on the first-ever conference of leaders from the Afro-Mexican community focused on advancing human rights and addressing challenges and opportunities;
- Embassy Tegucigalpa developed a year-long strategy for increased engagement with Afro-Hondurans;
- Various U.S. embassies developed speaker programs and exchange programs; created internal antidiscrimination working groups; hosted political dialogues; collaborated with multilateral agencies; engaged with civil society as well as with African descendent entrepreneurs and professional associations; or published op-eds and social media content.

## **Americas Partnership for Social Inclusion and Equality (APSIE)**

The Americas Partnership for Social Inclusion and Equality (APSIE) aims to raise visibility of and provide support for social inclusion efforts in the region, building on lessons learned from civil society. As part of APSIE, the U.S. government supports historically marginalized groups in the Western Hemisphere, including LGBTI persons, women and girls, people of African descent, indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities, through technical assistance, training, and education. The United States invested nearly \$1.8 million and leveraged over \$1.9 million to fund projects that build the capacity of vulnerable groups to access economic and educational opportunities and to promote inclusive practices and civic engagement through eight projects in five countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru).

## **Citizen Security**

*“We spoke about concerns regarding terrorism, organized crime, and other threats to our citizens’ security, and about the need to combine our efforts to combat them, by strengthening cooperation among our countries and adopting measures to prevent crime and violence.” (Closing statement at the conclusion of the Seventh Summit of the Americas, President Juan Carlos Varela)*

*“Recognizing that peace and social inclusion help to create better security conditions and that these, in turn, encourage greater prosperity, stability, and quality of life for people, noting that cooperation among our countries in this area should proceed in accordance with the principles enshrined in international law, considering in particular the principle of sovereignty and nonintervention in the internal affairs of states.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Security)*

## **The U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America**

In partnership with the governments of Central America, the United States has committed approximately \$1.15 billion in citizen security in Central America, primarily through the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), since 2008. To build on the successes of CARSI and to comprehensively address the challenges facing the region, the U.S. government developed the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America in 2014. The Strategy advances prosperity, governance, and security objectives in the region to promote a secure, democratic, and prosperous Central America which will provide an environment in which all of its citizens can thrive.

Congress recommended up to \$750 million in fiscal year (FY) 2016 funding to support the Strategy. The President requested an additional \$1 billion in FY 2017, of which \$750 million is intended for the Department of State and USAID. The investments of these countries, combined

with support from the U.S. government and international partners, will advance our shared vision of a prosperous, secure, and accountable Central America.

As one component of the Strategy, CARSI funding continues to assist the seven nations of Central America in the strengthening and integration of security in coordination with other countries, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society, and the Central American Integration System. CARSI programs are designed to assist law enforcement and security forces to create safe streets, confront illicit trafficking, reduce the negative effects of gangs and criminal organizations, and strengthen border security deficiencies. CARSI also builds the capacity of law enforcement and the justice sector to serve citizens and address regional threats; and to advance community policing, gang prevention, and economic and social programming for at-risk youth and communities disproportionately affected by crime.

### **Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)**

The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) is a multi-year, regional citizen safety engagement with the Caribbean that stemmed from commitments made at the 2009 Summit of the Americas. The United States, CARICOM member nations, and the Dominican Republic are improving citizen safety throughout the Caribbean by working together to counter illicit trafficking and other transnational crimes that threaten regional security. Their goal is to substantially reducing illicit trafficking, increasing public safety, strengthening the rule of law, and addressing the underlying social and economic root causes of crime. Since 2010, the United States has committed \$386.4 million for CBSI assistance, including maritime and aerial security cooperation, law enforcement capacity building, border/port security, firearms interdiction, justice sector reform, crime prevention, and at-risk youth. With the help of equipment and training provided by the Department of State to Dominican law enforcement and counter-narcotics entities, Dominican authorities seized 9.3 metric tons (MT) of cocaine in 2015, versus 5.4 MT in 2014. Through train-the-trainer course instruction and mentoring, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Training Academy has become a regional training hub for officers from eight other CBSI nations. Over the next five years in 25 Jamaican communities, USAID will be providing grant assistance to support community groups, NGOs, and civil society in volatile and vulnerable areas through strengthening local governance structures and improving safety and security. CBSI provided short-range interdiction boats to bolster the region's interdiction capacity, continues advising and assisting Caribbean nations to improve their maritime maintenance and logistics efforts, and deployed a maritime logistics system to the partner nations that supports operational readiness. To reduce drug demand in The Bahamas, partnership between government and civil society has created the first twenty internationally certified substance use treatment professionals in the Western Hemisphere, creating best practice, evidence-based addiction treatment.

### **Merida Initiative**

The Merida Initiative is an unprecedented partnership between the United States and Mexico to fight organized crime and associated violence while furthering respect for human rights and the rule of law throughout Mexico. The United States has committed \$2.47 billion for the Merida Initiative. Under the partnership, the United States and Mexico have improved citizen safety in

affected areas to fight drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption, illicit arms trafficking, money laundering, and the demand for drugs on both sides of the border. Bilateral efforts support strengthening Mexico's institutions, especially police and justice systems at both the federal and state level; bolstering development of a secure border that facilitates legitimate trade and travel while disrupting illicit trade; and building strong and resilient communities able to withstand the pressures of crime and violence.

### **U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation**

At the 2012 Summit of the Americas, President Obama and Colombian President Santos announced an agreement to develop the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation, a coordination mechanism to support capacity-building to improve citizen security in third countries. Activities under the Action Plan support hemispheric citizen security priorities through capacity building in multiple areas, such as asset forfeiture, investigations, polygraphs, and interdiction. The United States and Colombia implemented 47 activities in Central America in 2013, 177 activities in Central America and the Caribbean in 2014, 284 in 2015, and 339 planned in 2016.

### **Peace Colombia**

Peace Colombia has replaced the Colombia Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI). Peace Colombia is a bilateral framework to channel U.S. assistance to post-accord Colombia in connection with the anticipated signing of a peace agreement with the FARC. U.S. assistance supports interdiction and manual eradication; capacity building and professionalization for Colombian military and police forces; access to rule of law; and creation of viable options for citizens in the licit economy, particularly in the agricultural sector. U.S. assistance also supports implementation of Colombian government reforms in land restitution; reparations for victims and vulnerable populations; demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; strengthening the Colombian Attorney General's Office in support of human rights, the rule of law, and protection of vulnerable citizens; and addressing global climate change and environmental issues. The President's FY 2017 request for Peace Colombia includes \$391 million for Department of State and USAID programs as part of a \$450 million interagency request.

### **Operations Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT)**

Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) is a combined U.S. Coast Guard, Drug Enforcement Administration and law enforcement entities of The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands partnership to combat drug smuggling. OPBAT assets also regularly assist with prosecuting human smuggling and search and rescue cases throughout its area of responsibility.

### **Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime**

In July 2011, the White House announced the Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime to build, balance, and integrate tools to combat transnational organized crime and related threats to U.S. national security – and to urge the United States' partners to do the same. The strategy sets out 56 priority actions, starting with steps the United States can take within its

borders to lessen the impact of transnational crime domestically and on the United States' foreign partners. Other actions seek to enhance U.S. intelligence; protect the financial system and strategic markets; strengthen interdiction, investigations, and prosecutions; disrupt the drug trade and its facilitation of other transnational threats; and build international cooperation. The United States is working with other OAS member states to foster a permanent structure and coordination mechanisms for addressing organized crime and to promote greater cooperation and implementation of the international conventions on this matter, including the Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime. In 2016, the OAS established a new Department against Transnational Organized Crime within the OAS Secretariat.

### **Illicit Trafficking in Firearms**

The ratification of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials (CIFTA) is a priority for the Obama administration. In January 2015, the Administration included CIFTA on its Treaty Priority List to the U.S. Senate and emphasized the importance of ratification in the July 2011 U.S. Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime.

The United States has offered technical assistance to a variety of countries to trace illicit firearms and control, store, or destroy excess national stockpiles. Through the OAS, the United States has provided more than \$1 million for the provision of marking equipment to countries in the hemisphere, increasing hemispheric capability to trace firearms and identify illicit trafficking routes and suppliers. To date, 25 OAS member states have received marking machines, 280 persons have been trained, and over 287,000 firearms have been marked. The United States has also signed eTrace agreements with 28 countries in the hemisphere, including all seven countries in Central America, and fourteen of the fifteen countries in the Caribbean. Expanding eTrace participation and follow-on investigating cooperation throughout the hemisphere is a priority for the U.S. government.

Through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, the United States has provided over \$2.86 million in assistance. The U.S. government has posted two Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) Regional Firearms Advisors in the Caribbean who provide firearms expertise and training to local law enforcement. We have cooperated with Canada, to provide ballistics analysis equipment to Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago to enable regional digital ballistics data sharing through the Regional Integrated Ballistics Information Network. Funds provided to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in the Americas regional project have enhanced the capacity of Caribbean states to combat illicit small arms and ammunition trafficking through operational forensic ballistics and stockpile management and destruction program.

Through CARSI, the United States has posted ATF Regional Firearms Advisors in Central America, who provide firearms expertise and training to local law enforcement. We have funded \$1.295 million of the OAS Program of Assistance for Control of Arms and Munitions (PACAM) stockpile management and destruction program in Central America.

## **Economic Growth and Opportunity**

At the 2015 Summit, President Obama emphasized the contribution small businesses make to creating jobs and growth, particularly for women. The United States is working with regional partners to launch new and expand and ongoing programs to increase growth opportunities in the regional economies.

*“Recognizing the fundamental importance of international development cooperation in all of its modalities and dimensions, guided by solidarity, flexibility, complementarity, alignment with national priorities and voluntary participation, with particular attention to strengthening institutional capacity and the development of human capital to attain inclusive and sustainable development as the basis of prosperity with equity, and further recognizing the importance of public and private investment in research and development and science and technology infrastructure to encourage inclusive innovation.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Hemispheric Partnership for Development)*

### **Americas Business Dialogue (ABD)**

Established in 2014, the ABD made its high-level debut at the 2015 CEO Summit of the Americas in Panama, where business leaders presented its inaugural set of policy recommendations to heads of state, including President Obama. Since then, the U. S. government has supported the ABD’s institutionalization as the premier consultative mechanism for regional private sector engagement in the hemisphere. The ABD has grown in membership, promoted valuable public-private collaborations, and provided opportunities for high-level dialogue between government and business leaders. Thus far in 2016, the ABD has headlined a public-private dialogue in Buenos Aires on trade facilitation, and featured prominently in the Inter-American Development Bank’s Annual Meetings in Nassau, where ministers and CEOs highlighted financial integration, small business inclusion, and energy cooperation. The ABD also organized the private sector sessions for the Vice President’s U.S.-Caribbean-Central American Energy Summit in Washington in May 2016.

*“Work to ensure that our countries... have significantly increased by 2025, broadband access to overcome the digital gap.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Hemispheric Partnership for Development, b)*

### **Communications and Connectivity**

We have advanced broadband adoption and deployment of infrastructure in the Americas to support economic growth and opportunity and citizen participation in the region. Building from the Broadband Partnership of the Americas that President Obama launched at the 2012 Summit,



the United States and its partners are to increase the adoption of fixed and mobile broadband service and the deployment of broadband infrastructure especially in rural communities. The Broadband Alliance for Progress in the Americas is advancing this objective by mobilizing the expertise and resources of the U.S. government, regional organizations, and the private sector to support the broadband adoption and deployment efforts of countries in the Americas.

The Global Connect Initiative, launched in September 2015 with Secretary Kerry's support, has the goal of catalyzing multi-stakeholder partnerships to bring 1.5 billion new internet users online by 2020. We have more partner countries in the Americas than in any other region in the world with whom we are promoting universal access to communications and broadband technologies as a tool for competitiveness, development, and economic prosperity. Also, since the 2015 Summit, we have shared U.S. technical knowledge and assistance with partners in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guyana, Jamaica, and Mexico, on topics ranging from maintaining an open internet, spectrum management, planning and allocation, broadband accessibility by persons with disabilities, emergency communications to digital television transition.

Related to connectivity, progress also has been made in implementing the President's new policy approach to Cuba. Changes undertaken by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security, and the Federal Communications Commission have enabled new opportunities for the provision of direct telecommunications services to Cuba. There are now four U.S. carriers providing direct facilities-based service to Cuba with other carriers expected to provide these services in the near future. In addition, for the first time, many U.S. consumers now have an option to roam using their own U.S. mobile device while in Cuba. U.S. firms may now export certain telecommunications equipment to Cuba without having to apply for a license. We have also continued our efforts of advancing broadband adoption and deployment in the region, including the allocation of spectrum for mobile broadband, by promoting efforts within the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission under the OAS, the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, and the Latin-American Forum of Telecommunications Regulators (Regulatel).

***“To promote and strengthen economic, political, social and cultural empowerment for women, ensure the protection and guarantee of all their rights, and redouble our collective efforts to end discrimination, child, early and forced marriage, recognizing that gender equity and equality is necessary and legitimate for the sustainable and democratic advancement of our societies.”(Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Citizen Participation, 3)***

### **Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas)**

Investing in women-owned and managed small and medium enterprises (SMEs) achieves simultaneous economic, financial, and social impact. Since its 2012 launch, WEAmericas has leveraged public-private partnerships to promote inclusive economic growth in the Americas by reducing barriers that women entrepreneurs face in starting and growing SMEs. These include:

access to markets, capital, skills and capacity building, and leadership opportunities. In support of the goals of WEAmericas, the Department partnered with Ernst and Young, U.S. embassies and local partners to carry out a series of four TechCamps for women entrepreneurs in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, and El Salvador. The WEAmericas TechCamps introduced women entrepreneurs to low cost, easy-to-use technological tools and concepts, they could use to solve the challenges they faced in growing their businesses. The WEAmericas TechCamp series was the first of the Department's over 50 TechCamps to focus specifically on women entrepreneurs. Nearly 400 women entrepreneurs participated in the series, opening new doors for themselves and their businesses. Ernst and Young provided follow-on advisory support for more than 20 of the most promising series participants. The United States is also working with our partners bilaterally and has signed memoranda of understanding with Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay that include pillars on women's economic empowerment and WEAmericas and the Small Business Network of the Americas, a complementary Summit initiative that focuses on linking regional small business development centers.

***“To promote economic growth with equity and social inclusion by strengthening cooperatives, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, including cultural industries, in addition to grassroots economic initiatives and other production units, innovation, and competitiveness in the countries of the Americas.” (2012 Mandates Arising from the Sixth Summit of the Americas, Poverty, Inequality, and Inequity).***

### **Small Business Network of the Americas (SBNA)**

After the 2012 Summit in Panama, President Obama announced “the United States will work with its partners to expand SBNA so that it can independently help micro, small, and medium-size enterprises, and entrepreneurs, and increase opportunities for growth.” The overarching goal of Small Business Network of the Americas is to increase international connectivity of small business support infrastructure to improve both domestic and international growth opportunities for small and medium businesses through job creation, business development resource access, and greater trade. The United States has put in place a regular process for over 4,000 small business service providers to participate in SBNA, with an eye toward establishing an independent association to facilitate greater cooperation among the service provider community. Since the last Summit, we have established the SBNA Partnership Program, under which service providers have formed more than 300 “sister center” relationships. We have hosted five sister center workshops and will continue doing so on a semi-annual basis to help centers find new partners. The U.S. Department of State anticipates providing up to \$3 million in targeted grant funds to enable center partnerships to work together to benefit their small business clients. In addition to existing networks of incubators, accelerators, and other service providers, the United States is providing technical assistance to countries interested in adapting the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) model to local contexts. In 2015, there were 118 SBDCs operating in 13 countries in the region. By 2018, we expect 296 SBDCs to be operating in 16 countries across the region. Given that each SBDC serves an average of 367 small business clients per year, we expect the total number of clients served to exceed 100,000 small businesses annually. The United States has signed bilateral memoranda of understanding

to support cooperation on SBNA goals with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay.

The United States and Brazil are committed to helping small businesses grow and entrepreneurs start new companies so that they can create jobs and ensure inclusive economic growth. To that end, the United States and Brazil signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Promoting Entrepreneurship and the Growth of Micro-and-Small-Sized Enterprises in June 2015. The agreement not only advances the objectives of the Small Business Network of the Americas, but also promotes entrepreneurship among women. One key deliverable of the MOU was the execution of the LA Idea Incubator Program, which provided 22 scholarships for Brazilian entrepreneurs to undertake training programs at U.S.-based incubators and accelerators in late 2015. In addition, the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia offered tech-focused startup trainings for 100 Brazilian university students in March and May 2016, with mentorship from American and local entrepreneurs. Select participants will travel to Austin, Texas, for further activities and will receive additional support to launch their startups.

### **Supporting Local Businesses and Communities**

The United States promotes and invests in the best ideas from local communities for their own economic and social development through the Inter-American Foundation (IAF). The IAF grants multi-year funding to citizen-led, grassroots development projects throughout the region and supports project implementation by providing technical advice and independent verification of project goals throughout the life of the grant. These grants enable community enterprises, cooperatives, and local businesses to get off the ground, refine their products and services, create jobs, and access the global marketplace. The U.S. government's support helps vulnerable people improve their lives, strengthen the local economy, and remain in their communities to contribute as workers and leaders. Approximately 187,000 people acquired new knowledge and skills in agriculture, manufacturing, technical vocations, finance, planning, administration, marketing, civic engagement, and environmental conservation. Funds dedicated to education/training in FY15 totaled \$4.5 million. Through the IAF, the United States committed another \$25.2 million in the last five years to grants for agriculture, many of which enabled or improved food production for sale in domestic and international markets.

### **Feed the Future**

In parts of the Americas, food insecurity and poor nutrition together pose an important obstacle to economic growth and social development. Feed the Future (FTF) is the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative. With a focus on smallholder farmers, particularly women, FTF is establishing a foundation for lasting progress against global hunger by supporting countries in developing their agriculture sectors to spur economic growth that increases incomes and reduces hunger, poverty, and undernutrition. Under FTF, USAID and other U.S. government actors are working with host governments, other donors, the private sector, and civil society in poor rural areas in Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras. Our programs are raising the productivity, quality, and income-earning potential of high-value and staple food crops, creating jobs, and improving nutrition outcomes. In Honduras, for example, FTF has leveraged \$200 million from outside sources, including the Government of Honduras, other donors, and the

private sector, for the Dry Corridor Alliance. This Alliance is working to accelerate sustainable economic development in the geographic corridor that stretches along Honduras's southern and western borders, characterized by pervasive extreme poverty and erratic climatic conditions. The Alliance aims to lift 50,000 families out of extreme poverty, reduce undernutrition of children by 20 percent, and improve more than 280 kilometers of secondary and tertiary roads, providing market access to thousands.

## **Trade Facilitation**

The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), concluded at the 9<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali in 2013, establishes binding commitments for WTO members to: expedite movement, release, and clearance of goods; improve transparency through commitments on publication and advance rulings; and improve cooperation among WTO Members on customs matters. According to the OECD, the potential cost reduction from a "full" implementation of the WTO TFA (that is, all provisions including the "best endeavor" provisions of the agreement) is 16.5 percent of total costs for low income countries, 17.4 percent for lower middle income countries and 14.6 percent for upper middle income countries.

For the WTO TFA to enter into force, two-thirds of the WTO's members need to notify the WTO that they have completed their domestic procedures to accept the Agreement. The United States completed this process in January 2015.

At the Seventh Summit of the Americas, the United States joined 13 other countries in the region in a joint statement that considers the TFA's "entry into force essential to enhance the competitiveness of the Americas in the global marketplace." Ten countries in the Americas have since then joined the United States in ratifying the TFA. The United States applauds their leadership in that regard and encourages additional countries in the Americas to ratify the TFA for the region to play an important role in helping achieve its entry into force and benefit from its implementation. The United States remains committed to seeing the TFA enter into force as soon as possible.

USAID fosters enhanced public-private dialogue around trade facilitation, helping to pave the way for implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. USAID's Regional Trade and Market Alliances (RTMA) project promotes inclusive economic growth through intraregional trade and exports. The project's goal is to establish consolidated regional value chains and improve market access, particularly for agricultural products, through more robust market alliances and increased trade facilitation, regional harmonization, and institutional capacity. USAID has also partnered with USDA to help private sectors in the Americas to take advantage of trade opportunities.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have worked with, and provided support to governments in the Americas in identifying best practices for how to engage industry as new trade policies are developed. DHS and CBP have also worked with international organizations including the Inter-American Development Bank, World Customs Organization, and ABD to promote trade facilitation, specifically by sharing best practices for single window implementation.

## **Clean and Sustainable Energy Future**

At the 2015 Summit, President Obama addressed the shared challenges of energy insecurity and vulnerability to the effects of climate change by calling for ambitious action and collaboration on climate information sharing, fossil fuel subsidy reform, and non-hydro renewable energy development. The United State recognizes these complementary efforts as essential components in realizing the goal of sustainable development in each of our countries.

### **Environment**

*“Underscoring our shared concern regarding climate change, we agreed on mandates for the protection, conservation, restoration, and correct stewardship of the environment.” (Closing statement at the conclusion of the Seventh Summit of the Americas, President Juan Carlos Varela)*

*“To promote the exchange of information and data in the climate field, and capacity building for data collection and analysis to favor resilient development and adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Environment, 5)*

### **Regional Climate Centers**

Every Western Hemisphere country is susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change and extreme weather, yet nearly half lack the meteorological services necessary for informed decision-making and planning. Improvements and expanded access to climate services can make communities, businesses, and ecosystems more resilient. For those reasons, President Obama called on governments at the 2015 Summit of the Americas to ensure all countries in the region have access to climate information that enhance their capabilities for resilient development by 2020. The United States works actively with many partners throughout the region to increase the amount and accessibility of timely climate data. These efforts include the United States’ application to receive accreditation under the World Meteorological Organization as a Regional Climate Center (RCC) and our continued support for the establishment of additional RCCs through technical collaboration with sub-regional partners. We are strengthening national capabilities to collect, distribute, and integrate climate data into decision-making processes and helping partners understand and demonstrate the economic value of investments in climate services. The United States also supports the development of climate modeling expertise with Caribbean partners through improved drought forecasting technologies, meteorologist and climatologist training and exchanges, and the Caribbean Regional Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) twice a year.

### **National and Regional Access to Climate Data and Services**

USAID’s Central America Regional Climate Change program supports a regional climate change information center, Centro Clima, which provides demand-driven climate change data to

end users in different sectors, including those focused on coffee, water, energy, coastal marine biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction. In the Caribbean, USAID is strengthening national and sub-national capacity for climate data collection, monitoring, and forecasting. In the Dominican Republic specifically, USAID supports the integration of climate information into land-use planning and zoning in certain municipalities. USAID's Partnering for Adaptation and Resilience – Agua (PARA-Agua) connects U.S. climate and watershed modeling experts with watershed managers in Colombia and Peru to integrate climate data into watershed models, which will help determine priority investments for watersheds. USAID also provides technical assistance to Peru's Ministry of Environment to incorporate climate change risk management approaches into public investment projects.

In June 2015, the United States launched the Climate Data and Information for Resilient Development public-private partnership with financial and in-kind contributions of \$34 million. The partnership includes the United Kingdom's Government Department for International Development and UK Met Office, Esri, Google, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Skoll Global Threats Fund, and the American Red Cross. The partnership is working in Colombia through the International Center for Tropical Agriculture to create a "solution space" for utilizing quality data, products, and tools to build institutional capacity and facilitate knowledge sharing.

### **Environmental Partnership with Cuba**

The United States and Cuba signed a joint statement to facilitate and guide U.S.-Cuba cooperation on a range of environmental issues. The statement envisions cooperation – both governmental and non-governmental – on a spectrum of environmental issues, such as coastal and marine protection, the protection of biodiversity including endangered and threatened species, climate change, disaster risk reduction, and marine pollution. One of the United States and Cuba's first steps toward environmental cooperation was the establishment of a sister marine sanctuary relationship for the purposes of conserving biodiversity, protecting cultural and natural heritage, and promoting the sustainable use of our natural marine resources. Our two countries have also signed a memorandum of understanding to improve maritime safety and protect the marine environment by exchanging cartographic, hydrographic, and geodetic information.

### **Preventing Marine Pollution in the Caribbean**

Marine litter is a critical pollution issue for the wider Caribbean region, with nearly 65 percent of land-based generated trash directed to either open-air landfills or local waterways where there is significant potential for the litter and plastic trash to reach the ocean. The dominant source for waste in the Caribbean is from household and recreational activities. The United States has partnered with the Caribbean Environment Program to help countries in the region reduce and prevent land-based sources of trash from entering Caribbean-region waters. This effort is modeled on the Environmental Protection Agency's Trash Free Waters effort, which uses a stakeholder-based approach to mitigate marine litter. This partnership will provide countries with tools for developing national and regional strategies that generate tangible community-based solutions and directly benefit public health and the environment. The United States has launched the initial partnership with Jamaica and Panama.

## **Reducing Climate Change Risks to the Fishing Industry**

The United States created the Caribbean Oceans and Assets Sustainability Facility (COAST) – a new insurance product for the fisheries sector in the Caribbean – to reduce the risk of climate change to the fishing industry and related food security in the region. The United States has committed \$5 million for this initiative and NGOs have announced aligned funding of at least \$2 million. Jamaica has announced its intention to purchase the COAST insurance product.

## **Energy**

*“Energy is a central pillar of sustainable development, and in that area we agreed on actions that will guarantee access to energy from a range of sources that are environmentally friendly, economically affordable, and reliable.” (Closing statement at the conclusion of the Seventh Summit of the Americas, President Juan Carlos Varela)*

*“To promote patterns of energy production and consumption that make it possible to achieve higher levels of energy efficiency, especially in the industrial, residential, and transport sectors, with due consideration for the environment and the specific needs and circumstances of each country. Accordingly, to implement education and awareness programs on the importance of promoting these patterns.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Energy, 5)*

## **Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform**

At the 2015 Summit of the Americas, President Obama called on leaders to aggressively phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies (FFS) and to discuss opportunities for pragmatic action at the 2015 Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) Ministerial. Energy ministers at the 2015 ECPA meeting later considered reform opportunities and encouraged countries to implement reforms for inefficient subsidy regimes. The United States supports fossil fuel subsidy reform (FFSR) by emphasizing reform implementation in multilateral and bilateral fora and through technical cooperation. Our efforts build on the increased awareness of FFS generated by peer reviews and capacity building under the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Group of 20 (G-20). In December 2015, the United States hosted an APEC FFSR Capacity Building Workshop and invited other G-20 countries undergoing FFSR reform or peer reviews to attend. The United States is also undergoing a peer review of its subsidies in the G-20.

*“To acknowledge the Sustainable Energy for All initiative of the United Nations which sets the goals of achieving universal access to modern energy services, doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, and doubling the share of renewable*

*energy in the global energy mix by 2030. With regard to access to energy services, we propose to achieve the goal of universalization in our countries by 2022.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Energy, 5)*

The Western Hemisphere has tremendous potential to utilize its significant renewable energy resources as an engine for sustainable development and economic growth. The United States furthered its clean energy commitment at the 2015 Summit by setting a goal to double the collective share of non-hydro renewable energy in the Americas’ electricity mix by 2030. Recognizing the importance of the private sector in achieving this goal, the United States has worked to strengthen the commercial and investment environment for financing such projects by collaborating with the Americas Business Dialogue and promoting early stage finance opportunities for renewable energy projects through the U.S.-led Clean Energy Finance Facility for the Caribbean and Central America.

### **The Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA)**

ECPA provides a flexible framework for partnerships between governments, private sector companies, and non-governmental organizations to collaborate on low-emissions development and climate-resilient growth. As a mechanism to exchange best practices in renewable resource development, implementing standards for energy efficient appliances, and promoting clean production cycles, ECPA helps ensure solutions in one part of the hemisphere can be replicated more broadly. ECPA continues to serve as an important tool for promoting low carbon development and reduced emissions from deforestation and climate-resilient planning. Through ECPA, OAS member countries work on issues including, but not limited to, clean energy technology, energy efficiency, water management, and unconventional gas development across more than 40 distinct projects. The United States serves as a member of the ECPA Steering Committee.

### **Connecting the Americas 2022 (Connect 2022)**

The Connecting the Americas 2022 initiative provides a framework for advancing electricity interconnection and market integration; expanding access to reliable, affordable electricity; and creating regional business climates that accelerate renewable energy development and attract private investment. U.S. support includes on-going technical assistance in Central America and engagement on the Peru-Chile electrical interconnection through the Department of State’s Power Sector Program (PSP), which supports regional institutions and national governments in optimizing national energy resources, regional trade, and sustainable development. USAID’s Regional Clean Energy Initiative also advances Connect 2022 in Central America.

### **Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI)**

The Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI) supports Caribbean efforts to overcome reliance on imported petroleum and heavy fuel oil through improved governance, access to finance, technical cooperation, and donor coordination. Initiatives include support for the



Caribbean Community's Caribbean Sustainable Energy Roadmap and Strategy (C-SERMS) Platform to improve donor coordination, governance and renewable development in St. Kitts and Nevis, clean energy projects in the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean Clean Energy Technology Symposium, the establishment of a market and supply chain for natural gas in the Caribbean, and the strengthening of a team at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) to focus on the Caribbean and Central America, which has already led to financing for wind and solar energy projects in Jamaica. CESI supports the development of new tools for scenario planning to meet energy transition goals, and improved energy efficiency and increased deployment of renewables in the public and tourism sectors in the Eastern Caribbean. CESI also promotes energy efficiency and the integration of renewables into energy grids while accelerating private-sector clean energy investment in Jamaica.

### **U.S.-Caribbean and Central American Energy Security Task Force (Task Force)**

To help achieve a more secure, affordable, and clean energy future, President Obama announced the U.S.-Caribbean and Central American Energy Security Task Force (Task Force) when he met with Caribbean and Central American leaders in Jamaica and Panama, respectively, in April 2015. In consultation with both regions, the Task Force was created as a means to diminish the vulnerability of small electricity markets in Central America and the Caribbean to fluctuations in global energy markets, and contribute to an aggregate reduction in tariffs for consumers, elevating the competitiveness and economic prosperity in both regions. At the U.S.-Caribbean-Central American Energy Summit on May 3-4, 2016, the Task Force presented a report to leaders recommending actions to advance Caribbean and Central American energy security and electricity integration, clean energy investment, and regional energy cooperation. Leaders agreed on the importance of a diverse fuel supply and greater access to cleaner, cost-effective, and reliable energy to spur energy security and economic competitiveness in our regions. The Summit follows robust U.S. engagement on these issues since 2012, including the June 2013 Connect 2022 Ministerial, the June 2014 launch of CESI, the November 2014 Connect 2022 Investment Summit, the January 2015 Caribbean Energy Security Summit, launch of the Clean Energy Finance Facility for the Caribbean and Central America, and four regional Task Force meetings. The Task Force recommendations will accelerate ongoing efforts under CESI and Connect 2022.

### **Renewable Energy Development**

Additional U.S. initiatives supporting renewable energy development include:

- Clean Energy Finance Facility for the Caribbean and Central America (CEFF-CCA): The CEFF-CCA provides \$10 million in grants to early stage clean energy and energy efficiency projects.
- Central America – Regional Clean Energy Initiative (RCEI): The United States provides assistance to Central American countries to help enable the development of clean energy, reduce energy consumption, and increase public and private sector investments in renewable energy. In addition, the United States is working closely with regional entities to further develop Central America's Regional Electricity Market, and improve their governance and regional coordination to ensure the development and implementation of

an integrated regional energy strategy. RCEI is also helping Central America's governments in developing, adopting, and implementing energy efficiency standards to ensure consumer electric equipment is high-quality and energy efficient, thus lowering consumption and avoiding carbon emissions.

- Climate Economic Analysis for Development, Investment, and Resilience (CEADIR): CEADIR, with support from USAID, provides technical assistance, networking opportunities, and training to build capacity of financial institutions and national and regional government agencies to facilitate private and public investment in clean energy in the Americas.
- Colombia Clean Energy Project: The Colombia Clean Energy Project increases access to renewable energy and improves energy efficient practices in Colombia through an innovative incentive fund. The incentive fund promotes investment in community-scale renewables and energy efficiency projects by partnering with the Colombian Government to develop policies that promote renewable energy in off-grid zones.
- Enhancing Capacity for Low Emission Development Strategies (EC-LEDS): EC-LEDS is a flagship U.S. program that has forged partnerships with more than two dozen countries – including Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru – that committed to taking concrete actions to achieve low emission development. The EC-LEDS program supports the Government of Mexico's clean energy goal of generating 35 percent of its electricity from clean energy by 2024.
- Clean Energy Ministerial's Clean Energy Solutions Center: The Clean Energy Solutions Center helps governments support clean energy policies and technologies through no-cost policy assistance and training.
- Clean Energy Ministerial's International Smart Grid Action Network: The Smart Grid Action Network brings together experts to advance smart grids globally. Participants include the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
- Climate Partners U.S.-Brazil Initiative: The Climate Partners program brings U.S. clean energy experts to Brazil to discuss technical, regulatory, and financial tools to scale-up Brazil's nascent clean energy market. The program's objective is to shape policies that will enable Brazil to meet its goal (in its Nationally Determined Contribution to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change under the Paris Agreement) of doubling non-hydropower renewable energy generation by 2030. To date, five U.S. experts on renewable energy finance, primary science, market trends, and regulatory reform have shared U.S. best practices with Brazil's energy leadership.

## **SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Promoting social development is a key aspect of the United States' comprehensive approach to partnerships in the Western Hemisphere. One facet of achieving regional stability and long-term prosperity in the global economy depends on equipping youth with the skills they need to compete in a 21st century workforce. Research has shown that one of the best ways to prevent youth from falling prey to gang and criminal activity is to have active engagement in school, work, or other activities. Another aspect of reaching this goal is ensuring that all Western Hemisphere citizens have sufficient opportunities and freedom to achieve self-sufficiency. Progress comes not by holding down any segment of society, but by ensuring that everyone has the tools to succeed from access to health care to job readiness.

### **Education**

The United States, in conjunction with private sector and civil society, is advancing access to quality education to help achieve development and prosperity which will result in increased social inclusion and poverty reduction. We are providing students, scholars, and teachers with access to exchange and language acquisition programs and advising services to facilitate participation in international education.

*“There was ...complete agreement in recognizing that the right to education without discrimination and equitable access to a quality education are essential to the effort to achieve integral development, eradicating poverty and inequality. We have therefore proposed increasing the coverage of our education systems and strengthening higher technical education, together with creating programs and new employment opportunities, in collaboration with the private sector, for the at-risk youth of our hemisphere.” (Closing statement at the conclusion of the Seventh Summit of the Americas, President Juan Carlos Varela)*

*“To promote agreements for academic and scientific exchanges and the transfer of knowledge and technologies in order to impact the education sector, with a view to contributing to education and training processes to the fullest possible extent of respective national capacities.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Education, 5)*

### **Educational Exchanges**

President Obama launched the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* initiative to underscore the critical relationship between broader educational opportunity and greater regional prosperity. Expanding study abroad opportunities for students, our future leaders and innovators, strengthens bi-national relations and better prepares young people for the 21st century global workforce.

To date, a total of \$9 million in commitments has been secured from the private sector, foundations, USG, and non-USG sources to support the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund (100K Innovation Fund), which is the mechanism that supports the President's signature education initiative to increase student mobility within the Western Hemisphere to 100,000 students annually by 2020.

To date, fourteen private companies, foundations, the Department of State, and the governments of Argentina, Colombia, and Puerto Rico, have made commitments to the 100K Innovation Fund, which has supported nine Innovation Fund grant competitions, resulting in 70 Innovation Fund grants awarded to teams from 153 universities in 19 Western Hemisphere countries. Up to 16 future Innovation Fund grant competitions are funded through 2018.

The Innovation Fund network now includes more than 1,500 higher education institution members, creating hemisphere-wide capacity building programs and best practices to increase student mobility to/from the Americas.

Private sector contributors to the 100K Innovation Fund include Santander, ExxonMobil Foundation, Coca-Cola Foundation, CAF Development Bank, Ford Foundation, SEMBRA Energy, Freeport-McMoRan, and Televisa Foundation. Other contributors to the 100K Innovation Fund include CAMPUS Puerto Rico (Commonwealth of Puerto Rico); SENA and ICETEX (both of which are part of the government of Colombia); and INET (part of the Ministry of Education in Argentina).

The U.S. Department of State has sent more than 2,000 students, scholars, and teachers annually to participate in exchange programs such as Fulbright, Gilman, Global UGRAD Exchange, Study of the U.S. Institutes, and the Community College Initiative. The Department continues to invest in more than 125 EducationUSA advising centers throughout the region to reach approximately 1 million people each year to promote U.S. higher education and study in the United States. Outreach is carried out through in-person and online advising, study abroad fairs, Opportunity Funds, EducationUSA Academy, and EducationUSA Leadership Institutes. Additionally, the private sector has donated \$2 million for educational exchanges.

USAID's new \$35 million regional higher education and workforce development program includes in-country scholarships for study at local tertiary-level technical training institutions in the target countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica. A small number of scholarships will also be offered for a six-month exchange to a U.S. institution in select fields of study.

***“To support cooperation for the teaching and learning of languages in the Hemisphere.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Education, 4)***

## **Fellowships**

President Obama’s Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) Professional Fellows Program expands the leadership and experience of entrepreneurs and innovative civil society leaders through fellowships in cities throughout the United States, placing business and social entrepreneurs in start-ups, small businesses, non-governmental organizations, and similar entities. The pilot program, which took place in the first quarter of 2016, brought 24 entrepreneurs from 20 countries for programs in Miami, Charlotte, Seattle, Denver and Washington, DC, for meetings with business leaders, U.S. entrepreneurs, government leaders, and NGOs. Building upon that success, the second and larger iteration of YLAI is currently in the recruitment phase. YLAI will bring 250 young business and social entrepreneurs from 28 countries in the region to the United States for five weeks, during which time fellows will participate in a month-long individualized mentorship with counterpart businesses or civil society organizations in one of 18 U.S. cities. In addition, there is also a YLAI network that will leverage the interest in the program into long term relationships with the future leaders of the region.

Additional fellowships and scholarships include English Access Microscholarships, Martin Luther King Fellows, and College Horizons Outreach Programs, reaching about 6,500 students in their local communities. The United States launched 250 Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships beginning in FY15 for students to study Western Hemisphere languages, as well as 15 Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language grants.

## **Workforce Development**

*“To strengthen specific public policies and programs for young people with a view to striving to halve by 2025 the number of young people neither studying nor working, through ongoing technical and vocational education and training, promotion of scholarships and academic mobility, and by fostering human talent through new pedagogies influenced by the arts, innovation and entrepreneurship to help enable them to successfully transition from school to the work place.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas 2015 Mandates for Action; Education, 2)*

*“To design and implement or strengthen public policies to improve economic and social conditions to generate more and better opportunities for advancement of our populations, particularly young people, through the development of human talent, the creation of more and better jobs, the stimulation of the productive sector, access to credit, and improved citizen security, among other factors, so that the decision to migrate can be taken freely and voluntarily.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Migration, 1)*

## Workforce Development Programs

Achieving regional stability and long-term prosperity in the global economy depends on preparing youth with the skills they need to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. More than 70 active IAF grants totaling \$17.6 million to civil society organizations in the Americas are dedicated to supporting alternative or supplemental education programs, microenterprise development and training in vocational, technical, leadership and life skills for marginalized young people. Since the crisis of unaccompanied minors began in 2014, the IAF has continued to shift resources to Central America for programs that improve economic opportunity, citizen security and civic participation. In FY15, 45 percent of the IAF's activity in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras benefited young people directly. Grantee partners are working to create employment opportunities and teach children and adolescents skills that match the labor market and help them become engaged in community life.

During his remarks in Jamaica directly prior to the 2015 Summit of the Americas, President Obama announced \$68 million in new funding aimed at improving education, training, and employment programs for youth that provide at-risk youth with the skills they need to compete and succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These programs include:

- USAID: A \$35 million USAID regional workforce development program designed to strengthen the capacity of technical training institutions to provide market relevant training for disadvantaged populations in Central America and the Caribbean was awarded to FHI-360 in September 2015. The target countries for the program include Guatemala, Honduras and Jamaica. The program builds off of the \$50 million 2009 Summit initiative Scholarships for Education and Economic Development (SEED). USAID has signed a cooperative agreement with FHI-360 to begin implementation of the program, which will take place in Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica. A work plan for key life of project activities is being finalized, and the implementer has already begun vital country-level analyses, including labor market assessments and mapping of technical training service providers. In Suriname, the USAID Youth Development and Juvenile Justice project works at preventing at-risk youth involvement in crime and violence. Over 2,000 youth have participated in the project, over 400 found employment and an additional 26 have started their own businesses. The project's success is based on two complementary approaches: providing youth linkage to employment, vocational education and related opportunities; and supporting a stronger juvenile justice system that is more responsive to the rehabilitative needs of youth offenders.
- Department of Labor (DOL): A \$13 million DOL program in El Salvador and Honduras to build partnerships with employers to provide market-relevant skills training to approximately 5,100 at-risk youth. Participating youth will receive an extended period of follow-up support to help ensure they obtain and retain jobs, or can pursue opportunities for self-employment or further education. In its first seven months of implementation, 15 different sites have been selected where services will be offered to youth in low-income areas of San Salvador and Santa Ana in El Salvador, and San Pedro Sula, Choloma, and El Progreso in Honduras. A market study of entry-level employment opportunities for youth has been completed and will be published in the coming months.

Since the 2015 Summit of the Americas, DOL has also participated in youth employment exchanges to include site visits with counterparts from Colombia. The exchanges took place in Washington, DC, and Cartagena. Additionally, in April 2016, DOL received a request for bilateral cooperation from the Ministry of Labor of Saint Kitts and Nevis in the area of youth employment and employment services. Subject to the availability of funding, DOL will support a 2-5 day youth employment exchange with Saint Kitts and Nevis to take place in Washington, DC in the summer or fall of 2016. Organizations in the Bahamas, Mexico, and Jamaica have also reached out to DOL about future cooperation.

The DOL is also working with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to prepare for a regional youth apprenticeship conference to be hosted by the IDB in September 2016 in Washington, DC. The IDB plans to invite the Vice Ministers of Labor from the Americas region to participate. A site visit to a local apprenticeship program will also take place in close consultation with DOL.

- Millennium Challenge Corporation: A \$20 million education project under the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) threshold agreement with Guatemala to improve the education quality, equity, and relevance of secondary education to better prepare youth to succeed in the labor market. The MCC program will also support efforts to mobilize additional resources from the Guatemalan government that would allow increased public funding for education. The program entered into force in May 2016 and, to date, MCC has worked with the government of Guatemala to recruit project staff and prepare the procurement documents for the program, which will begin implementation later this year.

In addition, MCC's \$100.7 million Human Capital Project under the El Salvador Investment Compact will focus on preparing the people of El Salvador to better meet the demands of a global economy. The MCC will invest in approximately 350 schools in the coastal zone of El Salvador, focusing on grades 7-12, where dropout rates are the highest. MCC will also support reforms in technical and vocational education and training to ensure an integrated system that better matches the skills delivered by education providers with the demands of the private labor market. Since the 2015 Summit, MCC, through the local accountable entity responsible for the implementation of the compact, has entered into an Implementing Entity Agreement with the Ministry of Education that will ensure that the project is developed and implemented jointly with the government and people of El Salvador in a sustainable and efficient manner. In a similar way, the Technical Secretary of the Presidency and the Ministry of Economy have joined with the accountable entity in the elaboration of a strategy to actively engage the private sector in the reform of the technical and vocational education and training system.

## Health

*“To strengthen the ability of national health systems to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases and other public health emergencies, particularly those with the potential for cross-border effects and impacts in realms beyond health, including social, economic, security, and political risks.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Health, 3)*

### Zika

The foremost current international health challenge for the Americas is the Zika virus outbreak and the associated cases of microcephaly, Guillain-Barré syndrome, and other potential consequences of the virus. The U.S. government, through the Department of State, USAID, HHS (including Center for Disease Control [CDC], National Institute of Health, Food and Drug Administration, and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority), the Department of Defense, and other relevant agencies, is working closely with Zika-affected countries, especially in the Americas, to respond to the outbreak. Among the lines of effort under way are research collaboration, training and capacity building, support for public health systems (surveillance, laboratory diagnosis, and vector control), technical assistance with diagnostic tests and supplies, emergency response and risk communications, and regulatory coordination to expedite approval of and commercial availability of medical countermeasures.

Having redirected some Ebola funding (\$133 million for USAID and \$78 million to be implemented by CDC) to the Zika response, USAID and CDC will be expanding Zika virus response efforts. The Administration continues seek additional funding from Congress to meet the needs of both domestic and international response.

Our bilateral assistance is carried out in close coordination with international organizations, including the World Health Organization, its regional body the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), UNICEF, and others. Regional initiatives such as the North American Partnership on Animal and Pandemic Influenza (NAPAPI) are exploring using their established channels with Canada and Mexico to enhance cooperation on Zika.

For the medium term, we are working as quickly as possible to accelerate vaccine development, and to ensure that there is enough Zika diagnostic testing capacity available across the hemisphere, especially tests that can produce faster results, so that individuals – particularly women who are or may become pregnant and their partners – can ascertain whether they have been infected with Zika.

Working with PAHO and other partners, USAID supports the strengthening of health information systems, including appropriate coding of causes of death and death certificate completion, to improve timely access to quality health information, both of which are essential in identifying and responding to public health emergencies.



Like the recent Ebola epidemic in Africa, the Zika infections in the Americas and their consequences strengthen the case for the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and for better implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) – both high priorities for the U.S. government.

***“We encourage efforts to strengthen preparedness and response capacities to handle outbreaks of emerging epidemic diseases, in particular through the International Health Regulations, and note the work done by PAHO to develop a regional mechanism to support those efforts.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Health, 4)***

### **Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA)**

In 2014, the United States helped to launch the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) – a partnership of more than 50 nations, international organizations, and non-governmental stakeholders. GHSA aims to help build and strengthen countries’ capacities to create a world safe and secure from infectious disease threats, and to elevate health security as a national and global priority. The World Health Organization has welcomed GHSA as a way for Member States to assist each other in building and strengthening capacities under the International Health Regulations (IHR), the keystone of public health preparedness and the only binding global framework for developing public health capacities.

GHSA pursues a multilateral and multisectoral approach to strengthen both national and global capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to human and zoonotic infectious disease threats. This multisectoral approach emphasizes engagement of not only the health sector, but other key partners including the agriculture, foreign affairs, development assistance, and security sectors. Technical experts from countries around the world collaboratively identified eleven discrete areas of technical focus (“action packages”), and all GHSA member countries committed to carry out work on one or more – building capacity at a national, regional, and/or global level. Each Action Package includes a five-year target, indicators by which to measure progress, and lists of baseline assessment, planning, monitoring, and evaluation activities.

Governments in the Americas have committed to important work under the GHSA, including leading GHSA Action Packages on topics such as Antimicrobial Resistance; Biosafety and Biosecurity; Medical Countermeasures; Multisectoral Response; and Nationwide Laboratory Systems. In 2015-2016, three countries (Argentina, Peru, and the United States) are also undergoing or committing to complete a Joint External Evaluation (JEE), an external and objective assessment of IHR capacities that includes all GHSA targets.

As part of a broader G-7 commitment to support 76 countries toward full International Health Regulations (IHR) compliance, the United States is committed to working with Haiti, Peru, and CARICOM to develop five-year roadmaps to meet the targets set in the JEE, which includes the GHSA targets. Canada has also made commitments, and the United States and Canada are

collaborating closely to align support and mitigate duplication of effort where priorities overlap. The United States also strongly supports reforms under way at World Health Organization and Pan-American Health Organization to streamline, better coordinate, and strengthen emergency response to infectious disease threats. The United States also continues to work with its North American partners under the aegis of the North American Partnership on Animal and Pandemic Influenza to advance preparedness and response.

## **Migration**

*“Recognizing the relationship that exists between migration and development, and the contribution that migrants make to their countries of origin, transit, and destination, we agreed on actions to bolster cooperation among our states and to protect the human rights of migrants.” (Closing statement at the conclusion of the Seventh Summit of the Americas, the President of Panama, Juan Carlos Varela)*

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

In FY 2015, the Department of State provided \$20.1 million to UNHCR for its 2015 regional appeal for the Americas, in part to strengthen asylum systems and to track regional displacement due to criminal violence. This included targeted assistance to address displacement out of Central America into Mexico, with a particular focus on child protection needs. With U.S. support, UNHCR established a permanent presence in the region and is actively working to strengthen asylum systems and international protection screening processes.

### **International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC)**

The Department of State contributed \$19.3 million to ICRC for its 2015 regional appeal for the Western Hemisphere. To date in FY 2016, the Department of State has contributed more than \$12.2 million to ICRC’s 2016 regional appeal. ICRC works to facilitate a meaningful response to violence, improve host-government forensics capabilities, assist with family reunification, and monitor conditions in migrant detention centers. ICRC also partners with local organizations that provide medical care to migrants in need, including prosthetic limbs and rehabilitation to seriously injured migrants.

### **Unaccompanied Minors**

Since 2010, the Department of State has funded the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to implement a regional program in Central America to train migration and child welfare officials and civil society to identify, screen, and assist vulnerable migrants, including asylum seekers, human trafficking victims, children, and women and LGBTI migrants who may be especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. In FY 2015, the Department of State provided \$2 million to IOM for its Mesoamerica regional program, which continues an increased focus on activities to identify and protect unaccompanied minors.

In December 2014, the Departments of State and Homeland Security established the Central American Minors (CAM) program, an in-country refugee and parole initiative in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to provide a safe, legal, and orderly way for children to reunify with their lawfully present parents in the United States and offer them an alternative to the dangerous journey that many take to reach the United States. As of May 2016, 8,831 children have applied to the program, of which more than 350 have reunified with their parents in the United States.

*“To strengthen programs to prevent and fight illicit smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, particularly of women, children and adolescents, as well as to generate, review and amend laws, where appropriate, against these crimes so that, in their enforcement, they will render assistance and protection to victims of trafficking and to promote cooperation among states to that end, in accordance with the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.” (Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas, 2015 Mandates for Action; Migration, 3)*

### **Efforts to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons**

The President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (PITF) is a cabinet-level entity, created by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, which consists of 14 departments and agencies across the federal government that are responsible for coordinating U.S. government-wide efforts to combat trafficking in persons. The PITF meets annually and is chaired by the Secretary of State. Agencies of the PITF have brought together leaders from government, the private sector, advocates and survivors, faith leaders, law enforcement and academia, and have made significant progress following President Obama’s March 2012 call to strengthen federal efforts to combat human trafficking, his September 2012 speech announcing a number of new and strengthened initiatives, and the first-ever White House Forum to Combat Human Trafficking in April 2013.

Secretary Kerry chaired the annual cabinet-level meeting of the President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the White House on January 5, 2016. Agencies reported on progress made on four priority areas identified by the Obama Administration: victim services, rule of law, procurement and supply chains, and public awareness and outreach. These priorities have driven interagency collaboration since the May 2013 PITF meeting. This was the third meeting of the PITF during Secretary Kerry’s tenure as Chair and the sixth of the Obama Administration. During the meeting, the White House introduced the newly appointed members of the first-ever U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, which provides trafficking survivors a formal voice in federal anti-trafficking policy.

The Department of Labor has established formal partnerships in the United States with the embassies and consulates of eleven countries that are major countries of origin for migrant workers, including ten in the Americas (Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador,

El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru), in order to assist it in the protection of migrant workers employed in the United States and to help communicate with workers whom the Department of Labor might not otherwise be able to reach.

<http://scm.oas.org/pdfs/2016/SUMMIT/CMBRS01399.pdf>