

Honduras

2016 Country Review

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Chapter 1

Country Overview

Country Overview

HONDURAS

Honduras is a country in Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Guatemala and Nicaragua. It became a Spanish colony in the early 1500s and gained independence in 1821. The country was under the rule of dictatorship from 1933 to 1948. The following decades saw civilian governments alternating with military coups and rule until 1982 when an elected civilian government came to power.

Honduras has been governed by democratically elected civilian governments since then, but in June 2009 the country saw the first military coup in almost three decades that ousted President Manuel Zelaya. The international community condemned the coup and called for Zelaya's reinstatement, but months of mediation and talks failed to reverse the coup and restore Zelaya. Porfirio Lobo Sosa won a November 2009 presidential election organized by the interim authorities which took over following the ouster of President Manuel Zelaya. Mr Lobo was sworn into office in January 2010. He was succeeded in 2013 by Juan Orlando Hernandez.

Military rule, corruption, a huge wealth gap, crime and natural disasters have rendered Honduras one of the poorest and least developed countries in Central America. Until the mid-20th century Honduras' economy was dominated by U.S.-owned banana plantations. Still a major exporter of the fruit, Honduras is also Central America's second biggest coffee producer. Honduras has developed its textile industry to diversify away from dependence on agriculture.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Central America
Population:	8746673
Climate:	subtropical in lowlands; temperate in mountains
Languages:	Spanish Indigenous dialects
Currency:	1 lempira (L) = 100 centavos
Holiday:	Independence Day is 15 September (1821), Morazan Day is 3 October, Armed Forces Day is 21 October
Area Total:	112090
Area Land:	111890
Coast Line:	820

Honduras

Country Map



Central America

Regional Map



Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Pre-Columbian Honduras was inhabited by a wide variety of indigenous peoples, diverse in cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Mayan civilization arrived in western Honduras in the fifth century of the common era, or C.E., probably from lowland Mayan centers in Guatemala's Petén region. The Maya spread rapidly through the Río Motagua Valley, where for three and a half centuries, the city and major ceremonial site of Copán was one of their principal cultural centers. Art and astronomical studies were highly developed in Copán, and the city was part of an extensive Mayan trade network that spanned as far as central Mexico.

Around 800 C.E., at the height of the Mayan civilization, Copán was apparently abandoned by the educated priests and ruling class. The city fell into ruin, and the meanings of the many hieroglyphic inscriptions found in its architecture, as well as the reasons for its sudden fall were lost. The non-lite classes of Mayan culture continued to reside in pre-Columbian Honduras after the ninth century C.E., but the organization of the civilization steadily declined.

Christopher Columbus sighted the region in 1502. He named it "Honduras," meaning "depths," for the deep water off the coast, and claimed it as a colony of the Spanish Crown. Spaniard Hernan Cortes arrived in 1524, and the Spanish began founding settlements along the coast shortly thereafter.

Struggles among the Spaniards for power over the region characterized the first few decades of Spanish settlement. The indigenous population diminished rapidly due to disease, mistreatment, exportation of large numbers to the Caribbean islands as slaves, and revolts in response to enforced labor in gold and silver mines. The colony was on the verge of collapse by 1534.

Spanish settlement and economic activity increased in the 1540s, with the development of gold and silver mining, as well as cattle ranching and a variety of agricultural activities. Enforced labor led to further revolts that accelerated the decimation of the native population, and consequently, African slavery was introduced.

In 1544, Honduras was incorporated into the regional "audiencia" of Guatemala.

Mining was the key economic activity throughout the 16th century, but production began to decline in the 1560s, and Honduras rapidly declined in importance for the Spanish Crown. The colony became plagued by economic depression due to a combination of the lack of capital and labor, difficult terrain, the limited size of many gold and silver deposits, and bureaucratic regulations and incompetence.

By the 17th century, Honduras had become a poor and neglected backwater of the Spanish colonial empire, having a scattered population of mestizos, native people, blacks and a small number of Spanish rulers and landowners.

The majority of the inhabitants engaged in agriculture, and with the decline of gold and silver mining, the province became increasingly rural during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The lack of development resulted in relatively weak social and political institutions, and as a result of economic declines or foreign attacks, several town governments simply ceased to function during this period. Much of the Honduran interior remained un-colonized and outside of effective Spanish control during the colonial era. The Jicaque, fleeing into the hills, managed to retain considerable cultural autonomy. Other indigenous groups, however, were increasingly brought under Spanish influence and began to lose their separate identities.

Honduras, along with the other Central American provinces, gained independence from Spain in 1821 and was briefly annexed to the Mexican Empire.

In 1823, it joined the newly formed United Provinces of Central America, but social and economic differences between Honduras and its regional neighbors led to the federation's collapse in 1838. Gen. Francisco Morazan, a Honduran national hero, led unsuccessful efforts to maintain the federation. The restoration of Central American unity remained the chief aim of Honduran foreign policy until after World War I.

Since its independence, Honduras has been plagued with nearly 300 internal rebellions, civil wars and changes of government, more than half of them in the 20th century. The country's instability was largely attributed to the absence of an economic infrastructure and the lack of social and political integration.

In the latter years of the 19th century, Honduras' agriculturally based economy came to be dominated by U.S. companies that established vast banana plantations along the north coast.

During the first half of the 20th century, the Honduran economy was so dominated by the United Fruit Company and the Standard Fruit Company that company managers were frequently perceived as exercising as much power as the Honduran president.

In general, foreign capital, plantation life and conservative politics characterized Honduras from the late 19th until the mid-20th century.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Introduction

Honduras' two major political parties, the Liberal Party of Honduras, or PLH, and the National Party of Honduras, or PNH, run active campaigns throughout the country. Their ideologies are mostly centrist, but both parties encompass diverse factions that are centered on personalities. The three smaller registered parties, the Christian Democratic Party, the Innovation and Unity Party, and the Democratic Unification Party, stand as marginal and left-of-center groupings with few campaign resources and little organization. Despite significant progress in training and installing more skillful advisers at the top of each party ladder, electoral politics in Honduras remain traditionalist and paternalistic.

Chronology of Political Developments

During the relatively stable years of the Great Depression, the authoritarian Gen. Tiburcio Carias Andino controlled Honduras. His ties to dictators in neighboring countries and to owners of U.S. banana companies helped him maintain power until 1948. By then, provincial military leaders had begun to gain control of the two major parties, the National Party of Honduras and the Liberal Party of Honduras.

In October 1955, after two authoritarian administrations and a general strike by banana workers on the north coast in 1954, young military reformists staged a palace coup that installed a provisional junta and paved the way for constituent assembly elections in 1957. This assembly appointed Dr. Ramon Villeda Morales as president and transformed itself into a national legislature with a six-year term. The Liberal Party ruled from 1957 until 1963. At the same time, the military took its first steps to become a professional institution independent of leadership from any one political party. In 1960, the newly created military academy graduated its first class.

In October 1963, however, conservative military officers pre-empted constitutional elections and deposed Villeda in a bloody coup. These officers exiled Liberal Party members and took control of the national police. The armed forces, led by Gen. Lopez Arellano, governed until 1970.

Ramon Cruz of the National Party, briefly acted as a civilian president in 1970, but proved unable to manage the government. A 1969 border war with El Salvador caused popular discontent. In December 1972, Gen. Lopez staged another coup. Lopez adopted more progressive policies including land reform, but his regime was brought down in the mid-1970s by scandals.

Lopez's successors continued modernizing the armed forces by building army and security forces, and concentrating on Honduran air force superiority over its neighbors. The regimes of Gen. Melgar Castro (1975 -78) and Gen. Paz Garcia (1978-83) were largely accredited for building the current physical infrastructure and telecommunications system of Honduras. The country also witnessed a rapid economic growth during this period, due to greater international demand for its products and the availability of foreign commercial lending.

Following the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua in 1979 and the general instability in El Salvador at the time, the Honduran military accelerated plans to return the country to democracy. A constituent assembly was popularly elected in April 1980, and general elections were held in November 1981. A new constitution was approved in 1982 and the Liberal Party government of President Roberto Suazo Cordoba assumed power.

Suazo relied on U.S. support to help with the following: a severe economic recession, a threat posed by the revolutionary Sandinista government in Nicaragua and a brutal civil war in El Salvador. Close cooperation on political and military issues with the United States was complemented by ambitious social and economic development projects sponsored by USAID. Honduras became host to the largest Peace Corps mission in the world and non-governmental and international voluntary agencies also proliferated.

As the November 1985 election approached, the Liberal Party experienced difficulty settling on a candidate and interpreted election law as permitting multiple presidential candidates from one party. The Liberal Party claimed victory when its presidential candidates collectively out-pollled the National Party candidate, Rafael Leonardo Callejas, who received 42 percent of the vote. Jose Azcona Hoyo, the candidate receiving the most votes (27 percent) among the Liberals, assumed the presidency in January 1986. With strong endorsement and support from the Honduran military, the Suazo administration ushered in the first peaceful transfer of power between civilian presidents in more than 30 years.

Four years later, Rafael Callejas won the presidential election, taking office in January 1990. President-elect Callejas concentrated on economic reform by reducing the deficit, dealing with an

overvalued exchange rate and removing major structural barriers to investment. He also began the movement to place the military under civilian control and paved the way for the creation of the public ministry (attorney general's office).

Despite President Callejas economic reforms, growing public dissatisfaction with the rising cost of living coupled with seemingly widespread government corruption led voters in 1993 to elect the Carlos Roberto Reina of the Liberal Party. Reina defeated his opponent Oswaldo Ramos Soto from the National Party, with 56 percent of the vote. President Reina, elected on a platform calling for a "Moral Revolution," actively prosecuted corruption and pursued those responsible for human rights abuses in the 1980s. He created a modern attorney general's office as well as an investigative police force. Moreover, he reduced Honduras' historic and endemic corruption and elite impunity. This marked the start of institutionalizing rule of law in Honduras.

A hallmark of President Reina's administration was his successful efforts to increase civilian authority over the armed forces. His time in office witnessed a period of fundamental change in civil-military relations in Honduras. Notable achievements included the abolition of military draft and the passage of legislation, which transferred the national police from military to civilian control. These measures brought civil-military relations closer to the kind of balance normal in a constitutional democracy. Additionally, in 1996, President Reina named his own defense minister, therefore, breaking the precedent of accepting the armed forces' no minee.

Reina restored national fiscal health. After a rough start in 1994-95, the Reina administration substantially increased Central Bank net international reserves; reduced inflation to 12.8 percent per year and restored a healthy pace of economic growth (about five percent in 1997). Perhaps most importantly, the Reina government reduced spending to achieve a 1.1 percent non-financial public sector deficit in 1997.

Presidential elections were held once again on Nov. 30, 1997, and Carlos Roberto Flores Facusse was elected by a 10 percent margin over his main opponent, National Party nominee, Nora de Melgar. These elections, probably the cleanest in Honduran history, reflected the advancement of the country's democratic institutions.

Like three of his four predecessors, including his immediate predecessor, Flores was a member of the Liberal Party. He presented a platform for reform and modernization of the Honduran government and economy, with an emphasis on helping the impoverished, maintaining the country's fiscal health and improving international competitiveness. Flores took office on Jan. 27, 1998, as Honduras' fifth democratically elected president since free elections were restored in 1981.

Upon his inauguration on Jan. 27, 1998, President Flores stated his aims to be the reform and modernization of the Honduran government and economy, with an emphasis on helping the

impoverished, maintaining the country's fiscal health, and improving international competitiveness. In his first couple of years in office, Flores embarked on measures aimed at making the legal and juridical systems within Honduras more accountable. He placed a priority on toughening the laws to efficiently combat drug trafficking in early 1999, and in late 1999, he promulgated a new bill aimed against money laundering.

In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch swept through Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala, killing thousands of people and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. The worst natural disaster of the century in the Western hemisphere, Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras' road network and other public infrastructure, and crippled certain key sectors of the economy. Estimates were that Hurricane Mitch caused \$8.5 billion (in United States currency) in damages to homes, hospitals, schools, roads, farms and businesses throughout Central America, including more than US\$3 billion in Honduras alone. Throughout the country, the damage affected highways, bridges, ports and airports; the electrical power system, the telephone, water and sewage systems; hospitals and health centers; more than 3,000 schools; almost 83,000 houses; private agricultural infrastructure; and the non-agricultural private sector.

In an effort to aid the three countries, foreign donors contributed funds, and for additional assistance, the Clinton administration granted temporary residence and employment in the United States until July 2000 for those who registered in time. Meanwhile, Central Americans living in Costa Rica on Nov. 9, 1998, became eligible for permanent residence status.

Border tensions between Honduras and Nicaragua came to the forefront of Honduran politics in November 1999. Conflict and negotiations continued into 2001. (See Foreign Relations section for detailed information.)

In March 2000, the Honduran government expressed concern over the impending expiration date of the United States' temporary protected status, or TPS, for Honduran citizens. An estimated 90,000 Hondurans were living in the United States under these auspices, and these migrant workers continually sent millions of dollars to Honduras.

The government's concern was due to the fact that a mass deportation would result in an extreme strain on the Honduran economy, already in crisis since the hurricane. United States and Honduran officials met to assess the situation, and the Honduran government cited the need for more time and resources to construct houses that had been destroyed by Hurricane Mitch so that it could accommodate the influx of migrant workers. Upon careful consideration, the United States government announced an extension of the temporary protected status so that those who qualified could remain in the United States until July 5, 2001.

On April 7, 2000, the National Human Rights Commission in Honduras accused the justice system of being corrupt and unfair. The Supreme Court denied allegations and lodged a complaint against

the National Human Rights Commission's representative Leo Valladares. The Catholic Church supported Valladares and urged the courts be reformed. The government assigned a committee to ensure that reforms be upheld.

The severe economic instability following Hurricane Mitch led to an increase in social unrest in Honduras in the months and years after the storm. Rumors of a military coup circulated in 1999 and in May 2000, leading President Flores to dismiss dozens of military officers on two separate instances. The Defense Ministry claimed that the dismissals were part of an effort to modernize the armed forces.

The government reached agreements with the International Monetary Fund in 1999 and 2000 for the privatization of state industries such as the telephone, water and electric companies, in exchange for relief of Honduras' \$4.3 billion (in United States currency) foreign debt. In July 2000, after months of minor demonstrations, President Flores made the initial steps of selling the national telephone company to private investors, and protests involving tens of thousands of union workers, peasants, teachers and students erupted in Tegucigalpa and throughout the country.

About one-and-a-half years after Hurricane Mitch, the Honduran government had still not repaired damaged infrastructure in the hardest-hit areas of the country, and the administration said that it lacked the funds. Thus, along with anti-privatization protests, 2000 and 2001 were dense with demonstrations reflecting the Honduran people's deep dissatisfaction with the government's provision of basic services and post-hurricane repairs. In June 2000, a nationwide strike was held to demand wage increases and the freezing of the prices of fuel and essentials. Also in June, protests erupted over the national power company's failure to restore electricity a week after a windstorm destroyed part of the nation's power grid.

On Oct. 3, 2000, after weeks of unsuccessful negotiations between labor unions and the government, around 160,000 workers held a strike to demand salary increases, temporarily paralyzing the country's operations. Although the Honduran government agreed to a small increase in minimum wages, no substantial gain was made for the workers. Around 16,000 high school teachers were on strike for 24 hours on Oct. 5, 2000, and they obtained an agreement with government officials for the back-payment of wages to 5,000 teachers to compensate for two, several-month periods.

On Feb. 10, 2001, approximately 500 of Honduras' 7,000 police officers were fired in an effort to clean up the nation's security forces. Many of the officers, though not all, had been implicated in crimes. Several initiatives were also being promoted, with wide support, to combat the wave of crime plaguing the country.

Protests erupted once again in late March and early April 2001, when workers of the Institute of Social Security and, later, professors of the main state university went on strike to demand the

back-payment of wages. Thousands of nurses held a 10-day strike, as well at that time, eventually reaching an agreement with the government on April 4 for higher wages. Meanwhile, city bus drivers threatened the government with a strike of their own over the postponement of payment of a state subsidy, as well as crime on the buses and alleged abuse by traffic policemen.

As 2000 came to a close, political parties began campaigning for the Nov. 25, 2001, general elections, and conflict arose almost immediately. In October 2000, Ricardo Maduro registered as a candidate of the opposition PN, but the PL blocked his registration on the grounds that he was born in Panama and was therefore ineligible to run. On Dec. 9, 2000, only eight days before the deadline for the PN to name its presidential candidate, the National Elections Board, or TNE, had still not registered Maduro's candidacy, and he temporarily withdrew in order to avoid an outbreak of violence from his supporters. Maduro, a former president of the PN and of the Central Bank as well as a former legislator in both the Honduran Congress and in the Central American Parliament, accused the PL of instituting "political terrorism." Maduro is the leader of the "Arriba Honduras" party and the PN's leading presidential candidate. He named Luis Cosenza, also of the "Arriba Honduras" Party, as his representative upon withdrawing.

The PN held its presidential primary on Dec. 19, 2000, and Cosenza won with over 80 percent of the vote. Shortly thereafter, Congress verified Ricardo Maduro's citizenship, and the conservative leader was able to confirm his candidacy under the PN for the November elections. Maduro announced that his campaign would focus on issues surrounding organized crime, the legal system, unemployment, health care, cost of living and education. He promised to implement a zero tolerance program to combat crime, modeled after the plan implemented in New York City in the 1990s that encouraged police to crack down on minor crimes, as a way of preventing more serious offenses. Maduro also stated that the heated dispute over his citizenship and candidacy had led to the desire of all political parties to reform the political system, namely by creating an independent Electoral Commission and comptroller general's office.

The ruling PLH held its presidential primary on Dec. 16, 2000, and head of the Honduran National Congress, Rafael Pineda Ponce, won the candidacy with 40.35 percent of the vote. Seventy years old and a teacher by profession, Pineda was elected president of the PL on April 1, 2001, in addition to his presidential candidacy. Honduras' minority parties - the Christian Democrats, the Democratic Unification Party and the Innovation and Unity Party - also named presidential candidates for the Nov. 25, 2001 elections.

In March 2001, the Honduran and Nicaraguan governments and non-governmental organizations from both countries lobbied once again for the extension of the Temporary Protection Status, or TPS, this time to the administration of United States President George W. Bush. The countries reiterated that their economies would suffer very serious consequences if the Bush administration did not extend the TPS of the tens of thousands of illegal Honduran and Nicaraguan immigrants in the United States. The expiration date for the TPS already in place was July 5, 2001, but on

March 2, 2001, President Bush approved the extension of the TPS for another year.

Honduran officials launched an investigation of several military officers in 2001 in an attempt to curb corruption. As a result, one army general was dismissed and two retired colonels arrested for illicit enrichment in an unprecedented enforcement of military accountability.

Honduras was inundated with strikes in August 2001. Approximately 8,000 nurses and nurses aids held a strike for over two weeks in to demand back pay for wage increases to which the government had previously agreed. Some 4,500 other members of health unions also went on strike at that time to demand higher wages. The government enlisted hundreds of military health specialists to fill in for the health workers in public hospitals. Thousand of teachers also held strikes in June and August to demand that President Flores approve salary increases for 2002.

Honduras' indigenous population has long been struggling for land rights. Several indigenous protests in 2001 turned violent, and arrests and casualties were sustained when police attempted to disperse the hundreds of people blocking highways and demonstrating in front of Congress. An Amnesty International report released in 2001 listed Honduras as one of the top three most racist countries, citing specifically the institutionalized racism in the justice and legal systems against American Indians.

Hurricane Michelle hit Honduras in November 2001, damaging or destroying the homes of approximately 51,000 people, as well as some of the country's infrastructure and crops. Even worse than the hurricane was the severe drought that inflicted the country for much of 2001, destroying corn, bean, and sorghum crops and all but one of Honduras' export crops. In July, the government declared a state of food emergency in the southern zone due to a grave hunger crisis from the loss of food crops. The United Nations World Food Program and several local and foreign governmental and humanitarian agencies shipped a total of thousands of tons of food to Honduras in response to the state of emergency. Business and government officials stated that the drought caused more devastation to the southern Honduran economy than Hurricane Mitch had in 1998.

In the days leading up to the Nov. 25, 2001, presidential and legislative elections, the campaign was marred by extreme violence. On November 25, PNH Congressional candidate Angel Pacheco was shot seven times and killed in the city of Nacaome. Police said the murder appeared to be politically motivated, although representatives of both the PNH and PLH claimed that it was not. Four PLH activists were arrested and charged with the murder. Also in the days leading up to the elections, an unidentified assailant opened fire on the ruling Liberal Party's headquarters in the northern city of San Pedro Sula.

Elections were held on Nov. 25, 2001, and opposition PNH candidate Ricardo Maduro came out the winner with 53 percent of the vote. PLH candidate Rafael Pineda received 44 percent.

Maduro's victory marked only the second time since democracy was restored in Honduras, twenty years before, that a National Party candidate was chosen over a candidate of the ruling Liberal Party. Political analysts believed that the unusual outcome could be attributed to Maduro's preparation of a detailed platform in which he promised a crackdown on crime, privatization of public industries, and other IMF-supported reforms. Pineda did not differ strikingly from Maduro in his stances, but was generally more vague about his plans for the presidency. Thus, it appeared that many Hondurans had voted according to whom they felt was the best candidate, as opposed to according to traditional party lines. Maduro was inaugurated on Jan. 27, 2002.

The shift in Honduras' political system was reflected in legislative elections as well. For the first time, neither the PLH nor the PNH secured a majority in Congress, and it seems that the parties are losing their stronghold on the political system.

The new government faces numerous challenges in running a country in which: unemployment has risen to over 20 percent of the population; 80 percent of the population remains at poverty level; food and water shortages exist due to torrential rains killing crops followed by a drought; a drop in coffee prices; an extremely high crime rate. Honduras also has, according to Transparency International, one of the worst states of corruption in Latin America.

In keeping with President Maduro's campaign promise to eliminate crime and corruption, the day after Maduro's inauguration, army and police were patrolling the streets in four major cities: Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba and Choluteca. Local papers hailed this first action a success as crime rates have dropped in these areas. The president also expanded the Supreme Court by 15 judges and implemented a "non-privileged" system of justice.

On Feb. 20, 2002, Honduras gained a new procedural penal code that raised Honduran legal procedures to most Western standards. According to a 2002 Activity Data Sheet on Honduras, the U.S. Agency for International Development charged that, "Archaic judicial laws and bottlenecks also deprive Hondurans of their human rights; over 90 percent of prisoners have never been sentenced and many serve more than their sentence before their cases are adjudicated."

With the new penal code, court cases will now be handled orally rather than in the former inquisitive, secretive, and written procedure. The new code also calls for the accused to be viewed as innocent until proven guilty. The government hoped such increased transparency and efficiency in the judicial system would help deter criminal activity. President Maduro also was in the process of taking steps to cut back on government spending in March 2002.

By May 2002, the Honduran and Nicaraguan governments and non-governmental organizations from both countries felt their economies were still not recovered and again sought the extension of the Temporary Protection Status, or TPS, from the U.S. government. The expiration date for the TPS already in place was July 5, 2002, but on May 3, 2002, President Bush approved the

extension of the TPS for an additional 18 months. The latest extension remains in effect until Jan. 5, 2005, benefiting an estimated 87,000 to 100,000 Hondurans; the \$500 million sent home in 2001 by Hondurans in the U.S. was the country's biggest source of foreign income.

In March 2003, the Honduran government was fighting a different kind of battle when it created a special commission to investigate the deaths of 1,569 street children in the past five years. The Permanent Commission on the Physical and Moral Integrity of Children - which includes church leaders and government officials -- was established to search for those responsible for the deaths.

The move came about a month after Amnesty International began a six-month campaign to stop the deaths of street children in Honduras. Amnesty International alleged that, despite various efforts, the government has not managed to prosecute the killers of even a minimal number of the children.

Specifically the group said "the Honduran Government must not shirk its obligations and continue to ignore the murders and extrajudicial executions" of children. Amnesty International also urged the authorities in Tegucigalpa to come up with a concrete plan and timetable of action to solve the problem. According to the group, 556 street children were killed in 2002.

In late May 2003, Honduras became the first Central American country to agree to authorize a deployment of troops to Iraq to help stabilize the country following the U.S.-led war that took place in the spring of 2003. Defense minister Federico Breve at that time emphasized that the Honduran soldiers would be involved exclusively "in the post-war activities" being carried out as part of the reconstruction of Iraq.

The decision was made in the face of strong opposition. Sixty-six of the 128 lawmakers in the Honduras Congress voted in favor of the initiative while 62 were opposed. Honduras agreed to deploy 370 officers and troops to Iraq in six-month rotating stints for at least a year.

Legislators Ramon Villeda and Cesar Ham of the opposition Liberal and UD parties, respectively, said that sending troops to Iraq would be equal to legitimizing the U.S.-led war against the former Baghdad regime. Meanwhile, President Maduro maintained that Honduras was deploying troops to Iraq to show its "friendship and solidarity" with the United States, which the government supported during the war. Despite the government's show of solidarity with the United States' actions, some Honduran citizens had protested the war, drawing connections between U.S. imperialist aggression in Latin America and the Middle East. Honduran protesters argued that both the U.S.-led neoliberal economic program in Latin America and the proposed post-war provisional U.S. military government in Iraq demonstrate a colonialist and imperialist attitude.

In late July 2003, Honduran Foreign Minister Guillermo Perez-Cadaslo Arias announced he was resigning for personal reasons. Rumors had been circulating that he was planning to take a position

at the National Autonomous University of Honduras.

By May 2004, Honduras decided to withdraw its troops from the Middle Eastern country of Iraq. Much of the country's 370-person contingent had served in some of Iraq's flashpoint towns such as Najaf. In this regard, President Ricardo Maduro said he intended to withdraw Honduran troops "in the shortest possible time."

On the domestic front, the revelation of grizzly crimes including the discovery of severed heads spurred discussions of increased gang violence at the hands of the notorious "Mara Salvatrucha" group. The increased incidences of such crimes by gangs, or "maras," appeared to be a defiant response to President Maduro's strong crackdown against gang violence. Indeed, one severed head was found with a note stating, "Maduro old man, we are so hungry we are eating people." The "maras" appear to have attracted up to 30,000 youth with ties to other youth gangs in California. Gang warfare, as well as extra-judicial killings by police forces, have resulted in the deaths of over 1,500 young people in the last few years.

In December 2004, gang violence was also attributed to the massacre of 28 bus passengers in the northern part of the country. At the scene of the crime, the gunmen who had apparently opened fire on the passengers left a note stating that they represented a defunct guerrilla group, the Cinchonero People's Liberation Movement. The note said that they opposed the reintroduction of the death penalty in Honduras. The note also expressed opposition to several politicians who have taken a hardline approach to crime. Of particular interest has been the president of Congress, Porfirio Lobo, who has strongly argued for the death penalty in cases of serious crimes. Lobo was expected to be a candidate in the upcoming presidential election.

Meanwhile, Maduro's crackdown against crime and gang violence raised the ire of critics who blamed him for a prison riot in April 2003 which left 86 prisoners dead, as well as a prison fire in August 2004, which left 103 inmates dead. Nevertheless, in February 2005, the alleged head of the gang blamed for the bus massacre was arrested in the United States. Ebert Anibal Rivera, the apparent leader of Mara Salvatrucha was stopped in Texas. The government of Honduras said that if the United States did not charge him, they would seek his extradition.

In March 2005, the Congress of Honduras ratified a Central American free trade agreement with the United States. Later in 2005, at the Organization of American States summit in Argentina, however, the issues of regional and hemispheric trade would face resistance. There, the larger South American countries expressed their lack of support for the notion of a free trade zone across the Americas.

Reports on May 1, 2005, said that Honduran President Ricardo Maduro and his daughter had survived a plane crash just north of the capital city of Tegucigalpa. The small Cessna on which he was traveling crashed into the sea as it was attempting to land at the Caribbean coastal port of

Tela. The president was taken to a hospital in the city of Comayagua to recover, although his injuries were thought to be relatively minor. After the aircraft crashed into the waters, rescue crews were able to rapidly respond.

The aftermath of Hurricane Stan left thousands of people dead or missing across Latin America in October 2005. Stan hit Mexico as a Category One hurricane on Oct. 4, 2005, and decreased in intensity. In its downgraded status as a tropical storm, however, Stan unleashed an endless barrage of rain for subsequent days across Central America, including Honduras. The international community, led by Spain, also began to offer aid, supplies and equipment.

In November 2005, tropical storm Gamma left further damage in its path, including the deaths of several people in Honduras. The damage from Gamma was extensive. The effects of the storm destroyed infrastructure, while associated flooding made roads and bridges impassable. Regional authorities also warned that crops had been destroyed.

Also in November 2005, United States authorities deported Santos Padilla Bustillo, a Honduran fugitive wanted for the kidnapping and murder of Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu, the son of the now-President Ricardo Maduro. (Note: In 1997, Padilla and his three brothers who headed a gang of kidnapers shot and killed the Maduro's son.) Upon arrival in Tegucigalpa, he was taken to the criminal investigation directorate and then transferred to the prison in the city of San Pedro Sula, from which he had escaped in 1998. He was expected to face trial for a number of crimes.

At the close of November, general elections were scheduled to be held for the presidency and the Congress. In the presidential race, as noted above, Porfirio Lobo was considered to be a key candidate.

Lobo campaigned under the slogan "jobs and security" and promised to reinstate the death penalty for serious offenders. His platform also included proposals to lower the cost of remittances from Hondurans abroad, promote tourism and foreign investment, to provide incentives and benefits to farmers through the National Agricultural Development Bank, and to expand the tax-free import of agricultural inputs. Lobo also distanced himself from President Maduro by accusing the government of ignoring farmers. He also said he was in "complete disagreement" with the president's decision to freeze fuel prices only through November 2005. (Note: Lobo has been president of the Honduran Congress since January 2002. He was first elected deputy in 1990 and served as general manager of the Honduran Corporation for Forestry Development from 1990 until 1992. Born in Trujillo, Colon Department on Dec. 22, 1947, he received a degree in business administration from the University of Miami in 1970. He is a rancher and is married to Rosa Elena de Lobo.)

Lobo's main rival was Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales, also known as "Mel " Zelaya of the Liberal Party. He campaigned on a platform of open economy and "participative democracy." He

proposed the creation of a "transparency module" that would facilitate public disclosure of government spending and investment. He would also transfer development rights and obligations to local communities as part of a "government decentralization plan." He would create a "responsive and bureaucracy-free" government and move to further open the economy, in order to promote increased participation of the people. (Note: Zelaya served three terms as a deputy from 1985 until 1998 and served as president of the Lumber Industrialists Association. Born on Sept. 20, 1952 in Olancho, he studied civil engineering at the National Autonomous University of Honduras. He is married to Xiomara Castro and has four children.)

The other main contenders were Juan Almandarez Bonilla, a leftist candidate of Democratic Union (UD); Carlos Sosa Coello, the candidate of Innovation and Unity Party (PINU), a Social Democratic party; and Juan Ramon Martinez, of the Christian Democratic Party of Honduras (PDCH).

Polls leading up to the election showed a close race between Lobo and Zelaya. Then, on election day in Honduras on November 27, 2005, opposition candidate, Manuel Zelaya Rosales, claimed victory over Porfirio Lobo after exit polls showed him leading over Lobo with a 6 percent margin. Based on the early returns as well as exit poll data, it appeared as if Zelaya took close to 51 percent (50.79 percent) of the vote share while Lobo garnered just over 45 percent (45.22 percent).

At the congressional level, Zelaya's Liberal Party won 62 seats, Lobo's National Party took 55 seats, the Democratic Union acquired 5 seat, the Christian Democrats garnered 4 seats, and PUD 5, PDC 4, National Innovation and Unity Party got 2 seats.

About six weeks after the presidential election, the ruling party's candidate, Porfirio Lobo, conceded defeat to Manuel Zelaya Rosales. Lobo told the crowd attending a rally in the capital city of Tegucigalpa that he had wished Zelaya the best of luck. With almost 90 percent of the votes counted, Zelaya led by about 4 percent. Soon thereafter, the results were formalized and Zelaya was declared to be the winner. He was sworn into office in January 2006. He said that his priorities would include cracking down on gang warfare, poverty alleviation, and dealing with the realities of globalization by embracing free trade with the United States.

In the first part of 2006, a prison riot ensued at the main incarceration facility in the capital city. In the riot, 13 inmates were killed. It was the latest manifestation of a prison system rife with troubles, most expressly illustrated by repeated cases of prison rioting.

In early 2006, Honduras was also dealing with a health crisis in the form of a shortage of pharmaceutical drugs. A report suggested that the country's hospitals had only 30 percent of the drugs needed to treat the population. The shortage was attributed to a mixture of crime, insufficient funding for health care services, as well as negligent administration. In response, the newly-inaugurated president declared a state of emergency within the health care system. The

declaration allowed for medicines amounting to \$8 million (in United States currency) to be purchased. It also established a special committee composed of national health entities to administer the expenditures. While the rapid response moves were likely to alleviate the immediate crisis, they were not likely to resolve the long-term health care challenges facing the country.

In April 2006, a free trade agreement with the United States went into effect. At stake was the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which had been ratified by the Congress of Honduras a little over a year earlier in March 2005, as noted above.

Also in April 2006, resolution over the border dispute between Honduras and El Salvador was reached when both countries inaugurated the parameters of the new border. The issue had caused conflict between both countries since 1969.

In May 2006, Honduras was wracked by a political crisis when Deputy Leader Juan Ramon Salgado of the ruling Liberal Party was shot to death outside his home. It was the first time in the 20 years since the country had returned to democratic rule that a politician was murdered in Honduras. Authorities attributed his murder to narcotics-related gang violence that has been plaguing the country. Indeed, such violence has resided at the heart of its current socio-economic problems, ultimately leading to implications for the government about its handling of the matter.

A year later in May 2007, attention remained on this domestic front when President Zelaya used special executive powers to force the country's electronic media -- radio and television -- to broadcast the government's agenda for two hours daily. In these broadcast, interviews with the president and his cabinet would be broadcast, for the purpose of explaining projects and initiatives being undertaken.

The move came after President Zelaya failed to force Congress to prohibit the media's publication of reports of violent crime in the country. For his part, the Honduran leader said that he was taking this measure [compelling the media to broadcast government propaganda] in order to vitiate negative media coverage of his government. He also accused media directors of exploiting the various socio-economic and political challenges of the country in their coverage for financial profit.

In response, the main union for journalists in Honduras urged President Zelaya to reverse his media measure. The union also warned that the president's decision to force his will on the media, and his repression of media freedom, were both akin to the kinds of tactics used by military governments, which held power in Honduras during the 1980s. The country's political opposition echoed these views, noting that President Zelaya was moving the country in an authoritarian direction.

The matter has exacerbated concerns about the political effects of the crime crisis, and evoked further anxieties about the country's democratic underpinnings.

In October of 2007, a long-standing territorial dispute between Honduras and Nicaragua came to a head when the International Court of Justice at The Hague made a final ruling. At issue have been (1) fishing rights and (2) claims about potential oil extraction rights along the Misquito coast. While Honduras argued that sovereignty of four Caribbean islands should favor its interests, Nicaragua argued that the shape of the land should favor its own interests. Regardless, the court found that while Honduras had sovereignty over the islands, the border should be drawn at a shallower angle. Resultantly, the islands were kept inside Nicaraguan waters with three-mile circles around the islands connecting them to the Honduran territorial waters.

Special Report: Coup d'Etat of 2009

Background

On June 28, 2009, the military ousted President Manuel Zelaya -- the president of the Central American country of Honduras -- from office, forcing him into exile in Costa Rica. Reports on the ground in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa said that hundreds of military troops with riot shields surrounded the presidential palace. President Zelaya was then taken from his home and flown to Costa Rica. As well, eight government ministers were detained, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Patricia Rodas and Presidential Secretary Eduardo Enrique Reina. Meanwhile, tanks were said to be rolling through the streets and air force jets were flying overhead, according to the Associated Press.

The de facto coup d'etat occurred in reaction to the ongoing power struggle over the president's plans to change the constitution of the country. At issue was his plan to constitutionally extend his four-year non-renewable term in office. A referendum on the matter had been planned for June 28, 2009, but before it could be held, the Supreme Court ruled that it was illegal. President Zelaya decided to go forward with a non-binding referendum to ascertain the popular will of the people. But the situation took an acrimonious turn when President Zelaya refused a court ruling to reinstate the chief of the army, General Romeo Vasquez, who refused to comply with the president's order that he assist with the organization of the referendum. Ahead of the opening of the polls on voting day, the military had short-circuited the voice of the people. The Supreme Court later defended the actions of the military, saying that it was defending democracy. It was unlikely that the court and the military would be contradicted by the legislative branch of government since the referendum had been resisted by the Congress of Honduras, including members of the president's own party.

Notwithstanding the political establishment's opposition to the (now) non-binding referendum, the

military's actions were not well-received by all factions of Honduran civil society. Indeed, protestors were seen throwing rocks at the soldiers, while screaming "Traitors! Traitors!" The situation turned violent when police fired tear gas at hundreds of President Zelaya's supporters who had gathered to register their discontent in a public rally outside the presidential palace.

The sentiment of some factions of the Honduran citizenry was not considered when the country's Congress read a resolution accusing Zelaya of "manifest irregular conduct" and representing a "danger" to state law, presumably in response to the president's decision to move forward with the referendum, despite the Supreme Court's ruling against it. The Congress then voted to accept a letter of resignation, purported to be from President Zelaya, by a show of hands. That letter, which the congressional secretary Jose Alfredo Saavedra claimed was written by the president, indicated that Zelaya was resigning because of "the polarized political situation" and "insuperable health problems." Whether or not the letter, which was dated days earlier, was actually genuine, was a matter of debate. Nevertheless, the legislative body then appointed congressional president, Roberto Micheletti, as the new president of Honduras.

Micheletti's first act as president was to institute a curfew. Subsequently, Micheletti sought to quickly put his own stamp on the new regime by dismissing the country's ambassadors to the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), who were both appointed by Zelaya. Both appointees made clear that they opposed the decision to oust Zelaya from office.

Meanwhile, upon arriving at the airport in Costa Rica, deposed President Zelaya described what happened to him. He said he was awakened by the sound of gunfire and tried to dodge flying bullets between soldiers and his own security guards for about twenty minutes. Zelaya said he was then kidnapped by soldiers and forced to board an air force jet, which took him to Costa Rica. Zelaya denied writing any letter of resignation, and made it clear that he would not recognize any interim government and was holding onto power until the end of his term in January 2010. In fact, he indicated that he would attend a scheduled meeting of Central American leaders in Nicaragua then next day. During a telephone interview on the Venezuela-based Telesur television network, Zelaya said, "There is no way to justify an interruption of democracy, a coup d'etat." He continued, "This kidnapping is an extortion of the Honduran democratic system."

Zelaya blamed the situation on the Honduran elite, whom he said opposed his plans to try to bring economic relief to the impoverished masses. To that end, he said, "This was a plot by a very voracious elite, which wants to keep this country in an extreme level of poverty." Rafael Alegria, a labor leader in Honduras and a political ally of Zelaya, urged people to take up peaceful protests. In an interview on Honduran radio Cadena de Noticias, he declared, "We demand respect for the president's life. And we will go out into the streets to defend what this has cost us: living in peace and tranquility."

In other developments, there were reports that Honduran military leaders and other key politicians had been in contact with the United States, seeking support for their plan to wrest power from

Zelaya. According to the Associated Press, the United States made clear it would not support any coup. This scenario indirectly coincided with statements made by Zelaya himself ahead of the actual coup. In an interview with Spain's El Pais newspaper that took place before his removal, Zelaya appeared to be aware of efforts by his opponents to oust him from power, but believed at the time that such efforts had been thwarted because the United States would not sanction such action. "Everything was in place for the coup and if the US embassy had approved it, it would have happened. But they did not." He continued, "I'm only still here in office thanks to the United States." But apparently, significant military and political players in Honduras decided to go forward with the coup days later, even though the United States refused to support any moves aimed at deposing Zelaya from power.

Meanwhile, the international community responded to the news from Honduras with outrage. Mercosur -- the regional bloc made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay -- condemned the coup and said it would not recognize any Honduran authority besides Manuel Zelaya.

President Zelaya's ally in the region, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, said the deposed Honduran leader had been the victim of an illegal coup d'etat. He also accused Honduran troops of temporarily detaining and assaulting the Venezuelan and Cuban ambassadors in that country in a flagrant violation of diplomatic practice. Chavez warned that his country was not "at battle" and he was putting the Venezuelan military on alert.

Chavez' outrage was echoed by the European Union, which decried the undemocratic transfer of power. Spain also moved to recall its ambassador to Honduras.

United States President Barack Obama said he was "deeply concerned" by the ousting of Zelaya. In a statement, President Obama called for a return to democracy as follows: "I call on all political and social actors in Honduras to respect democratic norms, the rule of law and the tenets of the Inter-American Democratic Charter." Making clear the United States' position, the American president also characterized the removal of Zelaya from the presidency as "illegal." Underlying the United States' stance, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton condemned the actions by the Honduran military and legislative branch. United States diplomats were also said to be working to ensure the safety of Zelaya and his family. The New York Times reported that officials in Washington were pressing for the return of Zelaya to power in Honduras.

Days after the ousting of the democratically-elected leader of Honduras, the international community was taking concrete steps to pressure the Central American country into returning to democratic order. The United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution demanding the reinstatement of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, while the World Bank said it would institute a "pause" in lending to Honduras.

In addition, an emergency meeting was convened in Washington of the Organization of American States (OAS). The OAS issued a condemnation of the ousting of President Zelaya, characterizing it

as "a coup." The OAS also asserted it would not recognize the illegal authority of the new government and the body's Permanent Council called for the "immediate, safe and unconditional return" of Zelaya to his office as president. Soon thereafter, the OAS issued a three-day deadline to Honduras to restore exiled Zelaya to power. Failure to comply would result in the suspension of Honduras from the OAS.

Jose Miguel Insulza, the head of the OAS, decried the removal of Zelaya saying, "We thought we were in an era when military coups were no longer possible in this hemisphere." Explaining the decision to take action against Honduras, he said, "We need to show clearly that military coups will not be accepted. If within 72 hours the reinstatement doesn't happen, the assembly ... will meet again to suspend Honduras."

That suspension took place when the deadline was not met. The OAS met for a rare emergency meeting in Washington D.C and the final vote was 33 votes to zero. Not since the suspension of Cuba in 1962 had the OAS made such a decision.

For his part, Zelaya has denied the desire to extend his term in office. Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly two days after being forced into exile, Zelaya said, "I am not going to convene a constitutional assembly, and if I was offered the possibility of remaining in power, I would not do it. I am going to fulfill my four years, I'm going to fight to have the four years respected." Zelaya also said that he wants to return home from exile. But the new regime has taken a hard line position and has threatened to arrest him upon arrival in Honduras. In a move intended to prevent such an outcome, Insulza and the presidents of Argentina and Ecuador were planning to accompany Zelaya on his return trip to Honduras.

On the ground in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, the situation was unstable. Protestors both for and against the president's reinstatement were taking to the streets to voice their emotions. At the airport, on July 5, 2009, in anticipation of Zelaya's arrival, deadly clashes broke out despite a strong security presence. At least two people were reported to have been killed. Ultimately, Zelaya's plane was prevented from landing and was forced to divert to Nicaragua.

Mediation

In mid-July 2009, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias acted as mediator in talks between ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya and interim leader Roberto Micheletti, aimed at resolving the political crisis gripping Honduras. Those initial talks ended without any breakthrough and without the two men actually meeting in person -- a condition of the negotiations. For his part, Zelaya demanded his immediate restoration as president of Honduras. On the other side of the equation, Micheletti said that Zelaya should relinquish all claims to the presidency. The only area where Zelaya and Micheletti could find concurrence was in regard to their respect for the Honduran constitution, however, their interpretation of the country's law was likely to be quite different.

President Arias, the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize winner who helped resolve the civil war plaguing Central America, said: "We have no illusions, this may take longer than what was imagined."

A week later, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, called on the two sides to participate in a new round of talks. That new round of negotiations ended indecisively, but did reveal the provisions of the reconciliation deal that Arias was trying to advance. Central to that proposal was a provision for "the legitimate restitution" of Zelaya as the head of a reconciliation government, which was described as "a post where he will remain until the end of the constitutional term for which he was elected." The proposal made clear that this term would end on January 27, 2010 next year, and would be followed by the selection of a new president "chosen freely and democratically by the people in elections supervised and recognized by the international community," as described by Arias. The Costa Rican mediator also proposed the creation of a unity government, which would be composed of representatives of all political parties. Finally, Arias proposed an amnesty for political crimes associated with the coup d'etat of June 2009 that ousted Zelaya from office.

For his part, deposed President Zelaya has said the negotiations being led by Arias constituted the only path to reach a reconciliation agreement. To that end, he was said to be seriously considering Arias' proposals. While Zelaya and his cadre were reported to have agreed, in principle, to Arias' terms, there were remaining reservations about giving concessions to those who participated in the coup. In addition, Zelaya warned that even if no deal was forged, he had every intention of returning home to Honduras. On the other side of the equation, the interim government said that it would arrest Zelaya if he set foot on Honduran terrain. As well, the interim government, led by Micheletti, was reported to have rejected the proposal on the grounds that the notion of Zelaya's reinstatement was "impossible" and "not negotiable."

Meanwhile, the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, was the site of ongoing protests with Zelaya's supporters demanding his return. As well, the international community continued to regard the ousting of Zelaya as undemocratic, placing Honduras in the position of being the western hemisphere's newest pariah.

In other developments, the the interim government in Honduras decided to lift the overnight curfew that has been in effect since the ousting of President Zelaya. The government it was taking this action because it believed it had sufficiently quelled the opposition protests.

By the close of July 2009, negotiations in Costa Rica aimed at resolving the ongoing political crisis ended with no agreement between the two sides. At issue was interim leader Roberto Micheletti's decision to reject a reconciliation proposal, which included the establishment of a unity government, the reinstatement of ousted President Manuel Zelaya until January 2010, followed by democratic presidential elections, which would be internationally supervised, as discussed above. Yet even as Micheletti rejected this proposal, he was nonetheless faced with increased pressure to hand power back to Zelaya, as a result of mounting threats by the United States to cut

its aid to Honduras. Despite this warning from the United States, Zelaya expressed frustration with the international community's failure to reinstate him to presidential power, even going so far as to criticize the United States for not doing enough. For his part, Zelaya, who was now based in Nicaragua, made a symbolic gesture by taking a few steps across the border into Honduras. United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton responded by describing the move as "reckless." She explained that Zelaya's symbolic excursion into Honduran territory was "not conducive to the broader effort to restore constitutional order."

Presidential Election (see Update below)

Meanwhile, post-coup Honduras was pressing forward with its plans to hold elections in November 2009. Honduras officially began its pre-election campaign at the start of September 2009 in anticipation of elections set for November 2009. It would be the first vote since the military coup d'etat that ousted President Manuel Zelaya from power. The election had been scheduled by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in May 2009 when President Zelaya was still in office but was now being decried by Zelaya and the international community.

With that said, at stake was the presidency, the legislative representatives in the parliamentary body, as well as municipal representatives. In the race for the president, the candidates contesting the election were as follows --

- the Liberal Party's Elvin Santos
- the main opposition National Party's Porfirio Lobo Sosa
- the Christian Democrats' Felicito Avila
- the Innovation and Democratic Unity Party's Bernard Martinez
- the left-wing Democratic Unity Party's Cesar Ham
- Independent candidate Carlos Reyes

In Honduras, Zelaya's supporters called for a boycott of the election; they also demanded that Zelaya be reinstated as the rightful president of the country. President Zelaya himself acknowledged that the window for action in his favor was limited since his rightful term in office was scheduled to end in only months. That said, he noted the broader stakes were timeless: "The time period for fighting a principle, for democracy and justice, is undefined and is part of a historic process."

See "Update" below for more recent developments related to the controversial election.

Pariah Status

Internationally, the election was being frowned upon since many countries now viewed post-coup Honduras as having abrogated constitutional strictures. To that end, the OAS, which suspended Honduras in July 2009, made it clear that it would not recognize the results of the Nov. 29, 2009 vote for a new president. Individual countries also made it clear they would not recognize the election results.

Adding to Honduras' poor standing in the international community was the decision by the United States to cut all non-humanitarian aid to Honduras in a clear bid to register discontent over the country's slippage into undemocratic governance. The move by the United States earned rare praise from Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who has typically been a harsh critic of American foreign policy.

On September 14, 2009, the Honduran ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva said that he had been ordered out of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The situation emerged after several other Latin American countries accused envoy J. Delmer Urbizo of representing an "illegal" regime. It was a clear reference to the fact that the current government of Honduras ousted the elected President Zelaya from office in a coup d'etat. The incident cast a shadow on the start of the three-week session of the multi-national Human Rights Council. As Urbizo left the hall, he shouted "We will be back! Volveremos!"

Zelaya Returns

Ousted President Manuel Zelaya returned unexpectedly to Honduras on September 22, 2009. He was reported to have sought refuge at the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa. His presence has spurred calls both at home and abroad for his reinstatement to power, if only on a temporary basis ahead of the presidential election set for later in the year. However, the interim authorities of Honduras have made it clear that they would not acquiesce to the mounting pressure and, in fact, appeared willing to stakeout even more alienated terrain once Zelaya was at the Brazilian embassy.

According to reports from the ground in Tegucigalpa, the interim authorities, led by Roberto Micheletti, were demanding that Brazil "immediately take measures to ensure that Zelaya stops using the protection offered by the diplomatic mission to instigate violence in Honduras." The interim government also warned that it would take unspecified "additional measures" if Zelaya's status remained undefined within 10 days. For its part, Brazil decided to reject the ultimatum by Honduras' interim authorities on the basis that its embassy was protected under international law. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva personally entered the fray when he asserted, "Brazil will not comply with an ultimatum from a government of coup mongers."

The situation took a disturbing turn when it was reported that hundreds of Honduran soldiers and riot police had surrounded the Brazilian embassy. While Micheletti said that he had no plans to

storm the embassy and arrest Zelaya, there were intimations that the Brazilian diplomatic mission was, indeed, under siege. Zelaya himself accused the interim authorities of pumping toxic gas into the building, however, Red Cross personnel on the ground could not confirm the allegation. Still, the United Nations Security Council appeared to acknowledge the "siege" effect when it demanded that the interim authorities of Honduras "cease harassing" the Brazilian embassy.

On September 27, 2009, it was reported that in a bid to stave off the opposition, the interim authorities of Honduras decided to suspend constitutionally-enshrined civil liberties. Included in these measures was the decision to take opposition media broadcasters off the air. Also included in these measures were prohibitions on unauthorized gatherings and the freedom of police to arrest people without warrants. But a day later, the interim leader, Roberto Micheletti, said that the emergency decree would soon be lifted. The situation was complicated by stand-offs between police and opposition protestors, as well as the decision by the interim authorities to expel an advance team from the Organization of American States whose intent was to restart negotiations between the rival sides.

By October 2009, Honduras' interim leader, Roberto Micheletti, said that he would ask his government to lift the emergency decree, under which civil liberties were suspended and two radio stations were shut down. In an interview broadcast nationally on Honduran television, he said, "It is my decision to rescind the decree, but we'll take the decision with the council of ministers today."

Resolution

In the second week of October 2009, diplomats from 10 countries from across the Western Hemisphere, as well as Jose Insulza, chief of the Organization of American States (OAS), commenced fresh talks aimed at resolving the political crisis in Honduras. The diplomats were hoping to broker direct talks between deposed President Manuel Zelaya and interim leader Roberto Micheletti.

At issue has been ousted President Manuel Zelaya's demand that he be reinstated to power for the remaining three months of his term, juxtaposed with the insistence of the coup regime, led by Roberto Micheletti, that Zelaya should not be allowed to do so. Zelaya has said that he would meet with Micheletti only if there was an agreement forged in advance that would allow him to return to power. On the other side of the equation, Micheletti showed no sign of compromise as he insisted that Zelaya was a threat to the constitution. That being said, there were some members of the coup regime in Honduras who were showing some indications that the ongoing crisis in Honduras might only be resolved, and international recognition would be possible, if only they did indeed reinstate Zelaya for the three remaining months of his term.

Part of the pressure on the coup regime was the fact that it had scheduled parliamentary and presidential elections for later in the year, in the face of international warnings that the election results would not be recognized. To that end, Insulza said, "Those who thought it was possible to depose a president and normalize life in the country before starting an election campaign should realize that this has not been possible."

On October 15, 2009, there were reports that the two camps -- that of ousted Honduran President Jose Manuel Zelaya and that of interim leader Roberto Micheletti -- were edging towards some sort of compromise. While no specific details of the compromise deal were furnished, negotiators from the two sides respectively informed the media in Honduras that there was a plan in the works to restore Zelaya to the presidency ahead of fresh presidential elections set for November 29, 2009.

Yet to be seen was whether or not the general framework for negotiations, known as the San Jose Accord, due to mediation by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias (as discussed above) was still viable. The accord, named for the capital of Costa Rica where compromise was first spurred, has the backing of the Organization of American States and the Obama administration in the United States. Central to the accord is the provision for Zelaya to head a national unity government until his end of his term in January 2010, followed by his exit from the political scene and amnesty from charges of abuse of power. The accord also offers Micheletti amnesty for orchestrating the de facto coup d'etat against Zelaya.

By the close of 2009, a resolution had been forged, based on the OAS-backed San Jose Accord, and was met with concurrence by both rivals, Zelaya and Micheletti. The agreement would return Zelaya to power, create a power-sharing government, and require both camps to recognize the result the presidential election set for November, 2009.

Zelaya said that he would sign the accord, which would bring an end to the political crisis. Of course, Zelaya's restitution to the presidency was contingent upon a congressional vote in favor of this move, which itself would have to be authorized by the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, Zelaya described the agreement as a "triumph for Honduran democracy," and expressed his optimism about returning to power. Interim leader, Roberto Micheletti, also indicated he intended to sign the agreement, saying, "I have authorized my negotiating team to sign a deal that marks the beginning of the end of the country's political situation."

Reports suggested that Micheletti was finally ready to acquiesce to the agreement after United States Assistant Secretary of State, Thomas Shannon, warned that some sort of agreement was mandatory if Honduras wished international sanction of the impending election. Now with an apparently successful conclusion to the mediation process, United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, conveyed her congratulations to both sides on "reaching an historic agreement."

Reconciliation deal for Honduras collapses

Rivals in Honduras agreed to a plan brokered by the Organization of American States that would bring an end to the political crisis in that country. At issue was the reinstatement of ousted President Manuel Zelaya to power ahead of fresh presidential elections. Since the June 2009 coup that deposed Zelaya from office, Honduras has been regarded as something of a regional pariah with the countries of the Americas virtually united in its call for the restoration of democratic order.

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But by the start of November 2009, one of the key terms of the San Jose Accord was at risk of being voided, due to the delay by the Honduran Congress to carry out a vote sanctioning the deal, as discussed above. Observers suggested that the failure of the congress to act on the deal was a stalling tactic in defiance of the international community. The situation was not helped by the fact that the interim administration in Honduras appeared on the verge of violating another provision set forth in the agreement. At issue was the establishment of a unity government and Micheletti's announcement that he would lead the new administration. Zelaya reacted to this development by deeming the reconciliation dialogue to be over. In an interview with Radio Cooperativa de Chile, he said, "From here now on, we have declared that it is not possible to have a dialogue with a coup government. It is evident that they do not have honest talks, they do not keep their honor neither their word."

On Nov. 20, 2009, ahead of the scheduled election, Micheletti announced he would briefly cede power. The move was intended to increase the election's legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. However, such an end was not guaranteed since Micheletti's small concession was not

consistent with the arrangement set forth in the OAS-brokered deal.

Zelaya rival wins presidential election in Honduras

In November 2009, Honduras was preparing for presidential elections. Coming after the ousting of President Manuel Zelaya and the subsequent failure to adopt a reconciliation agreement, the presidential election was imbued by a sense of illegitimacy as several world powers insisted on not recognizing the results. Specifically, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Argentine President Cristina Kirchner have not relinquished their respective calls for the restitution of President Zelaya as a means to re-establish constitutional order and democracy in Honduras. Accordingly, they have warned that accepting these election results would be tantamount to sanctioning undemocratic and unconstitutional action and, thusly, would set a terrible precedent. Meanwhile, the United States, Panama, and Peru intimated they might be inclined to accept the election results if they could be verified as being "free and fair."

As such, the political situation in Honduras led to regional tensions on how to handle Honduras' political crisis and current pariah status. Despite the prevailing arguments about the illegality of this post-coup election, there were some indications that Hondurans were looking to the election as a symbolic end to the crisis plaguing the country. There were hopes by the interim government that a successful election would be illustrative of Honduras' return to democracy. However, with not all countries in the hemisphere willing to take such a position, the eventual winner would have the difficult task of trying to mend relations across the region

With the country still in a state of political chaos, the interim government deployed 30,000 soldiers and police to provide security. Zelaya himself called for a boycott of the election, citing it as illegitimate and urging his supporters to "impugn and denounce" the vote. But despite these assertions, Zelaya's rival in the previous presidential election, conservative Porfirio Lobo of the National Party, was favored to win this time against Elvin Santos of the Liberal Party. Indeed, with the votes counted it appeared that National Party candidate, Porfirio Lobo, won the election with exit polls showing him capturing 56 percent of the vote against Santos with 38 percent. (Note that voters were also selecting deputies to the National Congress and municipal positions.)

Honduran parliament votes to deny Zelaya reinstatement to the presidency

Meanwhile, Zelaya was still hoping to be reinstated to his position as president following a congressional vote on Dec. 2, 2009. Should the parliament vote in favor of this move, he would be temporarily returned to power ahead of the new presidential term, which was set to commence at the end of January 2010. The international sphere was also watching that congressional vote carefully as it potentially held the power to itself accord some legitimacy to the political process in

Honduras. But such an end did not come to pass as the Honduran congress instead reaffirmed the ousting of Zelaya from office. Accordingly, the path for Honduras' return to good standing in the global community remained very much a matter of controversy.

Other Recent Post-Coup Developments

Ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya was expected to meet his elected successor, Porfirio Lobo, on Dec. 14, 2009. President Leonel Fernandez of the Dominican Republic said the meeting would take place in his country. There was no actual confirmation from either Zelaya or Lobo of this meeting at the time of writing; in fact, Zelaya has said that he does not recognize the election of Lobo as his successor and he has continued to press for his restoration to the presidency ahead of the legal expiration of his presidential term. For its part, the Honduran Congress voted against such a move and Zelaya has said that the legislative's body's decision was effectively the ratification of a coup.

Honduras' interim leader, Roberto Micheletti said on Dec. 15, 2009, that he would not relinquish power ahead of the presidential inauguration ceremony set for Jan. 27, 2010. There had been some previous discussion that Micheletti might step down and allow Zelaya to return to the helm for a short period before the newly-elected president, Porfirio Lobo, took office. Such a move would have gained the approval of the international community, which has frowned upon the ousting of Zelaya, the installation of what is generally viewed as an illegitimate interim government, and the holding of elections before the restoration of constitutional order. But clearly, such a move was not to occur. For his part, Micheletti said, "I am not going to give up and leave the office until Jan. 27 as it is regulated in the Constitution. Even if the world, including the countries that have been hating us, asks me to do it, I will not do it." Despite the request from President-elect Lobo himself that Micheletti step down, the interim leader said, "I was elected by the Congress and the only one can depose me is the National Congress. I am not leaving because I think ... there is no agreement on my departure." Micheletti also dismissed Zelaya's claims of having a legitimate claim on the presidency, if only for a few weeks, in saying of Zelaya: "He is a common citizen."

On Jan. 6, 2010, Micheletti reaffirmed his refusal to relinquish power by strongly rejecting a demand by the United States that he leave office by Jan. 15, 2010 -- ahead of the Jan. 27, 2010, inauguration date. That demand was intended to pave the way for the normalization of relations between Honduras and the greater international community. But Micheletti said, "Washington should respect the sovereign decisions of our people."

Given the lack of concurrence about Zelaya's fate, a plan was advanced that would assure him safe passage to the Dominican Republic. The deal was officially sanctioned by Leonel Fernandez, the president of the Dominican Republic, as well as incoming Honduran President Porfirio Lobo. The

Dominican Republic was expected to be a transitional destination for Zelaya, with Mexico as a likely final destination. Speaking of the plan, Dominican President Fernandez said, "This is an exit with dignity." Also contained in the proposal were provisions for Zelaya to freely travel and speak publicly. For his part, Zelaya was reported to have been encouraged by the overall plan, although he said that he would still have to consider the details.

In other developments, human rights groups in Honduras and internationally have alleged that many of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya's supporters have been killed or arrested. According to the Miami Herald, these human rights groups have claimed that the country's interim government has carried out a harsh crackdown on Zelaya's supporters, with as many as 3,000 people arrested, 450 beaten, and 114 imprisoned since June 2009 when the coup d'etat ensued. For its part, the National Police has disputed these claims. In fact, National Police spokesperson Orlin Cerrato denied there were any political prisoners, instead arguing that those who may have been arrested were detained for carrying out criminal acts, such as painting graffiti.

Note that the new Honduran president, Porfirio Lobo, was officially inaugurated into office on January 27, 2010. Security was tight and approximately 30 international representatives were present for the ceremony.

On September 16, 2010, demonstrations by backers of former President Manuel Zelaya turned violent when police fired tear gas and water cannons at the pro-Zelaya supporters. Several protestors were chased by police into the offices of the opposition Radio Uno, however, as tear gas began to penetrate the building, both protestors and the employees tried to escape. One street vendor died from inhaling the fumes from the tear gas, several other people were injured in the chaos. A spokesperson from the police, Hector Mejia, justified the harsh action against the protestors saying that they were intimidating students participating in a government-sponsored rally marking Honduras' independence from Spain. However the protestors, many of whom were students, contradicted the official version of the events, and said that the police attacked the protestors. As well, Arnulfo Aguilar, the director of Radio Uno said that the police broke the windows of the building and assaulted one of his employees who was reported to be unconscious. Aguilar blamed the government for the violence saying, "This is a repressive act by the Lobo's coup government, which we will denounce to the world." But Defense Minister Marlon Pascua responded by saying, "We didn't repress anybody."

In a separate incident, the government's deputy director of transportation was killed by gunmen; that incident appeared to be one of many assassinations plaguing Honduras. Deputy Transportation Director Rosel Quinonez was killed as he exited his car in the northern city of La Ceiba. There was no available information as to who might be behind his assassination. That being said, Quinonez has been a longstanding member of President Lobo's National Party. It was possible that his assassination -- like so many deaths of public figures in Honduras -- was politically motivated, given the deep political divisions in the country, especially since President Zelaya was

ousted from office. On the other hand, rampant crime as a result of narcotics trafficking can also be blamed for the insecurity and violence that has beset Honduras in recent years.

On May 22, 2011, former Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, who was ousted from power and forced into exile in 2009, signed an agreement paving the way for his return. The deal was forged with his successor, President Porfirio Lobo, but was brokered with the help of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. It was hoped that the agreement would bring an end to a two year period of strife in Honduras, effectively returning the country to stability and unity on the domestic landscape. After the ousting of Zelaya, the country became politically divided at home and cast unfavorably on the international landscape.

Now, Honduras was hoping to end its pariah status and be welcomed back into the Organization of American States, from which it was suspended after Zelaya was removed from power in what many viewed as an unconstitutional process. To this end, Honduras officially re-entered the OAS on June 1, 2011. The vote was 32 to one in favor of Honduras' readmission to the regional bloc. Ecuador was the lone "no" vote on the basis of human rights violations committed by security forces during the time of the coup d'etat and continuing under the new government. Of particular concern to human rights groups has been the climate of impunity still rampant in Honduras, especially with regard to attacks on journalists. The United States has argued that by allowing Honduras to re-enter the OAS, there would be a better chance for accountability of the Honduran authorities as regards such allegations. Note that days earlier, Zelaya returned to Honduras and was welcomed by large swaths of supporters.

At the start of July 2011, the Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that the removal of former President Manuel Zelaya from office was a coup d'etat. The commission was charged by current President Porfirio Lobos with investigating the events of late June 2009, when Zelaya was deposed and forced into exile in Costa Rica.

The commission deemed that the events leading to the ousting of Zelaya from office was illegal and that the transition of power at that time was unconstitutional. To that latter end, the commission found that the Honduran Congress overstepped its powers in facilitating the elevation of Speaker Roberto Micheletti to the role of interim president. Indeed, it characterized the interim Micheletti administration as an illegal "de facto regime." The commission additionally noted that the entire crisis had been precipitated by Zelaya's decision to go forward with a referendum on constitutional changes, despite antagonism from his opponents in the Congress and the Supreme Court. (See "Editor's Note" below for details regarding the events leading to the ousting of Zelaya and the path towards a return to constitutional rule.)

It should be noted that the Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission drew attention to the fact that the Honduran Congress was without a clear process to resolve power conflicts.

Primer on 2013 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

Presidential and parliamentary elections were set to be held in Honduras in November 2013. A precise date was set for the elections to go forward on Nov. 24, 2013.

At the executive level, the president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term; the last presidential election was held on Nov. 29, 2009, and won decisively by Porfirio Lobo Sosa against Elvin Santos Lozano. In 2013, it was to be seen who would succeed President Lobo. The main candidates were expected to be Juan Orlando Hernández of the National Party, Mauricio Villeda of the Liberal Party, former First Lady Xiomara Castro de Zelaya of Libre, Romeo Vásquez Velásquez of Patriotic Alliance, and Salvador Nasralla of the newly-formed Anti-Corruption Party.

At the legislative level, the action would be in the unicameral "Asamblea Nacional" (National Assembly or National Congress), composed of 128 seats where members are elected for four-year terms. In the last elections held on Nov. 29, 2013, the National Party won the most seats with the Liberal Party in second place, and the Christian Democratic Party, the Democratic Unification Party, and the Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party trailing far behind. It was to be seen which party would see victory in 2013.

Why are these elections important?

The 2013 elections in Honduras were to be regarded as a democratic test of sorts for Honduras. Before the presidency of Lobo (elected in 2009), President Manuel Zelaya Rosales was the head of state having won the 2006 election. He was deposed in a coup in June 2009 with the country's Congress allegedly using a fraudulent letter of resignation to place Congressional President Roberto Micheletti into power as the country's new president. The move had been made in response to Zelaya's effort to extend his tenure in power via a popular referendum. That effort was understandably opposed by all quarters of the Honduran establishment, with the military, Supreme Court, and even the Congress, acting to ensure that such a move would not take place. However, the removal of Zelaya from power was accomplished in such a controversial and extra-legal manner that the international community largely refused to recognize the new Honduran leadership, which was at the time under the control of Micheletti.

Indeed, the ousting of Zelaya from power drove Honduras into pariah status in the Western Hemisphere with the countries of the Americas virtually united in its call for the restoration of democratic order. Meanwhile, Honduras was suspended from the Organization of American States, and also subject to a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly demanding the reinstatement of Zelaya. The country had to deal with a halt in funding from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Elections in November 2009, which ended in victory for Lobo, were intended to return Honduras to good governance and democratic order. The election of

Lobo -- and the exit of Micheletti from the office of the presidency -- calmed the political waters to some extent. Nevertheless, Honduras remained deeply and bitterly divided, given the political trauma that plagued the nation.

In 2013, all eyes would again be on Honduras to see if the Central American country would continue to chart the path of stability with peaceful elections and a drama-free transition of power. All expectations were that the presidential race would be a close contest between Xiomara Castro, the wife of deposed former President Manuel Zelaya and Libre candidate -- and -- Juan Orlando Hernandez of the National Party.

Election details --

It should be noted that in September 2013 -- two months ahead of election day -- Xiomara Castro, the wife of deposed former President Manuel Zelaya and Libre candidate, held a small lead in the presidential race ahead of her rivals. According to a poll by CID Gallup, the leftist politician had 29 percent of the vote share in terms of voters' preferences, ahead of Hernandez of the National Party, who had 27 percent. This poll result indicated that Castro had successfully boosted her standing in the eyes of citizens when she fought for her husband's right to retain the presidency following his questionable ousting discussed above. Clearly, former President Zelaya's supporters were transferring their allegiance to his wife. Should she succeed in winning the presidency, Castro's performance would be a political validation for Zelaya.

But Hernandez -- known by the nickname "Dauphin" due to his close alignment with outgoing President Lobo -- was also attracting significant vote share and had a good chance to overtake Castro and seize victory. Hernandez campaigned on a law and order platform that found resonance with a significant portion of the population; specifically, Hernandez was promising to form a new military police force to deal with the rampant crime plaguing Honduras from drug and gang violence to murder.

On Nov. 24, 2013, voters went to the polls in Honduras to cast their ballots in the country's elections. A partial vote count showed a close contest with Juan Orlando Hernandez of the National Party holding a small lead over Xiomara Castro of Libre at the presidential level. Adding to the confusion was a claim of victory by both of these two candidates before the vote counting was complete. Via Twitter, Hernandez declared victory, writing, "Thank God and thank you to the Honduran people for this triumph." Meanwhile, Castro also took to Twitter to declare a counter-claim of victory as follows, "Based on the exit poll results that I have received from the whole country, I can tell you: I am the president of Honduras." The matter would be settled within days with electoral official saying that an official result would soon be announced to the public.

Ultimately, it was Honduras' conservative ruling party candidate, Hernandez, who was declared to be the winner of the presidential contest with 36 percent of the vote share over Castro, his closest

rival, who had 29 percent.

Villeda of the Liberal Party took 20 percent and Nasralla of the Anti-Corruption Party secured more than 13 percent. All other candidates garnered less than a single percentage point respectively. Hernandez' victory over his leftist challenger, Castro, suggested that the policy agenda of outgoing President Lobo would be continued in the halls of government.

That being said, Castro's close finish behind Hernandez indicated that a significant portion of the population continued to support (or sympathize with) ousted President Zelaya. In many senses, Honduras' political climate remained as polarized as before. Moreover, Castro's accusation that the election outcome was the result of "a fraud of incalculable proportions," raised the specter of continued political turmoil for Honduras. Castro noted that her party, Libre, would not recognize the election result and that the government in power was illegitimate. At a news conference, she told the supporters of Libre that the party would challenge the election result, saying, "I call on you to unite to defend our proposal...This fight has just begun. They will never defeat us." Castro's challenge would be aided by the leader of the newly-formed Anti-Corruption Party whose candidate, Salvador Nasralla, won more than 13 percent of the vote and also questioned Hernandez' victory.

In response to allegations of fraud, election authorities in Honduras agreed to carry out a recount. The document requesting that recount explained that its justification for such action was "due to the alterations that each tally has been subject to, (and) the vulnerability and insecurity of the system at the expense of the people's will, massively expressed at the polls."

Note: At the congressional level, the conservative National Party won the most seats followed by left-wing Libre. The rest of the seats in Congress would be filled the Liberal Party and the aforementioned Anti-Corruption Party.

Protesters in Honduras demand resignation of President Hernandez amidst corruption probe --

On June 26, 2015, tens of thousands of people in Honduras took to the streets of the capital city of Tegucigalpa, armed with torches, to protest against President Juan Hernandez and demand his resignation. At issue for the protesters were allegations that the Honduran Institute of Social Security was overcharged various companies for services. Hernandez was implicated in the scandal since his 2013 presidential campaign received \$150,000 in donations from companies linked with the scandal, although the president insisted that his campaign was unaware of the source of the funds. While there was a call by opposition parties for an independent probe into the country's worst corruption scandal in years, the public's demands did not end at that point. Indeed, the public's demands extended to calls for the president to step down from power.

Editor's Note:

President Manuel Zelaya of the left-leaning Liberal Party came to power in 2006. His term in office was scheduled to end in 2010, barring a constitutional change that would allow him to extend his tenure. Zelaya wanted that issue to be put to the voters in a referendum.

However, all quarters of the Honduran establishment -- the military, the Supreme Court, and even the Congress -- acted to ensure that such a move would not take place in a de facto coup d'etat and they facilitated the subsequent exile of Zelaya. Diverse governments ranging from those in Washington D.C. to Caracas condemned the coup and called for Zelaya's reinstatement. Essentially, Honduras was being regarded as something of a regional pariah with the countries of the Americas virtually united in its call for the restoration of democratic order. Meanwhile, Honduras was suspended from the Organization of American States, and also subject to a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly demanding the reinstatement of Zelaya. The country had to deal with a halt in funding from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. As well, Honduras faced further international sanctions if the Micheletti interim government continued to defy the international community's demand for Zelaya to be reinstated, if only within the context of the San Jose Accord.

To that end, concurrence was reached at the close of October 2009 on a plan brokered by the Organization of American States that would bring an end to the political crisis in that country, however, as noted above, that plan faced further roadblocks from the interim government. At issue was the reinstatement of ousted President Manuel Zelaya to power ahead of fresh presidential elections -- a reality that began to fade away with a parliamentary vote against such action, essentially dooming the reconciliation deal to failure. Elections at the end of the year brought Porfirio Lobo to power as president but left the country bitterly divided.

Until the 2009 coup d'etat, Honduras -- a poor country dependent in the export of coffee and bananas -- endured military coups two times before; in 1963 and 1972, the military overthrew the elected presidents of Honduras. Civilian governance was not restored following the 1972 coup d'etat until 1981, largely as a result of pressure from the United States. But this latest military coup d'etat was the first undemocratic transfer of power in Honduras in almost three decades. Indeed it is one of few undemocratic transfers of power in the Western Hemisphere in recent times.

In 2011 and well into 2012, it was hoped that the signing of the new reconciliation deal would shift the political winds in Honduras, ushering in a climate of unity. All eyes were on the 2013 elections, which were mired by accusations of fraud but nonetheless ended with a transition of power. Two years later in 2015, there were calls for President Hernandez to resign amidst a corruption scandal. Also, as of 2015, Honduras remained plagued by manifold narcotics gang-related crime

and has the dubious distinction of being home to one of the world's highest incidences of murder.

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Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch.com . See Bibliography for full list of research sources used in this Country Review.

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2

Albania	4
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8
Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	4
Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5

Bhutan	5
Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	3
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7

China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4-4.5
Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6
East Timor	5
Ecuador	6

Egypt	5
El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr. YugoslavRep.Macedonia	5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5
Grenada	8
Guatemala	6

Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9
Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9
India	7.5-8
Indonesia	6
Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3
Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7
Japan	9
Jordan	6.5

Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8
Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4.5
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6
Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4

Malawi	4
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8
Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7
Mexico	6.5
Micronesia	7
Moldova	5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5
Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6

Nepal	4
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3.5
Palau	7
Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5

Romania	5.5
Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9
Sao Tome and Principe	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	6
Serbia	5
Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8
Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6

Somalia	2
South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	6
Turkey	7

Turkmenistan	4.5
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	7
Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

***Methodology**

The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)
2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)
3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)
4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)
5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)
6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)
7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)
8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)
9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)
10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), [Syria](#), [Iraq](#) and [Yemen](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of

unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected [Syria](#) where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. [Iraq](#) has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. [Libya](#) has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in [Libya](#) have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. [Yemen](#) continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between [Iran](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#). Conversely, [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, [Zimbabwe](#) continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and miring [Zimbabwe](#) with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. [Somalia](#) also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in [Kenya](#). On the upside, [Nigeria](#), which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national security front with its new president at the helm. [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Burkina Faso](#), [Burundi](#) and [Guinea](#) have been downgraded due to political unrest, with [Guinea](#) also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as [Serbia](#), [Croatia](#), and [Hungary](#), due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional

crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, [Singapore](#) retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for [Mexico](#) , [Guatemala](#), and [Brazil](#). [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the [United States](#) maintains a strong ranking along with [Canada](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the [United States](#) to be downgraded in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

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Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The [Political Stability](#) Index is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an

ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5
Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5-9
Argentina	7
Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6

Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5
Brazil	7
Brunei	8
Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6

Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5

Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4
Estonia	9
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr. Yugoslav Rep. Macedonia	6.5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5

Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7
Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4
Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4
Holy See (Vatican)	9.5
Honduras	6
Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7
Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5

Ireland	9.5
Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2
Korea, South	8.5
Kosovo	5.5
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5

Liberia	3.5-4
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4
Malawi	5
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	8
Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8
Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5

Mongolia	6.5-7
Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8
Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8
Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6

Paraguay	8
Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7
Romania	7
Russia	6
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9
Saint Lucia	9
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9
Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5

Seychelles	8
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7
Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5
Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6

Thailand	6
Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5
Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5
Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5

Yemen	2.5
Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)
2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability
3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights
4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance
5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")
6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection
7. level of unchecked crime and corruption
8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security
9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation
10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically --

has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), and [Somalia](#) -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both [Afghanistan](#) and [Somalia](#) continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In [Afghanistan](#), while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism. In [Somalia](#), while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in [Somalia](#), but across the border into [Kenya](#) with devastating results/ Also in this category is [Iraq](#), which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, [Libya](#), and [Yemen](#) have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. [Syria](#) has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddhafi landscape of [Libya](#) has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is [Yemen](#), which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secessionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a [Iran](#) and Sunni [Saudi Arabia](#).

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In [Bahrain](#), the landscape had calmed. In [Egypt](#), the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of [Tunisia](#) -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. [Zimbabwe](#) has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the

dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in a slightly improved direction is [Nigeria](#), which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. [Mali](#) was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited [Burkina Faso](#) and [Burundi](#) as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In [Burundi](#), an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In [Burkina Faso](#), the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Guinea](#) has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola heath crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. [Serbia](#) and [Albania](#) were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while [Romania](#) was slightly downgraded on the basis of corruption charges against the prime minister. [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, [Greece](#) was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, [Germany](#), [France](#), [Switzerland](#), the [United Kingdom](#), the [Netherlands](#), and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. [Cambodia](#) was very slightly downgraded due to post-election instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government

remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, [Haiti](#) retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. [Mexico](#) was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. [Guatemala](#) was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. [Brazil](#) was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. [Colombia](#) was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States. Meanwhile, the [United States](#), [Canada](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, [Fiji](#) was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, [Maldives](#) has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	

Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	
Burma	7	7	Not Free	

Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	↑
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	↓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	↓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	

Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	↓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	
Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	↓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	
The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	

Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	↓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	

Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	↓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	

Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	↑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	↓
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	↑
Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	

Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	↓
Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	↓
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	↓
Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	

Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	↓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	

Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	↓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	↓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	

Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	↓
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	
Ukraine*	3	2	Free	
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	

Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	↓
Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.

Available at URL: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Overview of Human Rights in Honduras

Honduras is a constitutional democracy, however, it is also one of the poorest nations in the

Western Hemisphere. That, coupled with high levels of government corruption, gang violence, and impunity for many law breakers, negatively affects Honduras' human rights track record.

Members of the security forces commit extra-judicial killings. Illegal searches, arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention and abuse of suspects are some of the key human rights violations at stake. Crimes committed by the security forces, military elite and the government go unpunished.

A lack of government funding and a corrupt judicial system does not allow for due process of the law. Harsh prison conditions await those who are found guilty.

Other human rights abuses include discrimination against indigenous people, homosexuals, and the lack of effective of labor laws. Child abuse, child prostitution, and trafficking of persons are problems in the region.

Note: A rising crime problem has spurred questions about the country's current socio-economic problems, ultimately leading to implications for the government about its handling of the matter. At issue has been the government's decision in 2007 to force the media to broadcast its own agenda [i.e. propaganda] for two hours daily. Journalists and the political opposition have warned that media repression was akin to the kinds of tactics used by military governments, which held power in Honduras during the 1980s.

Note that the 2009 coup, followed by what some view as an unconstitutional election, has marred Honduras' record. See "Political Conditions" for details.

In 2011 and well into 2012, it was hoped that the signing of the new reconciliation deal would shift the political winds in Honduras, ushering in a climate of unity. All eyes were on the 2013 elections, which were mired by accusations of fraud but nonetheless ended with a transition of power.

In 2014, Honduras has been plagued by manifold crime in a country where narcotics gangs operate with relative impunity and terrorize the local population. Honduras also has the dubious distinction of being home to one of the world's highest incidences of murder.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:

See full listing of the Human Development Index located in the Social Overview of this report for this country's current rank.

Human Poverty Index Rank:

51st out of 103

Gini Index:

55.0

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):

69.35 years of age

Unemployment Rate:

28%

Population living on \$1 a day (%):

16%

Population living on \$2 a day (%):

37.4%

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):

53%

Internally Displaced People:

N/A

Note-1,000 refugees are currently seeking asylum in Honduras

Total Crime Rate (%):

N/A

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):

Public: 3.2%

% of GDP Spent on Education:

N/A

Human Rights Conventions Party to:

- International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

Constitution

The 1982 constitution (amended in 1995) provides for a strong executive, a unicameral National

Congress (or National Assembly) and a judiciary appointed by the National Congress.

Executive Authority

At the executive level, there is a president who is both head of state and head of government. The president is directly elected to a four-year term by popular vote. The president presides over a cabinet.

Legislative Authority

At the legislative level, there is a unicameral National Congress or Congreso Nacional made up of 128 seats. Members of Congress serve a four-year term and are elected by a system of proportional representation. Congressional seats are assigned in proportion to the number of votes each party receives.

Judicial Authority

The judiciary includes the following: a Supreme Court of Justice, courts of appeal and several courts of original jurisdiction, such as labor, tax and criminal courts. Judges are elected for seven-year terms by the National Congress.

Legal System

The legal system is rooted in Roman and Spanish civil law with increasing influence of English common law; recent judicial reforms include abandoning Napoleonic legal codes in favor of the oral adversarial system.

Administration

For administrative purposes, Honduras is divided into 18 departments, with departmental and municipal officials selected for two-year terms.

Government Structure

Names:

conventional long form:

Republic of Honduras

conventional short form:

Honduras

local long form:

Republica de Honduras

local short form:

Honduras

Type:

Domcratic constitutional republic

Executive Branch:

President:

President Juan Orlando HERNANDEZ (elected in November 2013); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government.

Note on elections:

The president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term; the last election was held on Nov. 28, 2013 (next to be held in November 2017).

The breakdown of the 2013 election results was as follows --

Juan Orlando HERNANDEZ Alvarado elected president; percent of vote - Juan Orlando HERNANDEZ Alvarado 36.9%, Xiomara CASTRO 28.8%, Mauricio VILLEDA 20.3%, Salvador NASRALLA 13.4%

Note on chief of state and head of government:

President Manuel ZELAYA Rosales (since January 27, 2006) was deposed in a military coup in June 2009; the country's Congress allegedly used a fraudulent letter of resignation to place Congressional President Roberto Micheletti into power as the country's new president. At issue was a controversial proposal aimed at extending Zelaya's tenure. It was that issue, which was to be put to the voters in a non-binding referendum that led to the responses by all quarters of the

Honduran establishment, with the military, Supreme Court, and even the Congress, acting to ensure that such a move would not take place. The international community largely refused to recognize the new Honduran leadership and condemned the illegal ouster of Zelaya and the concomitant installation of Micheletti. Elections were held in November 2009, bringing Porfirio LOBO Sosa to power. Fresh elections were set for 2013, with Juan Orlando HERNANDEZ elected to power, as discussed in the 2013 Election Primer below.

Primer on 2013 Elections:

Nov, 24, 2013 --

Presidential and parliamentary elections were set to be held in Honduras in November 2013. A precise date was set for the elections to go forward on Nov. 24, 2013.

At the executive level, the president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term; the last presidential election was held on Nov. 29, 2009, and won decisively by Porfirio Lobo Sosa against Elvin Santos Lozano. In 2013, it was to be seen who would succeed President Lobo. The main candidates were expected to be Juan Orlando Hernández of the National Party, Mauricio Villeda of the Liberal Party, former First Lady Xiomara Castro de Zelaya of Libre, Romeo Vásquez Velásquez of Patriotic Alliance, and Salvador Nasralla of the newly-formed Anti-Corruption Party.

At the legislative level, the action would be in the unicameral "Asamblea Nacional" (National Assembly or National Congress), composed of 128 seats where members are elected for four-year terms. In the last elections held on Nov. 29, 2013, the National Party won the most seats with the Liberal Party in second place, and the Christian Democratic Party, the Democratic Unification Party, and the Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party trailing far behind. It was to be seen which party would see victory in 2013.

Why are these elections important?

The 2013 elections in Honduras were to be regarded as a democratic test of sorts for Honduras. Before the presidency of Lobo (elected in 2009), President Manuel Zelaya Rosales was the head of state having won the 2006 election. He was deposed in a coup in June 2009 with the country's Congress allegedly using a fraudulent letter of resignation to place Congressional President Roberto Micheletti into power as the country's new president. The move had been made in response to Zelaya's effort to extend his tenure in power via a popular referendum. That effort was understandably opposed by all quarters of the Honduran establishment, with the military, Supreme Court, and even the Congress, acting to ensure that such a move would not take place. However, the removal of Zelaya from power was accomplished in such a controversial and extra-legal manner that the international community largely refused to recognize the new Honduran leadership, which was at the time under the control of Micheletti.

Indeed, the ousting of Zelaya from power drove Honduras into pariah status in the Western Hemisphere with the countries of the Americas virtually united in its call for the restoration of democratic order. Meanwhile, Honduras was suspended from the Organization of American States, and also subject to a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly demanding the reinstatement of Zelaya. The country had to deal with a halt in funding from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Elections in November 2009, which ended in victory for Lobo, were intended to return Honduras to good governance and democratic order. The election of Lobo -- and the exit of Micheletti from the office of the presidency -- calmed the political waters to some extent. Nevertheless, Honduras remained deeply and bitterly divided, given the political trauma that plagued the nation.

In 2013, all eyes would again be on Honduras to see if the Central American country would continue to chart the path of stability with peaceful elections and a drama-free transition of power. All expectations were that the presidential race would be a close contest between Xiomara Castro, the wife of deposed former President Manuel Zelaya and Libre candidate -- and -- Juan Orlando Hernandez of the National Party.

Election notes --

It should be noted that in September 2013 -- two months ahead of election day -- Xiomara Castro, the wife of deposed former President Manuel Zelaya and Libre candidate, held a small lead in the presidential race ahead of her rivals. According to a poll by CID Gallup, the leftist politician had 29 percent of the vote share in terms of voters' preferences, ahead of Hernandez of the National Party, who had 27 percent. This poll result indicated that Castro had successfully boosted her standing in the eyes of citizens when she fought for her husband's right to retain the presidency following his questionable ousting discussed above. Clearly, former President Zelaya's supporters were transferring their allegiance to his wife. Should she succeed in winning the presidency, Castro's performance would be a political validation for Zelaya.

But Hernandez -- known by the nickname "Dauphin" due to his close alignment with outgoing President Lobo -- was also attracting significant vote share and had a good chance to overtake Castro and seize victory. Hernandez campaigned on a law and order platform that found resonance with a significant portion of the population; specifically, Hernandez was promising to form a new military police force to deal with the rampant crime plaguing Honduras from drug and gang violence to murder.

On Nov. 24, 2013, voters went to the polls in Honduras to cast their ballots in the country's elections. A partial vote count showed a close contest with Juan Orlando Hernandez of the National Party holding a small lead over Xiomara Castro of Libre at the presidential level. Adding to the confusion was a claim of victory by both of these two candidates before the vote counting was complete. Via Twitter, Hernandez declared victory, writing, "Thank God and thank you to

the Honduran people for this triumph." Meanwhile, Castro also took to Twitter to declare a counter-claim of victory as follows, "Based on the exit poll results that I have received from the whole country, I can tell you: I am the president of Honduras." The matter would be settled within days with electoral official saying that an official result would soon be announced to the public.

Ultimately, it was Honduras' conservative ruling party candidate, Hernandez, who was declared to be the winner of the presidential contest with 36 percent of the vote share over Castro, his closest rival, who had 29 percent.

Villeda of the Liberal Party took 20 percent and Nasralla of the Anti-Corruption Party secured more than 13 percent. All other candidates garnered less than a single percentage point respectively. Hernandez' victory over his leftist challenger, Castro, suggested that the policy agenda of outgoing President Lobo would be continued in the halls of government.

That being said, Castro's close finish behind Hernandez indicated that a significant portion of the population continued to support (or sympathize with) ousted President Zelaya. In many senses, Honduras' political climate remained as polarized as before. Moreover, Castro's accusation that the election outcome was the result of "a fraud of incalculable proportions," raised the specter of continued political turmoil for Honduras. Castro noted that her party, Libre, would not recognize the election result and that the government in power was illegitimate. At a news conference, she told the supporters of Libre that the party would challenge the election result, saying, "I call on you to unite to defend our proposal...This fight has just begun. They will never defeat us." Castro's challenge would be aided by the leader of the newly-formed Anti-Corruption Party whose candidate, Salvador Nasralla, won more than 13 percent of the vote and also questioned Hernandez' victory.

In response to allegations of fraud, election authorities in Honduras agreed to carry out a recount. The document requesting that recount explained that its justification for such action was "due to the alterations that each tally has been subject to, (and) the vulnerability and insecurity of the system at the expense of the people's will, massively expressed at the polls."

Note: At the congressional level, the conservative National Party won the most seats followed by left-wing Libre. The rest of the seats in Congress would be filled the Liberal Party and the aforementioned Anti-Corruption Party.

Cabinet:

Cabinet; appointed by the president

Legislative Branch:

Unicameral "Asamblea Nacional" (National Assembly or National Congress):

128 members; elected for a four-year term by proportional representation

2013 Elections:

Nov, 24, 2013 --

At the legislative level in the 2013 elections the action would be in the unicameral "Asamblea Nacional" (National Assembly or National Congress), composed of 128 seats where members are elected for four-year terms.

In the last elections held on Nov. 29, 2013, the National Party won the most seats with the Liberal Party in second place, and the Christian Democratic Party, the Democratic Unification Party, and the Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party trailing far behind. It was to be seen which party would see victory in 2013.

At the congressional level, the conservative National Party won the most seats followed by left-wing Libre. The rest of the seats in Congress would be filled the Liberal Party and the Anti-Corruption Party.

The breakdown of the election results was as follows --

percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - National Party of Honduras or PNH 48, Freedom and Refounding Party or LIBRE 37, Liberal Party or PL 27, Anti-Corruption Party or PAC 13, Christian Democratic Party or DC 1, Democratic Unification Party or UD 1, Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party or PINU 1

See Primer above for further election details.

Judicial Branch:

"Corte Suprema de Justicia" (Supreme Court of Justice); judges elected for four-year terms by the National Assembly

Legal System:

Rooted in Roman and Spanish civil law with increasing influence of English common law; recent judicial reforms include abandoning Napoleonic legal codes in favor of the oral adversarial system; accepts ICJ jurisdiction with reservations.

Constitution:

Jan. 11, 1982, effective Jan. 20, 1982; amended 1995

Political Parties, Leaders, and Types:

Anti-Corruption Party or PAC [Salvador NASRALLA]
Christian Democratic Party or DC [Felicito AVILA Ordonez]
Democratic Unification Party or UD [Cesar HAM]
Freedom and Refounding Party or LIBRE [Jose Manuel ZELAYA Rosales]
Liberal Party or PL [Mauricio VILLEDA Bermudez]
National Party of Honduras or PNH [Gladys Aurora LOPEZ]
Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party or PINU [Jorge Rafael AGUILAR Paredes]

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Administrative Divisions:

18 departments (departamentos, singular - departamento): Atlantida, Choluteca, Colon, Comayagua, Copan, Cortes, El Paraiso, Francisco Morazan, Gracias a Dios, Intibuca, Islas de la Bahia, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Olancho, Santa Barbara, Valle, Yoro

Principal Government Officials

Government and Leadership:

Pres. Juan Orlando HERNANDEZ Alvarado
Vice Pres. Ricardo ALVAREZ
Min.-Coordinator Gen. Jorge Ramon HERNANDEZ Alcerro
Min. of Agriculture & Livestock Jacobo PAZ
Min. of Communications & Govt. Strategy Hilda HERNANDEZ
Min. of Culture, Arts, & Sports Tulio Mariano GONZALES
Min. of Defense Samuel REYES
Min. of Economy Marlon TABORA
Min. of Education Marlon ESCOTO

Min. of Finance Wilfredo CERRATO
Min. of Foreign Relations Arturo CORRALES Alvarez
Min. of Govt. Ricardo ALVAREZ
Min. of Health Yolani BATRES
Min. of Human Rights, Justice, & Decentralization Rigoberto CHANG Castillo
Min. of Inclusion & Social Development Ricardo CARDONA
Min. of Industry & Commerce Jose Adonis LAVAIRE
Min. of Infrastructure & Energy Roberto ORDONEZ
Min. of Labor & Social Security Jorge BOGRAN
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment Jose Antonio GALDAMEZ
Min. of the Presidency Reinaldo SANCHEZ
Min. of Public Works, Transportation, & Housing
Min. of Security Julian PACHECO Tinoco
Min. of Tourism Nelly JEREZ
Attorney Gen. Oscar CHINCHILLA Banegas
Pres., Central Bank Marlon TABORA
Ambassador to the US Jorge Alberto MILLA Reyes
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York Mary Elizabeth FLORES Flake

-- as of 2015

Leader Biography

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Foreign Relations

General Relations

Honduras is a founding member of the United Nations (U.N.) and a number of its specialized agencies. During 1995-96, Honduras served for the first time as a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. It is also a member of the World Trade Organization.

See Editor's Note below as regards the coup d'etat of 2009 and the international response.

Regional Relations

Honduras is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Central American Parliament, the Central American Integration System, and the Central American Security Commission.

At the 1994 Summit of the Americas, Honduras joined its six Central American neighbors in signing the Alliance for Sustainable Development, known as the Conjunta Centroamerica-USA, or CONCAUSA, to promote sustainable economic development in the region. Honduras held the six-month SICA presidency during the second half of 1998.

In 1969, El Salvador and Honduras fought the brief "Soccer War" over disputed border areas as well as friction resulting from the 300,000 Salvadorans who had immigrated to Honduras in search of land and employment. The catalyst of the war was nationalistic feelings aroused by a series of soccer matches between the two countries. The two countries formally signed a peace treaty on Oct. 30, 1980, to put the border dispute before the International Court of Justice, or ICJ, and in September 1992, the court awarded most of the disputed territory to Honduras. In January 1998, Honduras and El Salvador signed a border demarcation treaty to implement the terms of the ICJ decree. Although the treaty awaited legal ratification in both countries, Honduras and El Salvador maintained normal diplomatic and trade relations.

At the 17th Central American Summit in 1995, hosted by Honduras in the northern city of San Pedro Sula, the region's six countries (excluding Belize) signed treaties to create confidence and security-building measures and to combat the smuggling of stolen automobiles in the isthmus. In subsequent summits, held every six months, Honduras continued to work with the other Central American countries on issues of common concern.

In Costa Rica in May 1997, former President Reina met with his Central American counterparts, former U.S. President Clinton, and the president of the Dominican Republic. The leaders celebrated the remarkable democratic transformation in the region and reaffirmed their support for strengthening democracy and good governance and promoting prosperity through economic integration, free trade and investment. The leaders also expressed their commitment to the continued development of just and equitable societies and responsible environmental policies as an integral element of sustainable development.

The president of Honduras consults frequently with the other Central American presidents on issues of mutual interest. Former President Flores continued his predecessor's strong emphasis on Central American cooperation and integration, which resulted in an agreement easing border controls and tariffs among Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador. However, maritime border tensions between Honduras and Nicaragua resurfaced in late 1999.

In November 1999, Honduras and Colombia negotiated and ratified the Caribbean Sea Maritime Limits Treaty, an agreement that established marine borders between the two countries. Nicaragua, however, claimed that the treaty would deprive it of 130,000 square kilometers of maritime space in the Caribbean Sea and dishonor a Central American Court of Justice verdict. The matter came to a head in late 1999 when the Nicaraguan government filed a lawsuit against Honduras to be heard before the International Court of Justice. Honduras maintained that treaty adhered to international law.

By December 1999, the Honduran authorities stated that no escalation in the differences between their country and Nicaragua would be forthcoming, and they expressed confidence that the matter

would be resolved. The first of several discussions between the foreign ministers of Honduras and Nicaragua began, and an envoy from the Organization of American States was sent to preside over the mediation until the case could be taken before the International Court of Justice. On Dec. 31, 1999, both countries agreed to deploy naval troops stationed along a specified strip of the Caribbean Sea to create a demilitarized zone. They also decided to define maritime borders to avoid armed confrontations. In February 2000, however, Honduran troops were still stationed in the proposed demilitarized zone. The Nicaraguan armed forces issued a stern warning that Honduras would have 30 days to remove their troops, stating that failure to comply could result in serious consequences.

In early 2001, two separate skirmishes involving Honduran and Nicaraguan patrol boats and Honduran fishing boats occurred in the maritime border area. Both countries denied instigating the armed conflict. At this time, Nicaragua's army and Foreign and Defense Ministries denounced Honduras for reinforcing its military, building up arms and practicing military maneuvers in the border region, all clear violations of the 1999 and 2000 accords. On March 17, 2001, the two countries signed a new agreement under the mediation of the OAS aimed at promoting confidence and security between the two sides and establishing mechanisms of observation and international vigilance. Under the agreement, both countries were to conduct at least four combined maritime patrols each year, cease sending more troops to the border and exchange information on their military positions.

On March 25, 2001, Nicaraguan President Arnaldo Aleman proposed that Nicaragua and Honduras search for a solution outside international justice organizations to their territorial maritime disputes. Instead, he suggested that they negotiate amongst themselves over the disputed area, with the aim of turning it into a bi-national sea. Weeks later, however, on April 3, Aleman suspended his proposal due to criticism by Nicaraguan legislators. As of April 2001, only 185 kilometers of the 400-kilometer boundary between Honduras and Nicaragua had been defined, and the maritime border in the Fonseca Gulf had yet to be delimited.

On Feb. 14, 2001, Honduran legislators ratified a free-trade agreement with Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador, despite dissatisfaction with some of the restrictions of the agreement. When the accord comes up for revision, Honduras plans to press for it to include a wider array of goods.

On June 16, 2001, Honduras joined Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama and Belize in the signing of the Puebla-Panama Plan, or PPP. The Plan's aim is to encourage regional political, economic, social, environmental and cultural cooperation. It includes plans for regional trade; physical integration in terms of infrastructure, energy grids, and telecommunications; and large-scale and local programs for conservation and the sustainable exploitation of natural resources. The framework for the PPP was provided by the Tuxtla Dialogue and Concertation mechanism, established in 1991.

Former Honduran Vice President William Handal signed an accord with the Salvadoran vice president in July 2001 aimed at collaborating in the development of the border region between the two countries. Around 500,000 people reside in the region.

On Jan. 26, 2002, Honduras re-established diplomatic ties with Cuba after a 41-year hiatus. In recent years Cuba and Honduras have had humanitarian and educational ties; Cuba sent medical teams to assist in areas devastated by Hurricane Mitch and Honduras sent students to Cuba to study medicine.

In the spring of 2006, Honduras, and its former nemesis, El Salvador, inaugurated the newly-agreed upon parameters of their mutual border.

In October of 2007, a long-standing territorial dispute between Honduras and Nicaragua came to a head when the International Court of Justice at The Hague made a final ruling. At issue have been (1) fishing rights and (2) claims about potential oil extraction rights along the Misquito coast. While Honduras argued that sovereignty of four Caribbean islands should favor its interests, Nicaragua argued that the shape of the land should favor its own interests. Regardless, the court found that while Honduras had sovereignty over the islands, the border should be drawn at a shallower angle. Resultantly, the islands were kept inside Nicaraguan waters with three-mile circles around the islands connecting them to the Honduran territorial waters.

Other Significant Relations

The United States (U.S.) and Honduras have close and friendly relations. Honduras is supportive of U.S. policy in the U.N. and other forums. In 1996, Honduras' overall voting coincidence with the United States in the United Nations was 44.3 percent and in 1997, it was 40.3 percent. As a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, Honduras played an important role in 1996, most notably in advancing the process of selecting a new U.N. secretary general during its October presidency of the council.

During the 1980s, Honduras supported U.S. policy in Central America opposing a revolutionary Marxist government in Nicaragua and an active leftist insurgency in El Salvador. The Honduran government also played a key role in negotiations that culminated in the 1990 Nicaraguan elections. Honduras contributed troops for the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti, and continues to participate in the U.N. observer mission in the Western Sahara.

The U.S. has historically been the largest bilateral donor to Honduras. Total aid from the U.S. to Honduras for the period 1991-95 was US\$322 million. U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, obligations to Honduras totaled US\$24.3 million for development assistance and US\$4.7 million for food products in 1997. Over the years such appropriations have

been used to achieve such objectives as fostering democratic institutions, increasing private sector employment and income, helping Honduras fund its arrears with international financial institutions, providing humanitarian aid, increasing agricultural production, and providing loans to micro-businesses. Of the US\$29 million aid in fiscal year 1997, more than US\$16 million was spent directly on goods and services from the United States. In addition, since about half of Honduras' imports come from the United States, development assistance that stimulates growth of the Honduran economy indirectly stimulates U.S. exports and thus supports additional employment and growth in the U.S. economy.

The United States historically has been, and remains today, Honduras' largest trading partner, supplying approximately 43 percent of its imports and purchasing around 53 percent of its exports. U.S. Department of Commerce data indicates that bilateral trade between the two nations reached US\$5.2 billion in 1998. American businesses exported US\$2.4 billion in goods and services to Honduras in 1998. Leading Honduran exports to the United States have included coffee, bananas, textile products, other fruits and vegetables, seafood and beef.

The United States accounts for about 75 percent of total direct foreign investment in Honduras, worth an estimated US\$900 million. The largest U.S. investments in Honduras are in fruit production, particularly banana and citrus, petroleum refining and marketing, and mining. In addition, U.S. corporations have invested in tobacco, apparel, shrimp culture, beef, poultry and animal-feed production, insurance, leasing, food processing, brewing and furniture manufacturing. U.S. apparel facilities or "maquilas" are responsible for the majority of the approximately 100,000 jobs in that sector of Honduran businesses. In recent years, more than 100 American companies have been operating in Honduras.

U.S.-Honduran ties are further strengthened by numerous private contacts, with an average of 110,000 U.S. citizens visiting Honduras annually, and approximately 10,500 Americans residing there.

Hurricane Mitch, the worst natural disaster ever to strike the Western Hemisphere, brought massive rains to Honduras that killed thousands of people, left hundreds of thousands homeless, devastated the road network and other public infrastructure, and crippled certain key sectors of the economy. Estimates are that Hurricane Mitch caused US\$8.5 billion in damages to homes, hospitals, schools, roads, farms, and businesses throughout Central America, including more than US\$3 billion in Honduras alone. Throughout the country, damage affected highways, bridges, ports and airports; the electrical power system, the telephone, water and sewage systems; hospitals and health centers; more than 3,000 schools; almost 83,000 houses; private agricultural infrastructure; and the non-agricultural private sector. Estimates of lost future productive capacity vary.

In response to this disaster, the U.S. proposed a significant supplemental budget request for Central America, in addition to the more than US\$300 million in immediate humanitarian aid provided in

the wake of the storm. This supplemental assistance was designed to help repair water and sanitation systems; housing, schools and roads; provide agricultural inputs; local government crisis management training; debt relief for Honduras and Nicaragua; and environmental management expertise. Additional resources have been proposed to maintain anti-crime and drug assistance programs.

New and existing U.S. economic programs, some with proposed enhancements that have taken on even greater importance since the hurricane, include: the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act; Overseas Private Investment Corporation financing for private investment and insurance against risks of war and expropriation; U.S. Trade Development Agency grant loans for pre-feasibility studies of projects with U.S. product and services export potential; and U.S. Export-Import Bank short- and medium-term financing for U.S. exports to Honduran importers.

The Peace Corps has been active in Honduras since 1962, and at one time the program there was the largest in the world. Some 5,000 American women and men, ranging in age from 22 to 65, have worked with the people of Honduras. In 1997, there were 200 Peace Corps Volunteers working in the poorest parts of Honduras. As a result of Hurricane Mitch, the U.S. also created a "Crisis Corps" composed primarily of those who formerly served in the Peace Corps and who are pitching in to provide short-term assistance.

Formal U.S. security assistance has declined from over US\$500 million provided between 1982 and 1993 to US\$500,000 annually in International Military Education and Training courses. Some residual credits are still available from previous military aid, but will be exhausted within the next few years. In the absence of a large security assistance program, defense cooperation has taken the form of increased participation by the Honduran armed forces in military-to-military contact programs and bilateral and multilateral combined exercises oriented toward peacekeeping, disaster relief, humanitarian/civic assistance and counter-narcotics.

The U.S. Joint Task Force stationed at the Honduran Soto Cano Air Base plays a vital role in supporting combined exercises in Honduras and in neighboring Central American countries. While JTF-Bravo has been involved in several multilateral exercises and numerous smaller humanitarian deployments, it played an absolutely critical role in responding to Hurricane Mitch by saving lives, repairing roads and critical infrastructure and meeting high priority health and sanitation needs. U.S. forces also delivered millions of dollars worth of privately donated goods to those in need.

Since 1994, U.S. troops, in collaboration with counterparts from Brazil and Colombia, have assisted Honduran soldiers in clearing land mines from the country's border with Nicaragua. As of early 1998, approximately 180,000 square meters had been cleared of mines, and approximately 2,000 mines had been destroyed.

Following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, Honduras declared its support

for the United States. The government stated that it would work cooperatively with the United States by stepping up security measures in the country's ports of entry, following all leads regarding international terrorist networks, particularly the existence of Honduran property and bank accounts in the hands of terrorists, and engaging in the exchange of information.

In late May 2003, Honduras became the first Central American country to agree to authorize a deployment of troops to Iraq to help stabilize the country following the U.S.-led war that took place in the spring of 2003. Defense minister Federico Breve at that time emphasized that the Honduran soldiers would be involved exclusively "in the post-war activities" being carried out as part of the reconstruction of Iraq.

Legislators Ramon Villeda and Cesar Ham of the opposition Liberal and UD parties, respectively, said that sending troops to Iraq would be equal to legitimizing the U.S.-led war against the former Baghdad regime. Meanwhile, President Maduro maintained that Honduras was deploying troops to Iraq to show its "friendship and solidarity" with the United States, which the government supported during the war. Despite the government's show of solidarity with the United States' actions, some Honduran citizens had protested the war, drawing connections between U.S. imperialist aggression in Latin America and the Middle East. Honduran protesters argued that both the U.S.-led neoliberal economic program in Latin America and the proposed post-war provisional U.S. military government in Iraq demonstrate a colonialist and imperialist attitude.

In May 2004, Honduras decided to withdraw its troops from the Middle Eastern country of Iraq. Much of the country's 370-person contingent had served in some of Iraq's flashpoint towns such as Najaf. In this regard, President Ricardo Maduro said he intended to withdraw Honduran troops "in the shortest possible time."

Meanwhile, in June 2003, then-President Ricardo Maduro encouraged Spanish business leaders to invest in Honduras, highlighting opportunities in tourism, agriculture and infrastructure. The two countries were discussing the signing of an \$80 million cooperation agreement as part of Spain's bilateral aid program.

In March 2006, the Congress of Honduras approved the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The free trade deal with the United States went into effect a month later.

Editor's Note.

President Manuel Zelaya Rosales (since January 27, 2006) was deposed in a military coup in June 2009; the country's Congress used possibly fraudulent letter of resignation to place Congressional President Roberto Micheletti into power as the country's new president. At issue was a controversial proposal aimed at extending Zelaya's tenure. It was that issue, which was to be put to

the voters in a non-binding referendum that led to the responses by all quarters of the Honduran establishment, with the military, Supreme Court, and even the Congress, acting to ensure that such a move would not take place.

The international community has largely refused to recognize the new Honduran leadership and have condemned the illegal ouster of Zelaya and the concomitant installation of Micheletti.

- President Zelaya's ally in the region, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, said that the deposed Honduran leader had been the victim of an illegal coup d'etat. He also accused Honduran troops of temporarily detaining and assaulting the Venezuelan and Cuban ambassadors in that country in a flagrant violation of diplomatic practice. Chavez warned that his country was not "at battle" and he was putting the Venezuelan military on alert.

- Chavez' outrage was echoed by the European Union, which decried the undemocratic transfer of power.

- An emergency meeting was convened in Washington of the Organization of American States (OAS). The OAS issued a condemnation of the ousting of President Zelaya, characterizing it as "a coup." The OAS also asserted that it would not recognize the illegal authority of the new government and the body's Permanent Council called for the "immediate, safe and unconditional return" of Zelaya to his office as president.

- Mercosur -- the regional bloc made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay -- condemned the coup and said it will not recognize any Honduran authority besides Manuel Zelaya.

- The United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution demanding the reinstatement of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, while the World Bank said that it would institute a "pause" in lending to Honduras.

- United States President Barack Obama said that he was "deeply concerned" by the ousting of Zelaya. In a statement, President Obama called for a return to democracy as follows: "I call on all political and social actors in Honduras to respect democratic norms, the rule of law and the tenets of the Inter-American Democratic Charter." Making clear the United States' position, the American president also characterized the removal of Zelaya from the presidency as "illegal."

- United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton condemned the actions by the Honduran military and legislative branch.

- United States diplomats were also said to be working to ensure the safety of Zelaya and his family. The New York Times reported that officials in Washington were pressing for the return of Zelaya to power in Honduras.

***See "Political Conditions" of this Country Review for the latest post-coup developments as well as the deterioration of relations between Honduras and the international community. In particular, relations between Honduras and Brazil have devolved notably ever since ousted President Zelaya was said to be at the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa. In 2013, it was hoped that the signing of the new reconciliation deal would shift the political winds in Honduras, ushering in a climate of unity at home, and better relations with the international community. ***

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at CountryWatch.com; see Bibliography for research sources.

National Security

External Threats

Honduras does not face any immediate military threats, but is engaged in a few minor territorial disputes with neighboring countries.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) rendered a decision in a boundary dispute between Honduras and El Salvador in 1992. El Salvador subsequently pressed the ICJ to review the case. The ICJ rejected refused to do so in 2003. El Salvador also challenges Honduran claims to Conejo Island in the Gulf of Fonseca.

In April 2006, resolution over the border dispute between Honduras and El Salvador was reached when both countries inaugurated the parameters of the new border. The issue had caused conflict between both countries since 1969.

In 1999, the Nicaraguan government filed a claim against Honduras through the ICJ over a complicated maritime dispute in the Caribbean Sea.

In October of 2007, a long-standing territorial dispute between Honduras and Nicaragua came to a head when the International Court of Justice at The Hague made a final ruling. At issue have been (1) fishing rights and (2) claims about potential oil extraction rights along the Misquito coast.

While Honduras argued that sovereignty of four Caribbean islands should favor its interests, Nicaragua argued that the shape of the land should favor its own interests. Regardless, the court found that while Honduras had sovereignty over the islands, the border should be drawn at a shallower angle. Resultantly, the islands were kept inside Nicaraguan waters with three-mile circles around the islands connecting them to the Honduran territorial waters.

Crime

The United States (U.S.) Department of State reports a generally high rate of crime in Honduras. In addition to theft, crime of a more violent nature is prevalent there. Indeed, the country has been suffering from a spate of gang violence in past years. Recently, the U.S. Department of State reported that 46 American citizens had been murdered in Honduras since 1995. Also, Honduras serves as an interim destination for South American narcotics, bound principally for the United States. Small amounts of cannabis are cultivated there, mostly for domestic consumption. A high degree of corruption serves to facilitate criminal activity in Honduras.

Insurgencies

Despite a history of rampant unrest, generally stable political conditions have prevailed in Honduras since the late 1980s. The military regime in power at the time initiated a return to civilian rule in Honduras in 1979. Successive democratic elections have taken place there since 1981.

In 2009, President Manuel Zelaya Rosales was deposed in a military coup; the country's Congress used possibly fraudulent letter of resignation to place Congressional President Roberto Micheletti into power as the country's new president. The international community has largely refused to recognize the new Honduran leadership and have condemned the illegal ouster of Zelaya and the concomitant installation of Micheletti.

This latest military coup d'etat was the first undemocratic transfer of power in Honduras in almost three decades. Indeed it is one of few undemocratic transfers of power in the Western Hemisphere in recent times.

Terrorism

There is no specific threat of a terrorist attack against targets in Honduras or Honduran interests abroad. Likewise, Honduras has not been a target of terrorist violence in the past. Honduras is party to seven of the twelve international conventions and protocols pertaining to terrorism.

Note:

In 2011 and well into 2012, it was hoped that the signing of the new reconciliation deal would shift the political winds in Honduras, ushering in a climate of unity. All eyes were on the 2013 elections, which were mired by accusations of fraud but nonetheless ended with a transition of power.

As of 2014, Honduras remains plagued by manifold crime in a country where narcotics gangs operate with relative impunity and terrorize the local population. Honduras also has the dubious distinction of being home to one of the world's highest incidences of murder.

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Army, Navy (includes Naval Infantry), Air Force

Eligible age to enter service:

18

Mandatory Service Terms:

2-3 years for voluntary service, no conscription

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 1,525,578

females age 16-49: 1,539,688

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:

Males: 95,895

Females: 92,087

Military Expenditures (in US \$)-Percent of GDP:

1.05%

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Honduras is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin America, with 60 percent of the population living below the poverty line (CIA, 2010). During the 1980s, it faced a prolonged economic decline due to numerous factors including: the debt crisis early in that decade, a large and inefficient public sector, extensive administrative controls that discouraged private investment, a trade regime biased against exports, inefficient financial intermediation, and low investment in education and insecure property rights. Policy reforms beginning in 1990 sparked an economic turnaround, but macroeconomic mismanagement and the devastating Hurricane Mitch in 1998 again held back the country's economic development. But economic growth picked up in Honduras in recent years supported by improved macroeconomic performance and favorable external environment.

During 2009, however, Honduras' economy was significantly affected by the global economic crisis mostly through trade and remittances, and by a period of severe political turmoil. In late June 2009 President Manuel Zelaya was ousted from office by the military coup and forced into exile. Porfirio Lobo won a November 2009 election organized by the interim government and he was sworn into office in January 2010, marking the closure of seven months of political chaos. As a result of these developments, economic growth suffered a contraction in 2009, and the fiscal position deteriorated sharply. The economy saw sluggish economic growth in 2010, as the Lobo administration inherited a difficult fiscal position with off-budget debts accrued in previous administrations and government salaries nearly equivalent to tax collections. Early on, Lobo's government displayed a commitment to improving tax collection and cutting expenditures, and attracting foreign investment. In April 2010, The World Bank decided to restore development aid to Honduras after almost eight months of suspension – including a loan of \$270 million and an additional \$130 million in new credit. Honduras secured an IMF Precautionary Stand-By agreement in October 2010, which included a \$202 million loan. The agreement has helped renew multilateral and bilateral donor confidence in the country. In 2010, inflation was kept low, international monetary reserves grew and confidence by the private sector improved. In July 2011, the IMF announced it would lend Honduras \$113.9 million to continue supporting President Lobo's reform program and help the government subsidize key commodities due to recent spikes in international prices for raw materials.

In June 2012, ratings agency Standard & Poor's upgraded Honduras' credit rating to B-plus from B with a stable outlook, noting that a more stable political environment had led to long-term focus

and reform implementation. Specifically, S&P said the government had done a good job of restoring good relations with external donors and reducing domestic political tensions. The country's economy was expected to expand by up to 4 percent in 2012, aided by higher coffee prices and textile exports to the United States. Honduras was now tied with Mexico for a spot as the world's No. 3 arabica coffee producer after Brazil and Colombia, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

By February 2013, Moody's Investors Service said it revised Honduras' credit outlook to negative from stable and affirmed its B2 local and foreign currency government bond ratings. The outlook reflected the agency's concerns about "the government's fiscal deterioration in 2012 and the low likelihood of significant fiscal consolidation in 2013, given that it is an election year." The agency also cited "a deterioration in the economy's external finances, including a widening current account deficit, which remains only partially covered by" foreign direct investment.

In August 2013, the IMF projected growth would decline in 2013 due in part to a drop in coffee production due to rust leaf disease and weaker trading partner growth. IMF staff also predicted inflation would remain broadly unchanged for the year.

In December 2013, the Congress of Honduras unveiled its biggest tax overhaul in more than two decades in a move expected to generate about \$800 million a year in tax revenue. The country's public debt has more than quadrupled since 2008, leading to nationwide strikes by unpaid doctors and teachers.

In May 2014, the head of Honduras' central bank said the economy should grow from between 2.5 and 3.5 percent for the year, driven by telecommunications, agriculture, manufacturing and trade. He also projected that the fiscal deficit would decline in 2014 and even further in 2015, while expressing hope that the country would sign a new three-year credit deal with the IMF.

The economy again registered modest economic growth in 2014. In November 2014 along with his counterparts from El Salvador and Guatemala, President Hernandez announced the "Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle." The plan seeks to address the challenges facing the three Northern Triangle countries, including steps the governments will take to stimulate economic growth, increase transparency and fiscal responsibility, reduce violence, modernize the justice system, improve infrastructure, and promote educational opportunities over the next several years.

Then in December, Honduras - as hoped - did sign a three-year IMF stand-by arrangement aimed at easing the country's poor fiscal position.

In March 2015, the Honduran central bank said the country's economy should grow by up to 3.5 percent for the year, with the budget deficit dipping slightly. The growth would be driven by expectations for a recovery in the United States economy, activity in the financial sector, the

communications sector and the manufacturing export industry, according to Honduran Central Bank President Marlon Tabora.

Economic Performance

After robust growth from 2005 to 2007, real GDP slowed in 2008. The economy deteriorated further to a contraction in 2009, due to the deepening of the global economic crisis and the domestic political turmoil. Growth returned in 2010. Meanwhile, inflation increased in 2008 driven by rising world oil and food prices, but declined in 2009 with rapidly falling world commodity prices before climbing again in 2010. Meanwhile, the fiscal position deteriorated significantly with the overall fiscal deficit widening in 2009, reflecting lower tax revenues (driven by the economic slowdown) and a large increase in current expenditure (mostly public sector wages).

According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 3.4 percent

The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: -3.1 percent

Inflation was measured at: 7.0 percent

Updated in 2015

**Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.*

Supplementary Sources: The International Monetary Fund, Reuters and Honduras Weekly

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	335.028	361.348	376.540	409.612	439.702

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	11.942	7.856	4.204	8.783	7.346
Consumption (LCU billions)	260.106	284.080	308.495	332.199	360.290
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	53.820	58.545	63.009	64.350	69.792
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	87.107	88.762	81.936	90.359	95.670
Exports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	171.728	183.936	180.519	191.982	212.179
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	237.733	253.975	257.420	269.278	298.229

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Population, total (million)	7.777	7.936	8.098	8.264	8.433
Population growth (%)	2.047	2.044	2.041	2.050	2.045
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	43,079.34	45,532.80	46,497.85	49,565.78	52,140.64

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	165.958	172.810	177.634	183.115	189.523
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	3.835	4.129	2.791	3.086	3.500
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	201.875	209.101	211.975	223.691	232.004
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	7.808	3.579	1.374	5.527	3.716

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	86.747	96.421	115.033	117.491	124.223
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	7.448	11.152	19.303	2.137	5.730
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	23.112	22.501	22.947	24.416	25.766
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	77.431	81.307	86.406	100.009	113.295
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	-9.3160	-15.1140	-28.6270	-17.4820	-10.9280
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	-2.7807	-4.1827	-7.6027	-4.2679	-2.4853

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	172.579	184.638	199.897	226.170	242.784
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	12.382	6.987	8.264	13.143	7.346
Lending Interest Rate (%)	18.558	18.451	20.081	20.612	13.422
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.030	4.400	4.400	4.500	4.500

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/\$US)	18.983	19.518	20.355	20.994	22.050
Trade Balance NIPA (\$US billions)	-3.4771	-3.5885	-3.7781	-3.6818	-3.9025
Trade Balance % of GDP	-19.7015	-19.3826	-20.4231	-18.8706	-19.5700
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves (\$US billions)	2.783	2.532	3.008	3.458	3.239

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (\$US billions)	17.649	18.514	18.499	19.511	19.941
Exports (\$US billions)	9.046	9.424	8.869	9.145	9.623
Imports (\$US billions)	12.524	13.013	12.647	12.827	13.525

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (TBPd)	47.056	51.163	49.000	49.622	51.458
Petroleum Production (TBPd)	0.0200	0.0199	0.0199	0.0196	0.0199
Petroleum Net Exports (TBPd)	-47.0365	-51.1430	-48.9801	-49.6021	-51.4380
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	259.517	137.789	140.624	142.491	147.711
Coal Production (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (1000s st)	-259.5172	-137.7889	-140.6236	-142.4914	-147.7107

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	2.787	2.759	2.840	2.701	2.672
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	0.1407	0.5340	0.5837	0.6380	0.7018

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	0.1005	0.1092	0.1046	0.1060	0.1099
Petroleum Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	-0.1004	-0.1092	-0.1046	-0.1059	-0.1098
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0052	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0030
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0052	-0.0028	-0.0028	-0.0028	-0.0030
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.0279	0.0276	0.0284	0.0270	0.0267
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0014	0.0053	0.0058	0.0064	0.0070

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum-WTI (\$/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub (\$/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian (\$/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	2.245	2.441	2.337	2.367	2.455
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Based (mm mt C)	0.1487	0.0790	0.0806	0.0817	0.0847
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	2.393	2.520	2.418	2.449	2.539

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	978.663	878.808	928.524	725.468	710.015
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	543.955	522.868	593.642	406.119	378.506
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-434.7081	-355.9400	-334.8815	-319.3494	-331.5097
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	7.298	4.208	5.566	5.286	5.026
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	2.003	2.196	2.187	1.889	1.717
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-5.2954	-2.0120	-3.3793	-3.3974	-3.3091
Rice Total					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Consumption (1000 metric tons)	176.763	184.265	49.656	173.670	165.688
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	49.257	53.754	49.634	49.680	47.745
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-127.5054	-130.5107	-0.0218	-123.9899	-117.9426
Coffee Total Consumption (metric tons)	31,460.00	26,177.00	19,300.00	15,311.29	15,322.11
Coffee Production (metric tons)	275,133.23	331,980.24	267,810.09	281,142.00	262,030.42
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	243,673.23	305,803.24	248,510.09	265,830.71	246,708.31
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	1,441.00	894.000	796.000	774.438	801.139
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	1,515.64	1,105.47	1,166.96	1,138.42	1,153.46
Cocoa Beans Net Exports (metric tons)	74.645	211.468	370.955	363.983	352.325
Wheat Total					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Consumption (1000 metric tons)	199.281	174.215	237.407	263.306	235.201
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	1.087	0.9550	0.9984	1.033	0.8767
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-198.1944	-173.2600	-236.4086	-262.2728	-234.3242

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	4.476	6.018	5.247	5.247	5.247
Copper Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	-4.4760	-6.0180	-5.2470	-5.2470	-5.2470
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	401.702	338.649	626.198	913.748	878.727
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	-401.7020	-338.6490	-626.1985	-913.7480	-878.7267
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	45.621	38.180	38.180	30.738	27.637
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	-45.6210	-38.1797	-38.1797	-30.7384	-27.6375
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	0.5270	1.469	1.155	0.8407	0.8300
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	-0.5270	-1.4690	-1.1548	-0.8407	-0.8300
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	-0.0016	-0.0016	-0.0016	-0.0016	-0.0016
Gold Consumption (kg)	386.055	386.055	386.055	386.055	386.055
Gold Production (kg)	2,145.49	2,115.86	2,173.97	2,108.65	2,048.73
Gold Exports (kg)	1,759.44	1,729.81	1,787.92	1,722.59	1,662.67

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Silver Consumption (mt)	72,103.75	65,629.25	68,383.00	68,631.24	60,448.32
Silver Production (mt)	54,397.17	51,848.43	51,473.28	48,848.87	43,969.82
Silver Exports (mt)	-17706.5768	-13780.8160	-16909.7245	-19782.3759	-16478.4990

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper (\$/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc (\$/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin (\$/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead (\$/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel (\$/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold (\$/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver (\$/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Background

Honduras, the second poorest country in Central America, suffers from extraordinarily unequal distribution of income, as well as high unemployment and underemployment. The economy relies heavily on a narrow range of exports, notably apparel, bananas, and coffee, making it vulnerable to natural disasters and shifts in commodity prices; however, investments in the maquila and non-traditional export sectors are slowly diversifying the economy. Nearly half of Honduras's economic activity is directly tied to the US, with exports to the US equivalent to 30% of GDP and remittances for another 22%. The US-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) came into force in 2006 and has helped foster investment, but physical and political insecurity may deter potential investors. Despite improvements in tax collections, the government's fiscal deficit is growing due to increases in current expenditures from increasing public wages. Tegucigalpa lacks an IMF agreement; its Stand-By Agreement expired in April 2009.

Foreign Investment Assessment

Openness to Foreign Investment

Honduras welcomes foreign investors and can offer them a range of benefits. The ratification of the 1992 Investment Law, free trade zones, low labor costs, proximity to the U.S. market, Central America's best Caribbean port, macroeconomic and political stability, and the reduction of trade 47 barriers have made Honduras increasingly attractive to investors. On the other hand, juridical insecurity, a low educational level among the population, an antiquated labor code, corruption, inconsistency in the application of certain legal benefits for investors, bureaucratic red tape, inadequate financial supervision, increasing levels of crime, and an insufficiently developed infrastructure need to be addressed in order to improve the country's investment climate and attract even greater foreign investment.

The 1992 Investment Law guarantees national treatment to foreign private firms in Honduras, with only a few exceptions. The law does not limit foreign ownership of businesses, except for those specifically reserved for Honduran investors, i.e., small firms with capital less than 150,000 lempiras (US\$11,000). Additionally, government authorization is required for both foreign and domestic investors in the following areas:

- Basic health services;
- Telecommunications;
- Generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity;
- Air transport;
- Fishing, hunting and aquaculture;
- Exploitation of forestry resources;
- Investigation, exploration, and exploitation of mines, quarries, petroleum and related substances;
- Agricultural and agro-industrial activities exceeding land tenancy limits established by the Agricultural Modernization Law of 1992 and the Land Reform Law of 1974;
- Insurance and financial services;
- Private education services.

Foreign investors face some discriminatory treatment in Honduras. To participate in public tenders, foreign firms are required to act through a local agent. By law, local agency firms must be at least 51 percent Honduran-owned. Dividends paid to foreign investors are taxed at 15 percent, while local investors pay only 10 percent. Additionally, Honduran law requires majority Honduran ownership in the following areas:

- commercial fishing,
- local transportation,
- those areas benefiting directly from the National Agrarian Reform Law,
- insurance companies.

Finally, Honduran professional bodies heavily regulate the licensing of foreigners to practice law, medicine, engineering, accounting and other professions.

While the law does not permit discriminatory or preferential export and import policies affecting foreign investors, some do exist. The 1992 Investment Law guarantees freedom to export and import to all foreign investors, and eliminates the requirement of prior administrative permits and licenses, except for statistical registries or customs procedures.

Although there is a clear preference on the part of the Government of Honduras for new foreign investment in export industries, there are no officially mandated requirements that foreign investors must satisfy as a condition for investing in Honduras. There is a requirement that a privately-operated industrial park must generate 5,000 new jobs within five years of start up, but this rule applies to all owners, foreign or national. By February 2000, these industrial parks had generated over 120,000 jobs, an increase of nine percent over 1998. As a result of enhanced Caribbean Basin Initiative benefits authorized by the U.S. beginning October 1, 2000, employment in the maquila sector is expected to double in the next five years. In the last few months of 1998, Congress passed a series of laws designed to promote investment in renewable energy, tourism, agro-

industry, and mining. The Government has been slow to implement these laws. In the view of many senior Honduran officials, the country's natural resource base, labor costs, freedom of entry, competitive exchange rate and political stability are the country's best incentives.

Foreigners interested in working in the country must obtain a resident visa from the Honduran Ministry of Government and a work permit from the Ministry of Labor. The time required completing the resident visa and work permit process may take up to three months; however, there is no evidence of discrimination against foreigners in the granting of these documents.

Transparency of Regulatory System

Most Honduran laws dealing with business, trade, and labor are outdated. The country lacks a basic/ indexed legal code; laws are published in periodically circulated gazettes that lawyers and judges must maintain and index on their own. The Government of Honduras often lacks the resources to implement or enforce laws already on the books (or, more accurately, in the gazettes.) Property registration often is not up to date, nor can the results of title searches be relied upon. There is no title insurance in Honduras. Procedural red tape to obtain government approval for investment activities is still very common.

Nonetheless, progress has been made. The passage of the Investment Law in May 1992 is one of the best examples. As a result of this law, the Ministry of Industry and Trade created a one-stop export and investment registration window to deal with procedures related to the registration of exports and investment in the country. Unfortunately, this office is under-staffed and under-funded.

Labor Force

Total: 2.47 million estimated

By occupation: agriculture 34%, industry 21%, services 45%

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture products: bananas, coffee, citrus; beef; timber; shrimp

Industries: sugar, coffee, textiles, clothing, wood products

Import Commodities and Partners

Commodities: machinery and transport equipment, industrial raw materials, chemical products, fuels, foodstuffs

Partners: US 54%, El Salvador 3.5%, Mexico 3%

Export Commodities and Partners

Commodities: coffee, shrimp, bananas, gold, palm oil, fruit, lobster, lumber

Partners: US 66.1%, El Salvador 2.6%, Guatemala 2.4%

Telephone System

Telephones- main lines in use: 322,500

Telephones- mobile cellular: 326,500

General Assessment: general assessment: inadequate system

Domestic: N/A

International: country code - 504; satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean); connected to Central American Microwave System

Internet

Internet Hosts: 1,944

Internet users: 168,600

Roads, Airports, Ports and Harbors

Railways: 699 km

Highways: 13,603 km

Ports and harbors: La Ceiba, Puerto Castilla, Puerto Cortes, San Lorenzo, Tela, Puerto Lempira

Airports: 115; w/paved runways: 11

Legal System and Considerations

Honduras' legal system is rooted in Roman and Spanish civil law with increasing influence of English common law. Recent judicial reforms include abandoning Napoleonic legal codes in favor of the oral adversarial system. The country accepts ICJ jurisdiction, with some reservations.

Dispute Settlement

Dispute resolution within the Honduran legal system is slow and generally unsatisfactory. Investors

are strongly encouraged to hire competent Honduran legal counsel before taking any significant steps toward investing or otherwise doing business in Honduras. When entering into legal contracts, investors may wish to discuss with their lawyer the possibility of including language providing for arbitration or other forms of alternative dispute resolution. Honduras is a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). The Honduran Congress passed a new criminal procedures code last December that will enter fully into effect as of February 2002. It will change the Honduran judicial system from a written inquisitorial system to a more open and transparent oral-adversarial system.

Corruption Perception Ranking

See most recent ranking list, as reported by Transparency International, elsewhere in this Country Review.

Cultural Considerations

Honduras, like all parts of Latin America, is customarily formal. For example, one should always address people by their title and last name until invited to do otherwise. It is also important that one never stand with your hands on your hips, as this will be perceived as a sign you are angry, or that you yawn or cough (if one can avoid it) in public.

For More information see:

United States' State Department Commercial Guide

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5
Armenia	5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9

Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	5.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6

Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5

Dominica	6
Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5
France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5
Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5

Ghana	5.5
Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5
Honduras	5.5
Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5
India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4
Iraq	3
Ireland	8

Israel	8.5
Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9
Kosovo	4.5
Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5
Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5

Libya	3
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	5
Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5

Montenegro	5.5
Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8
Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6

Peru	6
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7
Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5
Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6
Serbia	6
Seychelles	5

Sierra Leone	4
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4
Suriname	5
Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4
Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5

Thailand	7.5-8
Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5
United Arab Emirates	8.5
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5

Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the [United Kingdom](#), [Iceland](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Austria](#). However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#), suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and [Latvia](#) have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern [Ukraine](#) fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring [Russia](#).

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for [Mali](#) and [Nigeria](#) versus the [Central African Republic](#), [Burkina Faso](#), and [Burundi](#). [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in [Nigeria](#) generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of [Burundi](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eyebrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in [Libya](#) and [Algeria](#) have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these

countries as well. [Syria](#) incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. [Iraq](#) saw a similar downgrade as a result of the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. [Yemen](#), likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, [Egypt](#) and [Tunisia](#) saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like [Pakistan](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) maintaining their low ratings.

The [United States](#) continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of [Mexico](#), there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In [Argentina](#), a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by

the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0
8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4
11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8
14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4

16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3
17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1
27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9
27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5
32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6

34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7
35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9
43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9
45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8
46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6
49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5

52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6
52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1
61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9
63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3
65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7
66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6

69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4
71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4
79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2
79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3
83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9
84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7

84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8
89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8
97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4
99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2
99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6
99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2

106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1
106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2
111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1
120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3

120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0
120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2
130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3
130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7
130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8
139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7

139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7
143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6
146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6
146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d'Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4
154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5
158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2

158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6
158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9
168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8
168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9
168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7
176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7

178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8
179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

Note:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of [Serbia](#), is not listed above. No calculation is available for [Kosovo](#) at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, [China](#) claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a [United States](#) domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

Source:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL: <http://www.transparency.org>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

Editor's Note:

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010
Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0
United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2

Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0
France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1
Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1
Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7
Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3

Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8
Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7
Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5
Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7
Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1

Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2
India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6
Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9
Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6
Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16

Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1
Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2
Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5
Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2
Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5

Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3
Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8
Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9
Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3
Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4

Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12
Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8
Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12
Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0
Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13

Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9
Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3
Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a
Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13
Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2

Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The [United States](#) falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by [Sweden](#) and [Singapore](#) in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of [China](#) continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- [Germany](#) moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- [Switzerland](#) tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: <http://www.weforum.org>

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

Corporate tax

The corporate income tax rate is applied at 25 percent on taxable income.

Capital gains

A 10 percent tax is applied to capital gains from property sales.

Social security

Social security contributions are applied at a rate of seven percent of gross salaries.

Pension contributions

Pension contributions are applied at a rate of 1.5 percent on gross salaries.

Indirect tax

There is a value added tax (VAT) of 12 percent that is applied to most transactions.

Stock Market

The Honduras Stock Exchange had 71 listed companies at the end of the last decade.

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

Cultural Demography

Honduras' rugged topography and lack of good ports on the Pacific coast have combined to keep it relatively isolated from the mainstream of social and economic development throughout its history. The capital, Tegucigalpa, is located high in the central mountains, removed from the isthmus's main north-south transportation routes. The isolation of the capital led to the rise of San Pedro Sula in the 20th century as the nation's commercial and industrial center.

The population totals over eight million people. About 90 percent of the population of Honduras is mestizo, of mixed European and Amerindian descent. There also are small minorities of European, African, Asian, Arab and Amerindian descent. Most Hondurans are Roman Catholic, but Protestant proselytization has resulted in significant numbers of converts. Spanish is the predominant language, although some English is spoken along the northern coast and on the Caribbean Bay Islands. Indigenous dialects and the Garifuna dialect also are spoken.

Human Development

In terms of health and welfare, the infant mortality rate in Honduras is 25.21 deaths per every 1,000 live births. According to figures released recently, the average life expectancy at birth is 69.35 years of age for the total population. The literacy rate for the population age 15 and is 80 percent. Note that 7.3 percent of GDP in this country is spent on health expenditures.

A notable measure of human development is the Human Development Index (HDI), which is formulated by the United Nations Development Program. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, knowledge and education, as well as economic standard of living. In a ranking of 169 countries, the HDI placed Honduras in the medium human development category, at 106th place.

Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI, which is calculated and updated annually, offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic

and financial indicators.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at CountryWatch.com; see Bibliography for research sources.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The [Human Development Index](#) (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human Development	High Human Development	Medium Human Development	Low Human Development
1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh
3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana
4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon

5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)
6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen
7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Surname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea
11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda
17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal
18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti
19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti
21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania

22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire
23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia
24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan
28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	159. Central African Republic
33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali
34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia
36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad

37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau
38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	123. Solomon Islands	165. Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
42. Barbados	84. Algeria	127. Sao Tome and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's [Human Development Index](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/) available at URL: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260
4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67
6	Finland	256.67
7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33
9	Brunei	253.33

10	Canada	253.33
11	Ireland	253.33
12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67
17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67
22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67
24	Vanuatu	246.67
25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33
27	Barbados	243.33

28	Belgium	243.33
29	Dominica	243.33
30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240
35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240
40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67
42	Dominican Republic	233.33
43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33
45	Qatar	233.33

46	Spain	233.33
47	Saint Lucia	233.33
48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230
53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33
58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33
60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33
61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220
63	Hong Kong	220

64	Indonesia	220
65	Kyrgyzstan	220
66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220
71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67
76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33
78	Philippines	213.33
79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33
81	Brazil	210

82	China	210
83	Cuba	210
84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67
89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33
94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33
96	Bhutan	200
97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67
99	Poland	196.67

100	Cape Verde	193.33
101	Kazakhstan	193.33
102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190
107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67
112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67
114	Morocco	186.67
115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67
117	Bolivia	183.33

118	Haiti	183.33
119	Nepal	183.33
120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180
125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180
130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67
132	Mauritania	176.67
133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33
135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33

136	Romania	173.33
137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170
138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170
143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33
148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160
150	Djibouti	160
151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67
153	Ethiopia	156.67

154	Latvia	156.67
155	Lithuania	156.67
156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150
161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33
166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33
168	Swaziland	140
169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33
171	Turkmenistan	133.33

172	Armenia	123.33
173	Sudan	120
174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [Finland](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#), [Austria](#) resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Moldova](#), [Belarus](#) and [Ukraine](#) ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, [Zimbabwe](#) and [Burundi](#) found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. [Japan](#) was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as [Brunei](#) and [Malaysia](#) were in the top tier, while [Pakistan](#) was close to the bottom with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bag with Saudi Arabians reporting healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? *Psychtalk* 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the [United States](#) will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the [Human Development Index](#) (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1

2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1
4	Guatemala	68.4
5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5
9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7
14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9
17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3

20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8
22	Sri Lanka	56.5
23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6
27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1
32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5
35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9

38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2
40	Algeria	51.2
41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4
45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2
50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1
53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8

56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7
58	Serbia	47.6
59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2
63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5
68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9
71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5

74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3
76	Spain	43.2
77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3
81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2
86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4
89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5

92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2
94	Iceland	38.1
95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5
99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2
104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0
107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3

110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7
112	Republic of the Congo	32.4
113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3
117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5
122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1
125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2

128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9
130	Angola	26.8
131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6
135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8
140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8
143	Zimbabwe	16.6

Source: This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).

Methodology: *The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>*

Status of Women

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:

Not Ranked

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:

74th out of 80

Female Population:

3.6 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:

69.9 years

Total Fertility Rate:

4.1

Maternal Mortality Ratio (2000):

110

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:

7,500-27,000

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):

31%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:

20

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):

62%

Female Adult Literacy Rate:

80%

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:

N/A

Female-Headed Households (%):

N/A

Economically Active Females (%):

41.6%

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):

40.0%

Female Estimated Earned Income:

\$1,447

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):

Lower or Single House: 5.5%

Upper House or Senate: N/A

Year Women Received the Right to Vote:

1955

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:

1955

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation levels)
2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)
3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)
4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

	2010 rank	2010 score	2010 rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank
Country								
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4
Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1
New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9
Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8

Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10
South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19
United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15
Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13
United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46
Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17
Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22

Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62
Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a
Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50
Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14
Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38
Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32
Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49

Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45
France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86
Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25
Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36
Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77
Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72
Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78

Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53
Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64
Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47
Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63
Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65
Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84
Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80

Brueni Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66
Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100
Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71
Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82
Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48
Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93
Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94

Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83
Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59
Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56
United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97
Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a
Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106
Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115

Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111
Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109
Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108
Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119
Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120
Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121
Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122
Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123

Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112
Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as [Iceland](#), [Norway](#), [Finland](#), and [Sweden](#) have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, [France](#) has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the [United States](#) has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. [Canada](#) has continued to remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. [Lesotho](#) and South African ranked highly in the index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite [Lesotho](#) still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The [Philippines](#) and [Sri Lanka](#) were the top

ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context. The [Philippines](#) has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the [United Arab Emirates](#) held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

<http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende>

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Content to come!

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. A firm handshake with direct eye contact is the customary form of greeting. Men will need to wait for a woman to extend her hand first if she wants her hand shaken. Friends and relatives will often greet each other with a kiss and/or a hug -- called the *abrazo* in Spanish. Men, however, do not usually hug other men. A pat on the shoulder is a sign of friendship.

2. Generally, greetings among Latin Americans are lengthy endeavors involving both greetings and many inquiries about health, travels, relatives, friends or acquaintances. Quick greetings are interpreted as disrespectful and thoughtless.
3. As in all parts of Latin America, formality is the norm. Always address people by their title and last name until invited to do otherwise.
4. Yawning or coughing in public, especially while in conversation, is very rude. Always cover the mouth if you must yawn or cough. Eating in public is also not advised.
5. Never stand with your hands on your hips, as this will be perceived as a sign you are angry. While such aggressive stances are normal in North America, they do not translate well elsewhere. Of course, one should also expect Latin Americans to communicate in close proximity than in North America. Try not to be too uncomfortable with this distinction.
6. Sit only on chairs and couches, not on tables and other things unintended for seating. Also, do not rest your feet on tables or pieces of furniture.
7. Punctuality, although not strictly adhered to in daily living, is expected in business circles, particularly with foreigners. If you are invited to a party, never be on time. For dinner parties, it is appropriate to arrive up thirty minutes late if you are alone. At large parties you may arrive up to an hour late.
8. Sports (especially soccer which is called "*futball*" locally), sightseeing, culture, literature, dance, music, family and travel make excellent topics of conversation. Try to be informed about the local cultural life in this regard.
9. Like other Latin Americans, Hondurans have a tradition of hospitality and may invite guests to their homes. Dinner is normally eaten between 7:00 and 9:00 P.M., but a dinner party will begin and end later. A dinner party will end soon after the meal, but a cocktail party may go until later. One should not, however, drop in for an unscheduled visit at someone's home.
10. Dining is formal with diners keeping wrists on the table and elbows off the table. The fork should remain consistently in the left hand and the knife should be used in the right hand.
11. Note that business is not usually discussed at social dinners, although business dinners at restaurants do occur frequently. Know the difference between a social occasion and a business lunch and expect differences in conversation accordingly.
12. If you are invited to dinner, it is appropriate (although not expected) to bring a gift for the host

or hostess. Flowers, expensive and imported chocolates, pastries, cognacs, whiskey and other upper tier brands of liquor make fine gifts. Inappropriate gifts include knives (they symbolize the dissolution of a friendship) or certain kinds of flowers (some flowers may be associated with funerals). A wrapped gift may not be opened in the presence of the giver for fear of appearing greedy, but if you are the recipient of a gift, profuse appreciation is expected.

13. Dress is generally casual but fashionable and one should always dress with good taste. Latin Americans are very conscious of self-presentation. Business attire is somewhat more orthodox, including suits for both men and women. Shorts should be confined to private homes and are not generally worn on the street.

Travel Information

Please Note:

This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the [United States](#) Department of State's listings available at URL:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

[Afghanistan](#), [Algeria](#), [Burundi](#), [Cameroon](#), [Central African Republic](#), [Chad](#), [Colombia](#), [Democratic Republic of Congo](#), [Djibouti](#), [El Salvador](#), [Eritrea](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Guinea](#), [Honduras](#), [Iraq](#), [Iran](#), [Lebanon](#), [Liberia](#), [Libya](#), [Mali](#), [Mauritania](#), [Mexico](#), [Nepal](#), [Niger](#), [Nigeria](#), North Korea, [Pakistan](#), Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, [Philippines](#) areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, [Saudi Arabia](#), [Sierra Leone](#), [Somalia](#), South [Sudan](#), [Sudan](#), [Syria](#), [Ukraine](#), [Venezuela](#), and [Yemen](#).

Please Note:

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens that the level of crime and violence in [Honduras](#) remains critically high, although it has declined in the past two years. Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens visit [Honduras](#) each year for study, tourism, business, and volunteer work without incident. However, crime and violence are serious problems throughout the country. The Government of [Honduras](#) lacks sufficient resources to properly investigate and prosecute cases, and police often lack vehicles or fuel to respond to calls for assistance. The police may take hours to arrive at the scene of a violent crime or may not respond at all. Members of the Honduran National Police have been arrested, tried, and convicted for criminal activities. Many more are under investigation. As a result, criminals operate with a high degree of impunity throughout [Honduras](#). Of note is the fact that [Honduras](#) has had one of the highest murder rates in the world for the last five years. The U.S. Embassy has recorded more than 100 murders of U.S. citizens since 2002. Many cases over the last 14 years are still awaiting trial. The vast majority of serious crimes in [Honduras](#), including those against U.S. citizens, are never solved.

International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

- 1.** Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.
- 2.** Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.
- 3.** Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.
- 4.** Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.
- 5.** Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.
- 6.** Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy,

travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.

7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.

8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.

9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these complexities and subtleties before you travel.

10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.

11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.

12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male or female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.

13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.

14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.

15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Tips for Travelers

- Take out adequate travel/medical insurance.
- Take cash and travelers checks with you; do not rely on credit cards as your only source of funds.
- Take a photocopy of your passport and keep the original in a safe place.
- Inform your family and friends in your home country of your whereabouts: travel itinerary, hotel telephone numbers.
- Enter next of kin details into the back of your passport.
- Avoid isolated areas and traveling alone at night.
- Check with your embassy, consulate, or appropriate government institution related to travel before traveling.
- Do not wear jewelry, especially in the downtown area of the main cities.
- Do not leave your baggage unattended at any time.
- Only US dollars are widely accepted.
- Do not carry large amounts of money, take the necessary and keep the rest in a safe at the hotel.

Note: This information is directly quoted from the [United Kingdom](#) Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sources: *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

The U.S. is Honduras' main trading partner, and Hondurans generally look upon American citizens as reliable and trustworthy business partners. Hondurans often view written contracts as formalities that represent a verbal agreement between trusted colleagues. The verbal understanding is therefore sometimes given greater importance than the written contract. Personal relationships are frequently important in creating and maintaining business ties and avoiding disputes. Honduran

business people frequently seek to build lifetime relationships and establish close links with clients or customers, which creates a reciprocal feeling of obligation and a mutual desire to be helpful.

Hondurans are hospitable and gracious hosts. Generally the consummation of a business deal is closely related to some kind of social activity. As a result, many businesspeople find that going straight to the point when negotiating with Hondurans is not well received. When meeting with Honduran counterparts it is often best to move into business matters gradually. After the formalities of courtesy have been taken care of, meetings generally turn to a more concrete discussion of business. Negotiations tend to be slow and drawn out in [Honduras](#). Hondurans place more emphasis on completing human transactions than on holding to schedules.

Traffic in the two largest cities is always a problem, so visitors should allow ample time between appointments. Punctuality is more lax than in the other Western countries; waiting is typical. Many business people pride themselves on timeliness, but schedules are less important in [Honduras](#) than elsewhere. Unfortunately, one cannot count on receiving an appointment without prior notice simply because one has come for one day only or has traveled a great distance. This different approach to scheduling and punctuality should be taken as a cultural difference, not as discourtesy or disinterest.

Sources: *United States Department of State Commercial Guides*

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the [United States](#) Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the [United States](#) Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the [United States](#) Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the [United States](#) Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom
<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

Visa Information from the Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html>

Passport Information from the Government of Australia

<https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx>

Passport Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro

<http://www.visapro.com>

Sources: [United States](#) Department of State, [United Kingdom](#) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of [Canada](#) Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General>

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/>

Travel Tips from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html>

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist>

Your trip abroad from [United States](#) Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from [United States](#) Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from [United States](#) Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from [United States](#) Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html <http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broc>

Medical information for travelers from [United States](#) Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information

<http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>

Sources: [United States](#) Department of State; [United States](#) Customs Department, [United Kingdom](#) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia; Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers

<http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

<http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm>

World Weather Forecasts

<http://www.intellicast.com/>

<http://www.wunderground.com/>

<http://www.worldweather.org/>

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock

<http://www.timeanddate.com/>

<http://www.worldtimezone.com/>

International Airport Codes

<http://www.world-airport-codes.com/>

International Dialing Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm>

<http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/>

International Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm>

International Mobile Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm>

International Internet Café Search Engine

<http://cybercaptive.com/>

Global Internet Roaming

<http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm>

World Electric Power Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm>

<http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm>

World Television Standards and Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm>

International Currency Exchange Rates

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World

<http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html>

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator

<http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/>

<http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html>

International Chambers of Commerce

<http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html>

World Tourism Websites

<http://123world.com/tourism/>

Diplomatic and Consular Information

[United States](#) Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.usembassy.gov/>

[United Kingdom](#) Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/>

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/>

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html>

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions

<http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx>

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World

<http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm>

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia

<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/>

Travel Warnings and Alerts from [United States](#) Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll>

Sources: [United Kingdom](#) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the [United States](#) Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

[United States](#) Department of State Information on Terrorism

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/>

Government of the [United Kingdom](#) Resource on the Risk of Terrorism

[http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?
pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926](http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926)

Government of [Canada](#) Terrorism Guide

<http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng>

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html>

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety

<http://www.faasafety.gov/>

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer, Anna Warman)

<http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html>

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information

<http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp>

Information on [Human Rights](#)

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/>

Sources: The [United States](#) Department of State, the [United States](#) Customs Department, the Government of [Canada](#), the Government of [United Kingdom](#), the Government of [Australia](#), the Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

**Guinea - Ebola
Liberia - Ebola
Nepal - Earthquake zone
Sierra Leone - Ebola**

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

**Cameroon - Polio
Somalia - Polio
Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone
Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)**

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

**Australia - Ross River disease
Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles
Brazil - Dengue Fever
Brazil - Malaria
Brazil - Zika
China - H7N9 Avian flu
Cuba - Cholera
Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu
Ethiopia - Measles
Germany - Measles**

Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
Kyrgyzstan - Measles
Malaysia -Dengue Fever
Mexico - Chikungunya
Mexico - Hepatitis A
Nigeria - Meningitis
Philippines - Measles
Scotland - Mumps
Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya
Throughout Central America - Chikungunya
Throughout South America - Chikungunya
Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

**For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing available at URL:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>**

Health Information for Travelers to Honduras

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). Risk for malaria exists all year in the rural lowlands and in some urban areas of the countries in this region. Travelers to these areas and to Panama west of the Canal Zone should take chloroquine to prevent malaria. Travelers to areas east of the Canal Zone (including the San Blas Islands) should take mefloquine. For detailed information about specific locations, see Malaria in Central America and Mexico (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/camerica.htm>).

A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry into certain of these countries if you are traveling from a country in tropical South America or sub-Saharan Africa. For detailed information, see Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm>).

Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and American trypanosomiasis (Chagas disease) are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent these diseases.

Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid nighttime travel if possible and always use seat belts.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):

See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for immunizations to take effect.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
- Yellow fever for travelers to Panama who will be going outside urban areas.
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11-12 years who did not receive the series as infants.

To Stay Healthy, Do:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- If you will be visiting an area where there is risk for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
- Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To Avoid Getting Sick:

- Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Don't drink beverages with ice.
- Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't share needles with anyone.
- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page at URL <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/safety.htm>.)
- Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

What You Need To Bring with You:

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, and leishmaniasis).
- Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children. Unless you are staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, you should purchase a bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin. (Bed nets can be purchased in camping or military supply stores.)
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
- Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See Do's above for more details about water filters.
- Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:

If you visit an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.

If you become ill after your trip-even as long as a year after your return-tell your doctor where you have traveled.

For More Information:

Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about how to protect yourself against diseases that occur in Mexico and Central America, such as:

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects
Dengue, Malaria

Carried in Food or Water
Escherichia coli, diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact
Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, please check the Diseases (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm>) section and the Health Topics A - Z (<http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm>).

Note:

Honduras is located in the Mexico and Central America health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinat.htm>

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

General Overview:

Honduras ' fertile landscape and natural resources are currently undergoing degradation, as a consequence of the expansion of the urban population and the demands therein, most significantly exemplified by the over-exploitation of these resources.

Current Issues:

- Deforestation, as a result of uncontrolled fires, logging, and the clearing of land for agricultural purposes
- Land degradation and soil erosion, hastened by uncontrolled development and improper
- Pollution of Lago de Yojoa (the country's largest source of freshwater) with heavy metals as well as several rivers and streams, as a result of mining activities

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc):

3.7

Country Rank (GHG output):

117th

Natural Hazards:

- frequent, but generally mild, earthquakes
- hurricanes
- flooding

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Honduras is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- Ministry of the Environment

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

- The Comité para la Defensa y Desarrollo de la Flora y Fauna del Golfo de Fonseca (Committee for the Defense and Development of the Flora and Fauna of the Gulf of Fonseca)

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Hazardous Wastes
- Law of the Sea
- Marine Dumping
- Nuclear Test Ban
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Ship Pollution
- Tropical Timber 83
- Tropical Timber 94
- Wetlands

Signed but not ratified:

- None

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

2000

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	Country
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia
5	Japan
6	India

7	Germany
8	United Kingdom
9	Canada
10	Korea, South
11	Italy
12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa
15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland
23	Taiwan
24	Turkey

25	Thailand
26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan
28	Malaysia
29	Egypt
30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan
33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria
41	Austria
42	Iraq

43	Finland
44	Philippines
45	Vietnam
46	Korea, North
47	Israel
48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus
51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya
59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore

61	Switzerland
62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan
64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh
66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman
69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia
77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic

79	Lebanon
80	Estonia
81	Yemen
82	Jordan
83	Slovenia
84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina
87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar
95	Sudan
96	Kenya

97	Macedonia
98	Mongolia
99	Ghana
100	Cyprus
101	Moldova
102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei
105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia
113	Senegal
114	Uruguay

115	Gabon
116	Albania
117	Nicaragua
118	Botswana
119	Paraguay
120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia
123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea
131	Zambia
132	Suriname

133	Iceland
134	Togo
135	Benin
136	Uganda
137	Bahamas
138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana
141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso
149	Malawi
150	Swaziland

151	Belize
152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone
154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda
156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia
159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau
167	Central African Republic
168	Palau

169	Burundi
170	Grenada
171	Lesotho
172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands
174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru
177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati
Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor

Not Ranked	Holy See
Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein
Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia
Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia
Not Ranked	Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd
 Cook Islands are ranked 184th
 Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation.

Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike, are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's

least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life,

should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be

suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less

prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalinization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks, contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies—a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also

served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and

community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation, nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

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1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the [United States](#), the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the [United States](#). It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global

environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term.

Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation." As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a

globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular

concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western [United States](#), current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots. Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.
- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.
- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionuclides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of

subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas, forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionucleides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial

chemicals, the most prevalent remediative approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment. Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have

considerable support in the [United States](#), how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in [China](#), elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "[Biodiversity Assessment](#)"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The [United Kingdom](#) identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants

and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the interrelationship between agrobiodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

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Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

[<http://www.unep.net/>](http://www.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

[<http://climatechange.unep.net/>](http://climatechange.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

[<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>](http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

[<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm)

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

[<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>](http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm)

World Resources Institute.

[<http://www.wri.org/>](http://www.wri.org/)

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

[<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>](http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html)

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

<http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/>

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discussions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in [Kyoto, Japan](#) in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990 levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the [United States](#) (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and [Japan](#), are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries - - with the obvious exceptions of [India](#) and [China](#) -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and [Japan](#), are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be

a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, in Bonn, [Germany](#), in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, [Morocco](#), to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the

international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as [Russia](#), [Japan](#) and [Canada](#) agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto, Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's

reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and [United States](#) President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in [Mexico](#) City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as [South Africa](#), had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. [Bangladesh](#) identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But [Australia](#) went even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant

developing nation states, such as [China](#) and [India](#). Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of emerging economies like [China](#) and [India](#), with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, [China](#) -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, [China](#) had announced it would reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, [China](#) was now accusing the [United States](#) and the European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the [United States](#) -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with [Japan](#) for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, [China](#) demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on [India](#) -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in [India](#), who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in [India](#) was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to

Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and [India](#) were joined by [Brazil](#) and [South Africa](#) in the crafting of a draft document calling for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in [Denmark](#) would be classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts everyone on the planet."

Likewise, [Tuvalu](#) demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. [Tuvalu](#) also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from [Kiribati](#) joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned that the people of [Kiribati](#) could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as [Tuvalu](#) and [Kiribati](#) in the Pacific, and the [Maldives](#) in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant [Saudi Arabia](#) was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the [United States](#) demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. [United States](#) President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the [United States](#) Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the [United States](#) Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on

the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, [United States](#) Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the [United States](#) was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009. The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US\$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of [Sweden](#) -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by [China](#) and [India](#), appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to shore up support for a new climate change, [United States](#) President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the [United States](#) and [China](#). At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The [United States](#) argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being cultivated. A draft text called for \$100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in [Qatar](#) extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend

the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of [Nauru](#), a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: "We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us."

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with [United States](#) President Barack Obama's request for \$60 billion from Congress to deal with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the [United States](#) and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around \$10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and

environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as [Kiribati](#) and [Tuvalu](#), are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including [Fiji](#), [Kiribati](#), [Samoa](#) and [Tonga](#), and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in [Qatar](#) (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: <http://aosis.org/>

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP) in Paris, [France](#), ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate

change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The [United States](#) leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have. "

Former [United States](#) Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accomplishments ensconced in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across

every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold
- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years
- \$100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, [Denmark](#), in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as [China](#) and [India](#), objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the \$100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around \$44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the \$100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the [United States](#), which would have to

ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto, [China](#) and [India](#) were not held to the same standards as the [United States](#) and European countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in sea level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of [Tuvalu](#) issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future ... is already bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of [Tuvalu](#). No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find consensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its responsibility for this irreversible damage.. Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the [United States](#) and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as [Russia](#), [China](#) and [India](#), there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), [Fiji](#), and the [Marshall Islands](#), called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of [Kiribati](#), "Imagine living in a place where you know it's going to go away someday, but you don't know what day that wave's going to come over and wash your home away." He added, "It's a disaster we know is going to happen." Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as [Kiribati](#). Stone explained, "For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion," Stone explained. "So it's not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it's also about the day that there's just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island." Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, "If you look ahead 50 years, a country like [Kiribati](#) could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere."

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the [United States](#). He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: "We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival." Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, "Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era."

Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, “Climate change won’t stop overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer.”

Editor's Entry on [Environmental Policy](#):

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), the [Marshall Islands](#), [Fiji](#), among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and climate change, derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover, because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being uninhabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in [France](#), with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1979

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1992

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), Basel, 1989

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Helsinki, 1992

Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention), Waigani, 1995

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), Geneva 1957

FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, Rome, 1985

2. Major International Marine Accords:

Global Conventions

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention 1972), London, 1972

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by Protocol of 1978 relation thereto (MARPOL 73/78), London, 1973 and 1978

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1969 (1969 CLC), Brussels, 1969, 1976, and 1984

International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage 1971 (1971 Fund Convention), Brussels, 1971

Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), London 1996

International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Co-operation (OPRC), London, 1990

International Convention Relation to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties (Intervention Convention), Brussels, 1969

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Montego Bay, 1982

Regional Conventions

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Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources (Paris Convention), Paris, 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), Paris, 1992

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Conventions within the UNEP Regional Seas Programme

Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, Bucharest, 1992

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, Cartagena de Indias, 1983

Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, Nairobi, 1985

Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution, [Kuwait](#), 1978

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona Convention), Barcelona, 1976

Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, Jeddah, 1982

Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, Noumea, 1986

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, Lima, 1981

Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, Abidjan, 1981

3. Major Conventions Regarding Living Resources:

Marine Living Resources

Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Canberra, 1980

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Rio de Janeiro, 1966

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Washington, 1946

Nature Conservation and Terrestrial Living Resources

Antarctic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 1959

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Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Nairobi, 1992

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Bonn, 1979

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Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Ramsar, 1971

Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), Paris 1994

FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, Rome, 1983

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Freshwater Resources

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Helsinki, 1992

4. Major Conventions Regarding Nuclear Safety:

Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (Assistance Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (Notification Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Nuclear Safety, Vienna, 1994

Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, Vienna, 1963

5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANE)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

Appendices

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

The demographic numbers for cities and national populations listed in CountryWatch content are derived from the Geoba.se website, which analyzes data from the World Bank. The current demographic numbers displayed on the Countrywatch website are reflective of the latest available estimates.

The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

derived from a mix of sources including the Altapedia, Central Intelligence Agency Factbook, Infoplease, and State Department Background Notes.

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-- See also list of News Wires services below, which are also used for research purposes. --

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original Country Reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

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Methodology Notes for Economic Data:

Estimates by CountryWatch.com of GDP in dollars in most countries are made by converting local currency GDP data from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook to US dollars by market exchange rates estimated from the International Monetary Fund International Financial Statistics and projected out by the CountryWatch Macroeconomic Forecast. Real GDP was estimated by deflating current dollar values by the US GDP Implicit Price Deflator.

Exceptions to this method were used for:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nauru
- Cuba
- Palau
- Holy See
- San Marino
- Korea, North
- [Serbia](#) & Montenegro
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Liechtenstein
- Tonga
- Monaco
- Tuvalu

In these cases, other data and/or estimates by CountryWatch.com were utilized.

Investment Overview

C o r r u p t i o n a n d T r a n s p a r e n c y I n d e x . U R L :
<http://www.transparency.org/documents/cpi/2001/cpi2001.html#cpi>
<<http://www.transparency.org/documents/>

Deloitte Tax Guides. URL: <http://www.deloittetaxguides.com>

Trade Policy Reviews by the World Trade Organization . URL: http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp_rep_e.htm#bycountry

United States Department of Energy, Country Analysis Briefs. URL: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/contents.html>

United States Department of State, Background Notes. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/index.html

United States Department of State, Country Commercial Guides. 1996-2006. Washington, D.C. U n i t e d S t a t e s o f A m e r i c a . U R L : http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/com_guides/index.html

World Bank: Doing Business. URL: <http://www.doingbusiness.org>

World Bank: Governance Indicators. URL: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance>

Social Overview

Borden, G.A., Conaway, W.A., Morrison, T. 1994. *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: How to do Business in Sixty Countries*. Holbrook, Massachusetts, 1994.

Center for Disease Control. URL: <http://www.cdc.gov>

Eldis Country Profiles. URL: <http://www.eldis.org/country/index.htm>

Ethnologue. URL: <http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Government of Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. URL: <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo>

Government of Canada Foreign Affairs and International Trade. URL: http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consular_home-e.htm

Library of Congress Country Studies. URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>

Lonely Planet. URL: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/>

Steve Kropla's Online Help For World Travelers. URL: <http://www.kropla.com/>

[United Kingdom](http://www.fco.gov.uk/) Ministry of Foreign and Commonwealth Office. URL: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

United Nations Human Development Report. URL: <http://www.undp.org/hdro>

UNICEF Statistical Database Online. URL: <http://www.unicef.org/statis/atoz.html>

[United States](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html) Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook. 2001. Washington, D.C.: Printing and Photography Group. URL: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

United States Department of State, Background Notes. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/index.html

United States Department of State, Commercial and Business Affairs: Travel Tips. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/cba_travel.html

United States Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. URL: <http://travel.state.gov/>

World Health Organization. URL: <http://www.who.int/home-page/>

World News Connection, National Technical Information Service. Springfield, Virginia, USA.

Internet News Service, Xinhua News Agency (U.S.) Inc. Woodside, New York. URL: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original country reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the [Human Development Index](#) (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US\$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: <http://www.undp.org>

Note on [History](#) sections

In some CountryWatch Country Reviews, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used.

Environmental Overview

Environmental Profiles: A Global Guide to Projects and People. 1993. Linda Sobel Katz, Sarah Orrick, and Robert Honig. New York: Garland Publishing.

The Environment Encyclopedia and Directory, 2nd Edition. 1998. London: Europa.

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

Introduction to Global [Environmental Issues](#), 2nd Edition. 1997. Kevin Pickering and Lewis Owen.

London: Routledge.

Trends: Compendium of Data on Global Change. URL: http://cdiac.esd.ornl.gov/trends/emis/em_cont.htm

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

United States Department of Energy, Country Analysis Briefs. URL: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/contents.html>

World Climate Data Online. URL: <http://www.worldclimate.com>

World Directory of Country Environmental Studies. 1996. The World Resource Institute.

World Factbook. US Central Intelligence Agency. Washington, D.C.: Printing and Photography Group.

1998-1999 World Resources Guide to the Global Environment by the World Resources Institute. May, 1998.

1998/1999 Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development. 1998. London: Earthscan Publications.

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Other Sources:

General information has also been used in the compilation of this review, with the courtesy of governmental agencies from this country.

News Services:

CANA Daily Bulletin. Caribbean Media Agency Ltd., St. Michael, [Barbados](#).

Central and Eastern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa.

Daily News, Panafrican News Agency. Dakar, [Senegal](#).

PACNEWS, Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association. Suva, [Fiji](#).

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Washington D.C. USA.

Reuters News. Thomson Reuters. New York, New York. USA.

Southern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Southern Africa.

Voice of America, English Service. Washington D.C.

West Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa. 1998-1999

Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

USING COUNTRYWATCH.COM AS AN ELECTRONIC SOURCE:

MLA STYLE OF CITATION

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For items in a "Works Cited" list, CountryWatch.com suggests that users follow recommended patterns for indentation given in the *MLA Handbook*, 4th edition.

Individual Works

Basic form, using an Internet protocol:

Author/editor. *Title of Print Version of Work*. Edition statement (if given). Publication information (Place of publication: publisher, date), if given. *Title of Electronic Work*. Medium. Available Protocol (if applicable):Site/Path/File. Access date.

Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.

Note:

This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

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Author/editor. "Part title." *Title of Print Version of Work*. Edition statement (if given). Publication information (Place of publication: publisher, date), if given. *Title of Electronic Work*. Medium. AvailableProtocol (if applicable): Site/Path/File. Access date.

Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. "People." *CountryWatch.com: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *CountryWatch.com: France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_topic.asp?vCOUNTRY=61&SECTION=SOCIAL&TOPIC=CLPEO&TYPE=TEXT. October 12, 2003.

Note:

This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

For further source citation information, please email: editor@countrywatch.com or education@countrywatch.com.

CountryWatch

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