



Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA) STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 - 2026



Image 1: Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken delivers remarks at the inaugural meeting of the Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council, at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. on July 21, 2021. Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley joined Secretary Blinken. (State Department photo)



I am committed to advancing our security and prosperity by building a diplomatic corps that fully represents America in all its talent and in all its diversity with the skills to contend with 21st century challenges.”

— Antony J. Blinken

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Message from the Secretary



The State Department is our nation's oldest cabinet agency, our nation's lead foreign affairs agency, and its employees are the face of the United States to the rest of the world. In order to effectively pursue our foreign policy goals and ensure our national security, it is imperative we create a workforce that truly reflects the country we represent.

Our country's diversity is our greatest strength. When we fully leverage everyone and everything our nation has to offer, our foreign policy is stronger, smarter, and more creative. As I said in my confirmation hearing, I will measure the success of my tenure based on how well we can recruit and retain a workforce that looks like America. Within the first few months of my administration, I appointed the Department's first-ever stand-alone Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, who reports directly to me and leads the newly created

Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. I also created the Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council to help achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the following Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan.

Together, we will ensure that the Department of State is a leader in government-wide efforts to advance DEIA goals for the federal workforce. In doing that, we will also be able to ensure that the Department itself is in the strongest possible position to deliver for the U.S. people in an increasingly diverse, complex, and interconnected world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antony Blinken". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Antony J. Blinken

Message from the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer



When the Secretary appointed me as the Department of State's first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, he made clear my mandate is to change the cultural norms and systemic barriers that stifle diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the Department. When we integrate diversity of identity, experience, and expertise into our decision-making processes, our foreign policy is more effective. And when we create more equitable and transparent processes for career advancement for Department employees, not just for underrepresented groups but for all employees, our institution is stronger, more resilient, and far better equipped to handle the complex national security challenges of the 21st century.

Successful implementation of our DEIA strategy rests on three guiding principles: intentionality, transparency, and accountability. Intentionality means we are all aligned around a common vision and proactively working to achieve it as a core part of all aspects of our work. Our intention to transform the Department into a more just, equitable, and accessible institution internally will enhance our ability to ensure a more equitable and inclusive world as part of our foreign policy. We need to be transparent in our efforts. This means transparency as we analyze and report DEIA-related data and trends, as we evaluate our progress, and as we standardize hiring and advancement processes to level the playing field.

Lastly and most importantly, we need to hold ourselves accountable for creating a workplace culture in which all employees can thrive, and which ensures all employees have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential. It requires us to speak up when we see injustice, no matter how uncomfortable, and this includes senior leaders. Department employees – at any level – who engage in harassment, discrimination, or bullying must be held accountable for such actions, as should leaders who fail to address such problems. Accountability also means incentivizing the right behavior. We must encourage the kind of structures and processes that concretely reward the groundswell of outstanding DEIA work already underway.

I believe the Department of State can be a leader in demonstrating how DEIA can be advanced across the federal government. This is the first time in my four decades as a diplomat I have seen this level of Department-wide momentum united to ensure equity for all. This kind of alignment is rare. And we must act on this historic opportunity.


Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley

Image 2: Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, and glifaa President Jeff Anderson delivered remarks at a flag raising ceremony to fly the Progress flag at the Department of State's Harry S. Truman Building on June 25, 2021. (State Department photo)



INTRODUCTION

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S 2022-2026 DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGIC PLAN (THE PLAN) RESPONDS TO THE WHITE HOUSE'S JUNE 25, 2021 EXECUTIVE ORDER 14035 ON ENHANCING DEIA IN THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE.

In accordance with guidance from the Office of Personnel Management, the Plan is organized by our agency goals for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and includes the following highlights:

- **Diversity:** is defined as our DEIA program structure and management. Our priorities for Diversity include the enhanced use of data to identify areas for improvement and ways to measure future progress, and to establish DEIA expectations for employees at all levels in the Department.
- **Equity:** includes issues related to recruitment, hiring, pay and compensation, promotion, and retention. The Department's Equity priorities focus on recruitment for diversity, enhanced transparency and equity in the promotions process, and improved retention and advancement of a diverse workforce.
- **Inclusion:** encompasses matters of professional development and an inclusive culture. Our Inclusion goals include improved inclusion in our workplace culture, enhanced transparency and equity in professional development opportunities, and addressing inclusion barriers related to overseas service.
- **Accessibility:** covers accountability and religious accommodation along with disability. Our Accessibility goals are to strengthen accountability policies and procedures, create a more accessible and disability-inclusive workplace, and foster a greater respect for religious diversity.

The Department's Plan builds on prior efforts from several offices, bureaus, DEIA councils, and employee organizations who have historically been responsible for the Department's DEIA efforts prior to the appointment of the Department's first standalone Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer and creation of the Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion in 2021. The plan also includes recommendations from outside stakeholders and industry DEIA experts.

In recent years, the Department's workforce has notably been advocating for advancing DEIA from the grassroots. To address the workforce's strong interest in DEIA, they had the opportunity to provide input into the Plan. Over 700 comments came from civil and foreign service employees, locally employed staff, contractors, and eligible family member employees. The Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion organized and led working groups encompassing employees from implementation offices responsible for actioning the Department's DEIA program and diverse workforce members passionate about DEIA. They evaluated these comments and made recommendations for the Plan.

The Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion will oversee the Plan's implementation and has convened an Implementation Team, made up of representatives from bureaus and offices with responsibility for action items in the Plan. The Team will meet quarterly to ensure goals and objectives are being met within the outlined timeframes and ensure the Plan is properly resourced, particularly in the out years. The Plan and its accompanying internal implementing document are considered 'living documents' and will be adjusted to accommodate identified best practices and new ideas. The Implementation Team will provide updates and direction to the Department's Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council, comprised of senior-level officials from each bureau, to ensure the DEIA program is operationalized across the entire Department.

The Secretary of State exhorts all employees to engage in forwarding the DEIA mission. We must do so for the United States to be in the strongest possible position to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century. The Plan provides the roadmap for the Department to achieve its goals to recruit, hire, retain, and advance a workforce that not only reflects the diversity of our country, but also leverages the strength of that diversity to deliver for the American people. Realizing this vision will require active participation and investment from every bureau, every post, and every individual in the Department.

Image 3: U.S. Consulate Adana commemorates Juneteenth, June 2022. (U.S. Consulate Adana photo, photo by Mustafa Saglamtundu)



DIVERSITY

DEIA PROGRAM STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT

DIVERSITY

PRIORITIES/GOAL 1:

EMPLOY AN EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH TO IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE CAREER OUTCOMES.

Strategy: Broaden availability and analysis of data while complying with all relevant laws and regulations to identify areas for improvement and ways to track future progress.

Actions:

- Conduct barrier analyses to identify potential barriers to equitable career outcomes at all phases of the employment cycle.
- Increase the accuracy of voluntarily self-reported demographic data by adding new categories to the Global Employment Management System.
- Establish data dashboards and release cleared demographic baseline data to the workforce.
- Examine options to include Locally-Employed Staff in the Office of Personnel Management Federal Viewpoint Survey.



PRIORITIES/GOAL 2:

FORMALIZE DEIA EXPECTATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES AT ALL LEVELS.

Strategy 1: Establish performance expectations for DEIA.

Actions:

- Create and announce DEIA performance requirements for Civil Service evaluations.
- Announce the dedicated core precept for the Foreign Service.
- Recognize DEIA efforts through awards.
- Explore adding DEIA elements into Locally-Employed Staff performance evaluations.

Strategy 2: Strengthen DEIA competencies for managers.

Actions:

- Add DEIA advancement criteria for senior-level positions.
- Add DEIA to senior performance pay criteria.

Image 4: Ambassador Maria Brewer and Lesotho Prime Minister Majoro celebrate the annual King Moshoeshoe I royal event, the birthday of the first king of Lesotho, in Maseru on March 11, 2022 (photo courtesy of the Hispanic Employee Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies).

Image 5: Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley delivers remarks at a cafeteria renaming ceremony at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., on February 1, 2022. (State Department photo)



EQUITY

**PAY AND COMPENSATION, RECRUIT,
HIRE, PROMOTE, AND RETAIN**

EQUITY

PRIORITIES/GOAL 1:

RECRUIT A WORKFORCE THAT REFLECTS OUR NATION'S DIVERSITY.

Strategy 1: Promote recruitment activity across the diversity spectrum.

Actions:

- Create a comprehensive recruitment plan targeting underrepresented groups.
- Pilot a talent sourcing plan to hire professional recruiters and support staff to identify and attract talent via online professional database sites pending availability of funds.
- Evaluate the Diplomats in Residence program.
- Run a national ad campaign to recruit for diversity.

Strategy 2: Identify and address barriers to entry.

Actions:

- Improve data collection to analyze the demographic representation levels of candidates at the completion of the hiring process.
- Identify ways to make the Foreign Service examination process more accessible to persons with disabilities and those from economically challenged backgrounds.
- Examine clearance and suitability processes.

Strategy 3: Leverage internships and fellowship programs with a proven track record of increasing diversity.

Actions:

- Develop a program to encourage retention of Pickering/Rangel Fellows.
- Develop and pilot a diversity fellowship program for the Civil Service.
- Increase paid internships including the Workforce Recruitment Program.
- Examine the onboarding/conversion processes for interns/fellows.
- Conduct exit surveys of interns/fellows.
- Examine methods to support the professional development of Consular Fellows.
- Target recruitment of Department scholar alumni through improved use of non-competitive eligibility.



Image 6: Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken meets with U.S. Embassy Berlin staff in Berlin, Germany, on June 25, 2022. [State Department photo by Ron Przysucha/ Public Domain]

EQUITY

PRIORITIES/GOALS: RECRUIT A WORKFORCE THAT REFLECTS OUR NATION'S DIVERSITY. (CONTINUED)

Strategy 4: Increase recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities.

Actions:

- Further integrate Schedule A hiring and consideration of candidates in the Selective Placement Program into the standard Civil Service hiring process.
- Create a strategic communications campaign to better disseminate materials that educate hiring managers on the benefits of Schedule A hiring for the Civil Service.

- Develop and implement a comprehensive outreach strategy to attract and support the entry of candidates with disabilities into the Foreign Service.
- Develop options on how the Department can recruit and retain more applicants with disabilities.



Image 7: From Left to Right: Arisa Nakamura, Mariyam Cementwala, Secretary Blinken, and Heather Pishko at the National Disability Employment Awareness Month Disability Action Group Roundtable on October 26, 2021 (State Department Photo).

EQUITY

PRIORITIES/GOAL 2:

IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AND EQUITY IN ADVANCEMENT PROCESSES.

Strategy 1: Develop mechanisms to ensure ongoing transparency and objectivity in the Foreign Service assignments and promotions.

Actions:

- Identify methods to improve diversity representation on assessor teams and selection boards .
- Examine methods to improve objectivity in evaluations.
- Standardize bidding and assignments processes across all bureaus to ensure ongoing transparency and objectivity.
- Promote understanding of the overseas hiring processes for Locally-Employed Staff and Eligible Family Member employees and integrate DEIA elements as needed.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the performance management course for entry-level employees.
- Reduce opportunities for bias and increase the range of inputs in 360 evaluations for assignments.
- Evaluate whether the Foreign Service professional development plan requirements and domestic limit policies have an adverse impact on the promotion rates for employees with disabilities or those with disabled family members.

Strategy 2: Improve transparency and equity in Civil Service advancement opportunities.

Actions:

- Complete a comprehensive review of the performance management system to ensure employees are developed, evaluated, and promoted in a fair, inclusive, and effective manner.
- Emphasize the importance of evaluations through a comprehensive outreach strategy.
- Launch a talent development campaign to provide career resources to Civil Service employees.
- Launch career mapping software.

Strategy 3: Evaluate and provide equitable opportunities for advancement into positions of senior leadership.

Actions:

- Conduct an analysis of the career paths of those in the Senior Foreign Service and the Senior Executive Service.
- Conduct a survey and barrier analysis of candidates who choose not to compete for Chief of Mission, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Principal Officer jobs.
- Expand the Senior Executive Service development program.
- Promote greater understanding of and transparency in the senior assignments process including Deputy Chief of Mission/Principal Officer and Deputy Assistant Secretary/Chief of Mission positions.

EQUITY

PRIORITIES/GOAL 3:

RETAIN AND ADVANCE A DIVERSE, HIGH-PERFORMING WORKFORCE.

Strategy 1: Examine the root causes of Department attrition and explore options for retaining top talent.

Actions:

- Establish a Retention Unit to examine the root causes of Department attrition and explore options for retaining top talent.
- Ascertain whether Department attrition may be higher for employees from underrepresented groups and why.
- Commission a study to examine the reasons for attrition, including DEIA-related angles, and make recommendations for stronger retention of top employees, including those from underrepresented groups.

Strategy 2: Leverage and enhance workplace flexibilities to support a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Actions:

- Develop the Workforce Flexibilities Plan under the Future of Work process, including updates to workforce policy, technology, and real property management.
- Develop improved transparent, objective, and fair telework policies to address domestic and overseas environments, remote work, and for domestic employees teleworking overseas.
- Follow up with the Office of Personnel Management to develop a mechanism to allow employees on leave without pay for more than 365 days to maintain health coverage.



Image 8: Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman holds a meet and greet with employees of U.S. Mission Gabon in Libreville, Gabon, on May 6, 2022. [Photo courtesy of U.S. Embassy Libreville/Public Domain]



Let me say that if I am confirmed to this job, I will view it as a significant measure of whether I succeeded or failed, however long I am in the job, whether or not we have finally put in place the real foundations to make sure that we have a workforce at the State Department that looks like the country it represents.”

— *Antony J. Blinken*

Image 9: Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken holds a meet and greet with employees and families of U.S. Mission Morocco in Rabat, Morocco, on March 29, 2022. (State Department photo)



INCLUSION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & INCLUSIVE CULTURE

INCLUSION

PRIORITIES/GOAL 1:

A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY IS IMPROVED THROUGH AN INFORMED AND TRAINED WORKFORCE.

Strategy 1: Assess workforce views on inclusion and experiences with bullying, harassment, discrimination, etc.

Actions:

- Conduct a Department-wide DEIA Climate Survey.
- Develop products that chronicle the historic impacts of discrimination at the Department.

Strategy 2: Leverage training to promote inclusivity.

Actions:

- Develop training resources on how to remove bias from evaluation, award, and promotion nominations.
- Conduct a comprehensive DEIA training needs assessment and bench-marking study.
- Develop an interactive DEIA toolkit.

- Pilot a diversity dialogue program.
- Continue DEIA training across the Foreign Service Institute components.

Strategy 3: Provide feedback and intervention for remediation in the employee lifecycle.

Actions:

- Implement changes to increase anonymous feedback for managers.
- Create a formal professional development feedback structure to improve manager performance.
- Develop an evaluation mechanism to measure the efficacy of the feedback tool being used to improve manager performance.
- Improve professional development interventions to remediate manager performance.
- Require U.S. Direct Hire managers of Locally-Employed Staff to complete training in cross cultural communication.



Image 10: Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken holds a Meet and Greet with U.S. Mission Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on December 15, 2021. (State Department photo)

INCLUSION

PRIORITIES/GOAL 2:

ADVANCE TRANSPARENCY AND EQUITY IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

Strategy 1: Improve equity and access to career development programs for all employees.

Actions:

- Complete an inventory of external career development opportunities.
- Increase opportunities for Civil Service employees to get overseas experience.
- Explore adding greater flexibility into the Foreign Service entry-level assignments process.
- Develop a robust list of available internal training and recommended development activities by job category and grade/rank.

- Increase training opportunities for Locally-Employed Staff.
- Ensure all employees have development plans.

Strategy 2: Support robust mentoring and coaching programs.

Actions:

- Examine methods to improve equity for training opportunities.
- Create a mentoring program for Locally-Employed Staff.
- Develop a strategic communication campaign to spotlight coaching.



Image 11: Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken visits the Ukrainian Institute of America, in New York, New York, on May 19, 2022. (State Department photo)

INCLUSION

PRIORITIES/GOAL 3:

MAKE OVERSEAS SERVICE MORE INCLUSIVE.

Strategy 1: Improve support for families including occupational opportunities for spouses and educational opportunities for children.

Actions:

- Seek opportunities to negotiate new bilateral work agreements and de facto work arrangements, and improve the functioning of existing ones.
- Evaluate and improve support to tandem couples and improve equity for those who are domestic employees teleworking overseas.
- Increase support for Foreign Service family members with disabilities, including the administration of the special needs education allowance.
- Increase career options for employees by building duty station flexibility for those positions with regional responsibilities.

Strategy 2: Increase support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI+) employees and family members.

Actions:

- Develop a Department-wide targeted plan to achieve equity in the advocacy plan to obtain the accreditation of same-sex spouses overseas.
- Assess resources for gender dysphoria and gender transition care at posts for employees and their dependents.



Image 12: Staff from the Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion meet with Mission Nepal's Locally-Employed Staff in Kathmandu on August 21, 2022 (S/ODI photo, photo by Carlo Aragon)

- Increase gender-neutral restrooms and locker rooms in overseas facilities.
- Evaluate and ensure inclusion and safety policies and procedures for LGBTQI+ children at overseas schools in collaboration with the educational accreditation agencies and provide mechanisms for social-emotional support.

Strategy 3: Increase advocacy and support for employees and family members who experience discrimination from the host-country government.

Actions:

- Create guidance for actions Mission leadership can take to assist those experiencing discrimination from host country government, to include protesting such instances through diplomatic channels.
- Catalogue and expand access to available resources to support employees who experience discrimination from the host-government.

Image 13: Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Roberta Mather, the Senior Advisor for Employee Communications, sign "Thank You" together during a film shoot for the Sign at State Symposium (April 2022)



ACCESSIBILITY

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS (DISABILITY & RELIGION), PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY, CULTURE OF ACCESSIBILITY, AND SAFE WORKPLACES AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

ACCESSIBILITY

PRIORITIES/GOAL 1:

STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES AND PROCESSES TO PREVENT AND ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, BULLYING, AND TOXIC MANAGEMENT.

Strategy 1: Strengthen candidate vetting for senior leadership positions.

Actions:

- Thoroughly vet Civil and Foreign Service employees applying for Chief of Mission, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Principal Officer positions, with a particular focus on substantiated incidents of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or mismanagement.

Strategy 2: Increase transparency in Department accountability mechanisms.

Actions:

- Update guidance on confidentiality provisions to allow employees to share final terms of settlement agreements.
- Inform harassment victims whether their complaints were substantiated as defined under current Department policy and/or referred for discipline subject to legal restrictions.
- Publish yearly statistics on the number of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints that end in settlement and the types of remedies.
- Share with the workforce how the Department's discipline program holds accountable employees who engage in bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

- Publish yearly, via cable, the bureaus where substantiated acts of discrimination occurred per issued findings.

Strategy 3: Expand and strengthen mechanisms for employees to report problematic behavior and avoid retaliation/reprisal.

Actions:

- Develop an anti-bullying program by which employees can report bullying and other toxic management practices that do not have EEO basis.
- Explore how to mitigate the risk of retaliation against employees involved in an EEO, discrimination, or harassment complaints in the performance management process.
- Pilot a channel employees can use to report management issues to their bureau front offices without fear of reprisal.
- Pilot a conversion of collateral duty (voluntary) EEO counselors into full-time EEO counselor positions within the Office of Civil Rights.
- Develop a process for posts to investigate and take appropriate action with respect to EEO complaints filed by non-U.S. citizen Locally-Employed Staff that are not resolved by the informal EEO process.

Strategy 4: Shorten timelines for Department investigations related to discrimination, harassment, and other misconduct.

Actions:

- Explore options to increase the number of Department-employed staff for the Department's EEO, anti-harassment, and discipline programs.

ACCESSIBILITY

PRIORITIES/GOAL 2:

CREATE A MORE ACCESSIBLE AND DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE.

Strategy 1: Enhance and streamline reasonable accommodations.

Actions:

- Conduct an annual survey of employees who request reasonable accommodation, including readers, sign language interpreters, and personal assistants, to evaluate and identify procedural challenges in requesting and receiving accommodations; the quality, effectiveness, and timeliness of services; and remedial steps to address service gaps.
- Improve communication and disseminate widely more information about how to request reasonable accommodations.

Strategy 2: Increase awareness of accessibility tools and disability inclusion.

Actions:

- Develop specific guidance for reasonable accommodation in the overseas environment including for Locally-Employed Staff.
- Develop and disseminate content and policies that increase sensitivity to invisible disabilities.
- Review and evaluate disability inclusion policies and practices in crisis and emergency management including, but not limited to, planning and response for pandemics, disasters, and evacuations in the domestic and overseas context.

- Develop and disseminate Department guidance on existing resources and supports to promote accessibility and disability inclusion including with senior leadership.
- Evaluate the need and determine if an increase in the number of Social Worker positions at posts is warranted; evaluate the creation of a Foreign Service specialty for social work.
- Develop appropriate disability inclusion training based on DEIA needs assessment findings.

Strategy 3: Reduce structural and attitudinal barriers to accessibility.

Actions:

- Create a proposal to address a physical accessible barrier program for overseas posts and consider incorporating recommendations into future budget requests.
- Examine options to enhance technological accessibility.
- Strengthen compliance on accessibility in all Department contracting, procurement, and acquisitions processes, including for hardware, software, and other devices or tools in secure spaces.
- Analyze access to and resources for video captioning and other technologies.

ACCESSIBILITY

PRIORITIES/GOAL 3:

FOSTER GREATER RESPECT AND A CULTURE OF ACCESSIBILITY FOR RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES.

Strategy 1: Increase use of religious accommodations.

Actions:

- Create a comprehensive, agency-wide religious accommodations policy.
- Establish physical spaces for religious accommodations.

Strategy 2: Increase awareness of religious accommodations.

Actions:

- Increase senior leader messaging on use and importance of religious accommodations.
- Regularly disseminate information about legal obligations requiring religious accommodations in the workplace.



Image 14: U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken departs from Panama City, Panama on April 20, 2022. (State Department photo)



Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion

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