

[Press Releases: Sint Maarten Constitution Day](#)

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
October 12, 2017

On behalf of the Government of the United States of America, we send congratulations to the people of Sint Maarten on the anniversary of Constitution Day.

The United States honors the resilient spirit of the people of St. Maarten today in the wake of the catastrophic destruction from the recent hurricanes. We will remain a friend and partner, working with you during this period of recovery and after, to safeguard our societies and promote the prosperity and well-being of our peoples.

We look forward to continuing our cooperation and strengthening our partnerships in pursuit of shared goals for the Caribbean as underscored in the United States and Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act of 2016.

We extend our hopes for a safe and prosperous year ahead.

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[Press Releases: Gubernatorial](#)

Elections in Venezuela

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
October 12, 2017

The Venezuelan people deserve to have their voices heard through their nation's Gubernatorial Elections this Sunday, October 15. The United States and the international community are paying close attention to this vote. The United States calls on the regime to hold free and fair elections.

We note with great concern that the regime will not permit the presence of independent international electoral observers. We call on the Venezuelan government to permit independent domestic observers to fully monitor the election and its tabulation of results.

The United States is concerned that a series of actions by the National Electoral Council (CNE) calls into question the fairness of the electoral process. These concerns include CNE steps such as: closing voting centers in opposition strongholds; manipulating ballot layout; not providing for a complete, independent auditing of vote tabulation software; and a pattern of politically-motivated, arbitrary disqualifications of opposition leaders and candidates.

Just this week, for example, the CNE announced the closing or relocation of 203 polling stations in 16 states, typically in opposition-dominated areas, and potentially disenfranchising as many as 450,000 voters.

The United States also notes with deep concern the August 2, public denunciation by Smartmatic of "manipulation," with more than one million "ghost" votes added to the results of the July 30, referendum. That balloting, which was boycotted by a majority of voters, paved the way for the establishment of an illegitimate Constituent Assembly.

We continue to support the Venezuelan people as they work toward a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous future.

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[Press Releases: Remarks at the #HiddenNoMore: Empowering Women Leaders in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics \(STEM\) Event](#)

Remarks

John J. Sullivan

Deputy Secretary of State

William J. Burns Auditorium

Washington, DC

October 12, 2017

DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: Thank you, Alyson, for that kind introduction. And thanks to you and to OES Acting Assistant Secretary Judith Garber for the good work you and your teams have done in putting together this event.

First, I want to extend Secretary Tillerson's regrets that he was unable to join you today. He's very passionate about promoting women leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, what we call STEM, and sends his best regards for an informative and productive program. I regret that he's sent a pale substitute in his place. I'm a lowly Washington lawyer. He himself is an engineer and the head of the department, so I have – I've got big shoes to fill.

But on his behalf, I am delighted to be here to welcome you to the United States and to the U.S. Department of State. We're honored to host international visitors hailing from 48 countries and participating in our International Visitor Leadership Program. I'd also like to welcome all of our guests from the U.S. Government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector who are with us here today.

Whether at home or abroad, promoting women in STEM is a top priority for this administration.

In February, the President signed bills directing NASA and the National Science Foundation to promote the advancement of women in STEM. Further, on September 25th, the President announced that he would direct the U.S. Department of Education to invest a minimum of \$200 million in grant funding each year to expand STEM and computer science education in schools, and that same week, the private sector announced that it would direct over \$300 million toward computer science programs in school. The administration continues to explore the expansion of apprenticeships and vocational training to better prepare women with the necessary skillsets that are required by

industries in an ever-evolving economy.

These commitments from the administration represent a shared recognition that the workplace is changing and that STEM skills are playing an increasingly important role in sustaining America's economic competitiveness.

From a foreign policy standpoint, the United States advocates for the increased participation of women in economies around the world. In emerging markets, women who contribute to a household income reinvest 90 cents of every dollar they earn back into their family's education, health, and nutrition. Improvement in the – improvements in these areas are foundational for a country's ability to take further steps to advance economic development and prosperity.

We know that we have more to do to remove barriers to women in STEM. Our fundamental belief is that when women do better, families do better, countries do better, and the world does better.

The Secretary made clear in an address not too long ago that we at the State Department believe in the value of diversity in the workplace. The inclusion of different experiences and perspectives strengthens the collaborative process. Diversity makes us more aware of the consequences of our decisions as we work to overcome complex global challenges.

I repeat today what the Secretary said a little while ago: The State Department is committed to growing the number of women in our senior leadership ranks. Only about one-third of our senior Foreign Service officers are women, and we are committed to working to close the gender gap there, as well as in other places across the department.

Now, on to the participants in our International Visitor Leadership. I'm thrilled that we have so many accomplished women here today with us hailing from countries across the globe, including Egypt, El Salvador, Nepal, Nigeria, and a number of other countries where unfortunately women in STEM is not exactly commonplace. To all of you visiting us from around the world, our hope is that you will take what you've learned and the connections you've made throughout this program and keep working to promote the inclusion of more women in STEM fields in your home countries.

You are in a key position, and each of you has a vital responsibility to inspire the next generation of girls. Please take your position seriously. The more girls and women who are able to see and emulate role models who look like them, the more encouraged they will be to pursue their passions and succeed.

When you return home, please share your experiences from this project with others in your communities, especially with girls and young women who might never dream that there is a place for them in STEM. Each of you is living proof of the fact that there is.

In closing, I want to thank you all for your participation in the International Visitor Leadership Program and for your commitment to working

in the STEM fields. We hope that you will take what you've learned and spread your knowledge far and wide. I hope today will serve as a valuable leadership opportunity, that you'll have a fun and informative time, and that you will enjoy your visit to the United States. Thank you all for being here.

(Applause.)

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Press Releases: Equatorial Guinea **National Day**

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
October 12, 2017

On behalf of the Government of the United States of America, congratulations to the people of Equatorial Guinea on your 49th anniversary of independence on October 12th. Our two countries share a focus on commercial and maritime security issues. Our bilateral relationship has potential to mature further as Equatorial Guinea diversifies its economy and embraces the development of a free society anchored in democratic institutions.

We wish the people of Equatorial Guinea the very best as they celebrate with family and friends on this special day.

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Press Releases: United States **Dedicates the New U.S. Embassy in** **Nouakchott, Mauritania**

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
October 12, 2017

In an important symbol of our enduring friendship with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, U.S. Ambassador Larry Andre dedicated the new U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott yesterday.

The new Embassy is situated on a 10.5-acre site in the Tivragh Zeina district and includes a chancery, Marine Security Guard residence, support buildings, and facilities for the embassy community.

The design architect is AECOM of Arlington, Virginia, and the architect of record is Integrus Architecture of Spokane, Washington. The project was constructed by Caddell Construction Co. Inc. of Montgomery, Alabama.

Since 1999, as part of the Department's Capital Security Construction Program, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) has completed 138 new diplomatic facilities, with an additional 61 projects now in design or under construction.

OBO's mission is to provide safe, secure, and functional facilities that represent the U.S. government to host nations and support our staff in the achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives. These facilities represent American values and the best in American architecture, engineering, technology, sustainability, art, culture, and construction execution.

For further information please contact Christine Foushee at

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