

Panama Notes

EMBASSY OF PANAMA TO BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG, SLOVENIA
MISSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

MESSAGE FROM THE AMBASSADOR



Welcome Back to the City!

We hope that you had a great summer vacation.

Panama continues ratifying its commitment to the planet and to the reduction of global warming, promoting and prioritising sustainable development and environmental protection as the center of its policies.

With one of the highest vaccination rates in the region, Panama continues its path towards a post-pandemic recovery; with a sustainable, inclusive, low-emission and climate resilient national development model. From the inauguration of the new convention centre in Amador, the strengthening of our longstanding partnership with the EU, to the 107th anniversary of the Panama Canal as a facilitator of world trade, we hope you enjoy the September edition of the Panama Notes of the Embassy of Panama in Belgium!

HE Mrs Yavel Francis Lanuza

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Panama has taken a giant leap forward in protecting its Oceans



Panama has further strengthened its commitment to ocean conservation by signing into effect an executive order expanding the borders of the protected marine territory of the **Cordillera de Coiba Area of Managed Resources** by 30 percent. This initiative is part of the **30x30 Global Ocean Alliance**, which seeks to expand protected marine territories by 30 percent by 2030. The expansion of this protected territory positions Panama as a global **"Blue Leader"** in conservation.

A protected area since 2015, Panama's **Coiba Ridge** is a chain of submarine mountains near **Coiba National Park** (located on an island on the Pacific side of the country) and is considered to be exceptional geological formations with high biodiversity. Travelers can experience the area's marine and natural wonders at Coiba National Park, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, and one of the many ocean wonders within Panama's "Blue Heritage." Once a penal colony, access to **Coiba Island** was historically limited, allowing 80 percent of the archipelago's natural resources and wildlife to survive untouched and flourish over the years. Sharing the marine corridor with the **Galapagos Islands**, the marine park is now a world-class diving and whale

watching destination offering access to **Bahia Damas Reef**, the largest reef on the Pacific coastline of the American continent.

Ivan Eskildsen, Panama's minister of tourism, in a press statement said: **"Expanding the protection of its marine ecosystem demonstrates our country's collaborative effort in making a positive global impact as a leader in environmental conservation and ensuring future generations will be able to enjoy it."**

Coiba Island's tropical rainforest is also one of Panama's top destinations for birdwatching. The island is home to approximately 147 species, including endemic subspecies such as the Coiba spinetail and brown-backed dove. It is the only place in the country with a thriving population of the scarlet macaw.

Panama's participation in the 30x30 Global Ocean Alliance and being ahead of the 2030 objective, supports the country's **Tourism, Conservation and Research** strategy.

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Panama is one of the three carbon-negative countries in the world



Only three countries in the world, Panama, Bhutan and Suriname, are classified as “carbon negative,” meaning they absorb more greenhouse gases than they emit from human activities.

Melani Acosta, climate change mitigation analyst at Panama’s Environment Ministry said, “Panamanian forest lands capture more carbon than total gas emissions, which defines us as a carbon negative country.”

This is because 65.4 percent of Panama’s territory comprises forests and other wooded lands, 32.5 percent belongs to other lands and 2.1 percent to inland water bodies according to a 2019 report by the Environmental Information Directorate of the country’s Environment Ministry.

The Panamanian expert, part of the national greenhouse gas Inventories coordination team, said nevertheless that her country has an enormous responsibility, and must continue “carrying out the progressive reduction of the balance between emissions and removals.”



For this reason, and despite the Covid-19 pandemic, in the first quarter of this year, the country presented its second Biennial Update Report on the commitments made in the Paris Agreement against climate change.

In this sense, Panama plans to reforest 50,000 hectares of land, **“which will contribute to the absorption of carbon of approximately 2.6 million tons of CO2 equivalent, by the year 2050”** Acosta said.

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Panama exceeds world average of vaccination against Covid-19



The percentage of the population fully vaccinated against covid-19 reached 23.4% in Panama, above Costa Rica and Peru, the Panamanian Ministry of Health (MINSa) highlighted on Thursday, citing a report by the Panamerican Health Organization (PAHO).

In its most recent report, PAHO included data published by the website Our World in Data, which also indicated that as of August 21, Panama reached 61.1% of the population with at least one dose of the vaccine against the coronavirus, surpassing the world average of 32.4 % and 8 countries of the Americas, according to the MINSa.

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The proportion of people only partially vaccinated in Panama is 38%, according to data provided by PAHO in its study.

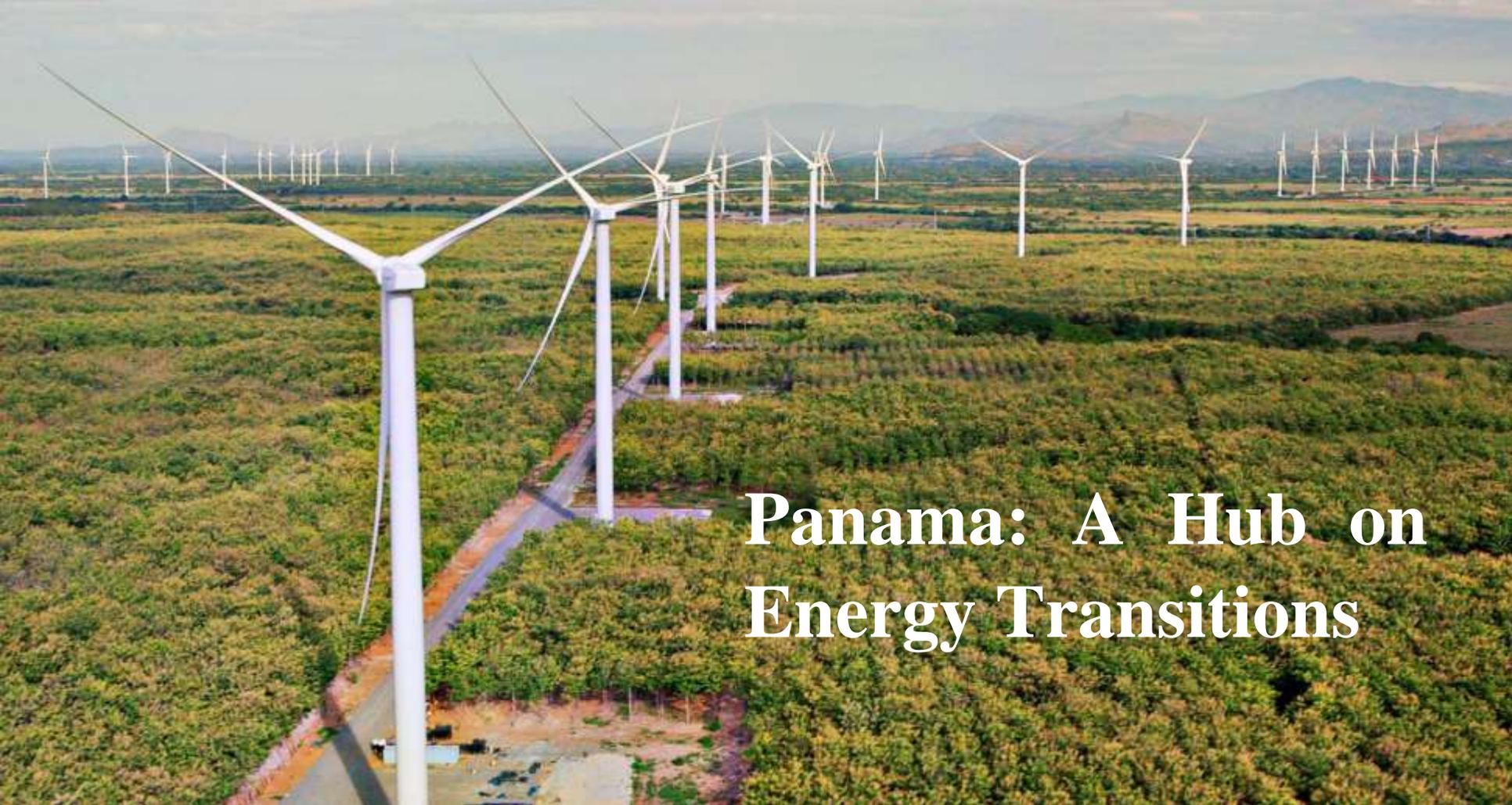
In Panama, 4,226,317 doses of the covid-19 vaccine have been applied, of which 3,555,016 are doses applied by Pfizer and 671,301 by AstraZeneca, the two suppliers in this Central American country of 4.28 million inhabitants, according to official data provided by the MINSa.

Panama, according to PAHO's document, is also the fourth country with the most tests to detect cases of covid with 824,875 per million inhabitants, being surpassed in test volume by Chile (1,015,969), Canada (1,050,590) and USA (1,531,808).

The study also points out that up to August 21, there was a relative decrease of 47.6% in the number of patients hospitalized with coronavirus on the ward and 7.3% in the Intensive Care Units (UCI).

Panama has a mortality rate of 1.5%, one of the lowest in the Latin American region.





Panama: A Hub on Energy Transitions

Panama is uniquely situated as a hub—for maritime transport, first and foremost, but also for air travel, banking, and other financial and logistical services. It seems only natural, then, for the country to become a hub of the energy transition, says National Energy Secretary Jorge Rivera. Both domestically and on the international front, Panama wants to bring people together not only to embrace clean energy but also to ensure that the transition to a new energy economy leaves no one behind. That will be a central message in February when the country hosts the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA), which will focus on “Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions.”

Justice and inclusion are essential to the transition to clean energy, according to Rivera—especially in a region where, on the most basic level, too many people still lack access to electricity.

At first glance, the Latin American and Caribbean region would seem to be doing quite well in this area. The International Energy Agency estimates that 97% of the population in Central and South America had access to electricity in 2019; the World Bank puts the average for Latin America and the Caribbean at over 98%.

Late last year, the Panamanian government approved a 10-year policy roadmap for the energy transition, which calls universal access to electricity “priority one.”

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Although Panama has been working to expand rural electrification in recent years, new investments of around US\$350 million will be needed to achieve universal access by 2030, according to the policy document.

UN High-Level Dialogue on Energy

On September 30th, the United Nations will hold its most important meeting on sustainable energy in 40 years.

The High-Level Dialogue on Energy aims to “raise ambition and accelerate action” toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal No. 7, which calls for ensuring access to “affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all” by 2030.

Five ministerial-level groups were formed to focus on the central themes of the event: energy access; energy transition; innovation, technology, and data; finance and investment; and the role of inclusive and just energy transitions in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Panama serves on this last group, along with Honduras, Iceland, Nauru, Portugal, and the United Arab Emirates, with the European Union in a supporting role. The focus here is on how to maximize potential positive impacts of the energy transition in areas such as gender equality, job creation, youth empowerment, agriculture and food systems, health, education, water, and sustainable production and consumption.

PANAMA STRENGTHENS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE EU AND BELGIUM



Panama's Foreign Minister, Erika Mouynes with Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Panama's Foreign Minister, Erika Mouynes, held several important ministerial meetings with her counterparts Sophie Wilmès, Jean Asselborn and Josep Borrell, respective heads of foreign policy of Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union (EU) and senior official at the European Commission.

The Panamanian Minister was received by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Federal Cultural Institutions of the Kingdom of Belgium, Sophie Wilmès, with whom natural alliances inspired by personal and professional backgrounds were established. They discuss on how Belgium and Panama can work together on issues e.g. protecting the oceans and our economic recovery. Agreed to work more closely together politically and glad we're both committed to gender equality.

Regarding the EU, with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on EU-Panama Bilateral Consultations, signed by the Panamanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, formalizes regular binational meetings as an open channel for political dialogue.

On regional current affairs, Panama offered itself as an "articulating country", willing to defend dialogue and consensual rapprochement, in search of realistic solutions, in accordance with the law and individual guarantees.

"Panama returns to the political arena at an important moment in which the international community must rise to the political and socioeconomic circumstances", the Foreign Minister emphasized, after pointing out that without stability there can be no development."

The head of Panamanian diplomacy met with the Commissioner for International Partnerships of the European Commission, Jutta Urpilainen, responsible for alliances aimed strengthening the European presence in multilateral forums, in an effective and inclusive manner and the promotion of education, topics in which Panama has also shown interest and the Minister spoke also with the Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevicius, Oceans and Fisheries who agreed to joint efforts for fight against plastic pollution, the construction of a sustainable Blue Economy and the guarantee that our oceans are clean and healthy.

The HE Erika Mouynes also pay a visit to European Union Emergency Response Coordination Centre and has an encounter with Commissioner, Janez Lenarcic, to look forward to strength our cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as disaster readiness and civil protection.



CAF strengthens its relationship with Panama to promote sustainable development

The Executive President-Elect of CAF-development bank of Latin America-, Sergio Díaz-Granados, met with the President of the Republic of Panama, Laurentino Cortizo Cohen, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Erika Mouynes and the Minister of Economy and Finance, Héctor Alexander, at the Palacio de las Garzas, to reiterate the institution's commitment as an unconditional ally in improving quality of life for Panamanians and the decision to install the executive presidency in the Panamanian multilateral organization.

Meanwhile, President Cortizo Cohen expressed his gratitude to CAF for the support that Panama has received during the crisis the region is undergoing due to the pandemic. "At an extremely important moment, we received a boost from the bank," the president said.

CAF's support for Panama has recently been concentrated on actions to combat the effects of COVID-19 on health and the economy, with loans and credit lines totaling US\$ 400millions.

In addition, Panamanian well-being is being promoted in key development areas, such as education, urban mobility, digital transformation, infrastructure

modernization and institutional reinforcement, among others.

Between 2016 and 2020, CAF allocated resources amounting to US\$3.097 billion for operations in Panama, representing an average of US\$ 619 million per year.



[Click her for more information](#)

Panama has a new Convention Centre



Thanks to an investment of more than US\$200 million, Panama now has a modern convention centre, the Panama Convention Center (PCC), located in Amador on the banks of the Panama Canal.

The new facility will replace the ATLAPA Convention Centre and consists of a single building with a common central area of 12,000 m² and two main entrances: one overlooking the canal and the other overlooking the city. From this central area, the distribution is made to the other areas, which are as follows: banqueting area of more than 4,000 m², exhibition hall of more than 15,000 m² and groups of meeting rooms arranged around the main hall. It has a maximum capacity of 23,906 people. It also has 1,715 parking spaces and a technical building for cold production and emergency power. In its entirety, the main building has 62,000 m² of construction and over 33,000 m² of rental space.

The imposing structure, strategically located on the banks of the canal, on the Amador road, stands out for its modern design and is equipped with the latest technology.

The Director General of the ATP pointed out that “the conventions, exhibitions and meetings segment is probably the one that can contribute most quickly to economic recovery, thanks to the foreign exchange earnings from abroad. That is why, on May 26, a cabinet

meeting was held at the PCC, as part of a strategy by President Laurentino Cortizo Cohen to highlight the importance of the PCC for economic reactivation.”

The president of Panama’s Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Jorge García Icaza, said the PCC is an important contribution to the tourism industry that will have a significant impact on tourism activity in the capital and the interior of the country. “Panama probably has the best potential in the region to become the hub for conventions and events in Latin America, due to its air connectivity, and it also offers a safe climate for business travelers and international tourists.”



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Panama's Geisha has scored the highest at the international coffee tasting

Panama's Geisha has scored the highest at the 25th edition of the international coffee tasting competition and now heads to an auction event where it has previously set a record-breaking price of over US\$1,000 a pound.

Characterized by floral aromatics as rose and jasmine, fruity hints, and tropical flavors, Geisha is grown Panamanian highlands of Chiriquí, rich in potassium and calcium-rich volcanic soils.

Some 169 coffee varieties participated in the 25th edition of the prestigious Best of Panama (BoP) coffee competition by the Specialty Coffee Association of Panama (SCAP).

Nineteen judges from the United States, Australia, Bulgaria, China, Japan, Costa Rica, South Korea, and Taiwan chose the winners.

The winners will now compete in the e-auction on September 22. SCAP hopes to fetch a new world record with the variety that reached US\$1,300.5 a pound last year.

Panama's coffee production is limited. But the country has discovered a lucrative niche in specialty coffees such as Geisha, sold at record prices, especially in Asia and Europe.

The Nuguo Fermented batch, owned by Café Gallardo, took first place in the natural Geisha category with 94.75 points out of a 100.

[Click here for more information](#)

PANAMA CANAL: 107 Years Connecting the World!



The Panama Canal reached 107 years as a facilitator of world trade on August 15. Since the transfer of the Canal to Panamanian hands, the waterway has boosted the country's development, operating as a profitable and sustainable organization in the face of today's changing world conditions. Since its inauguration in 1914, the waterway has served as a shortcut for more than 1.1 million ship transits, reducing distance, time and costs in the transportation of goods, while positively impacting the environment. Through its Green Route Strategy has contributed to reducing more than 830 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) by allowing ships to save fuel by traversing a shorter sea lane and moving greater volumes of cargo since the commissioning of the expanded Canal in June 2016. Reaffirming its commitment to sustainability, the Canal recognizes the importance of reducing the carbon footprint of its own operations, so this year it announced its goal to be a carbon neutral organization by 2030.

"The world is demanding that companies offer services and products that have a very low carbon footprint, so we are going to make the investments to adapt to that

reality, in line with our environmental tradition," said Panama Canal Administrator - Ricaurte Vásquez Morales.

Water, institutional framework and long-term sustainability

A key element of the Canal's environmental strategy is to secure water from the water sources of its watershed, which supplies half of the country's population and is the main input for the operation of the waterway.

Through the sustainability programs developed between the Canal and the communities of its watershed, which include more than 2,000 families, 9,209 hectares have been established with different reforestation methods (conservation, agroforestry, silvopastoral, enrichment of scrublands), and 2,000 hectares of forests within private farms are also protected.

With its expansion, the interoceanic waterway consolidated Panama's role as a connectivity point, bringing together 180 maritime routes linking 1,920 ports in 170 countries.

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Our guest of the month

WE ARE PROUD to have as Guest
of the Month:

Ms. Elvia Bustavino

Forbes magazine published in its July-August 2021 edition the list of the “100 Most Powerful Women in Central America 2021”, among them is the Secretary General of the Panama Maritime Authority (AMP), Elvia Bustavino.

Since 2019 she has been the Secretary General of the Panama Maritime Authority. In the Top Women in Shipping 2020 list, she was the only Latin American to occupy a place among the top 10 leaders. She participates in different associations where she promotes the female presence in the maritime world and the role that women’s plays in the development, progress and innovation of the different business, social and political spheres.

Elvia Bustavino is Director of the Central American Commission of Maritime Transport (COCATRAM) and served as the third woman President of this organization in four decades, also belongs to the Network of Women in the Maritime Authorities of Latin America (RED MAMLA) being part of the Executive Committee and serving as General Coordinator, she is also a member of WISTA Panama and the Panamanian Maritime Law Association.



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