

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8711

To strengthen the bilateral partnership between the United States and Ecuador in support of democratic institutions and rule of law, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and conservation.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 12, 2022

Mr. SIRES (for himself, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. TITUS, Mr. ESPAILLAT, and Ms. SALAZAR) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To strengthen the bilateral partnership between the United States and Ecuador in support of democratic institutions and rule of law, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and conservation.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “United States-Ecuador Partnership Act of 2022”.

6 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
7 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

- Sec. 2. Findings.
- Sec. 3. Sense of Congress.
- Sec. 4. Facilitating economic and commercial ties.
- Sec. 5. Promoting inclusive economic development.
- Sec. 6. Combating illicit economies, corruption, and negative foreign influence.
- Sec. 7. Strengthening democratic governance.
- Sec. 8. Fostering conservation and stewardship.
- Sec. 9. Authorization to transfer excess Coast Guard vessels.
- Sec. 10. Reporting requirements.
- Sec. 11. Sunset.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
3 ings:

4 (1) The United States and Ecuador have a his-
5 tory of bilateral cooperation grounded in mutual re-
6 spect, shared democratic values, and mutual security
7 interests.

8 (2) On February 7, 2021, and April 11, 2021,
9 Ecuador held democratic elections that included par-
10 ties from across the political spectrum, paving the
11 way for continued progress towards strengthening
12 democratic institutions.

13 (3) The United States and Ecuador share stra-
14 tegic interests in strengthening Ecuador’s demo-
15 cratic institutions, generating inclusive economic
16 growth, and building capacity in law enforcement,
17 anti-corruption, and conservation efforts.

18 (4) The United States and Ecuador historically
19 have enjoyed strong commercial, investment, and
20 economic ties, yet Ecuador continues to face signifi-

1 cant challenges to inclusive economic development,
2 including—

3 (A) the heavy economic toll of the COVID–
4 19 pandemic;

5 (B) vulnerabilities with respect to the
6 growing role of the People’s Republic of China
7 in the financing and refinancing of Ecuador’s
8 debts, and in strategic infrastructure projects
9 and sectors of the Ecuadorian economy; and

10 (C) the need to develop and strengthen
11 open and transparent economic policies that
12 strengthen Ecuador’s integration with global
13 markets, inclusive economic growth, and oppor-
14 tunities for upward social mobility for the Ec-
15 uadorian people.

16 (5) Since its establishment in December 2019,
17 the United States Development Finance Corporation
18 has provided more than \$440,000,000 in financing
19 to Ecuador.

20 (6) Ecuador’s justice system has taken impor-
21 tant steps to fight corruption and criminality and to
22 increase accountability. However, enduring chal-
23 lenges to the rule of law in Ecuador, including the
24 activities of transnational criminal organizations, il-
25 licit mining, illegal, unreported, and unregulated

1 (IUU) fishing, and undemocratic actors, present on-
2 going risks for political and social stability in Ecua-
3 dor.

4 (7) The activities undertaken by the Govern-
5 ment of the People’s Republic of China in Ecuador,
6 including its development of the ECU–911 video
7 surveillance and facial recognition system, financing
8 of the corruptly managed and environmentally dele-
9 terious Coca Codo Sinclair Dam, and support for il-
10 legal, unreported, and unregulated fishing practices
11 around the Galapagos Islands, pose risks to demo-
12 cratic governance and biodiversity in the country.

13 (8) Ecuador, which is home to several of the
14 Earth’s most biodiverse ecosystems, including the
15 Galapagos Islands, the headwaters of the Amazon
16 river, the Condor mountain range, and the Yasuni
17 Biosphere Reserve, has seen a reduction in its
18 rainforests between 1990 and 2016, due in part to
19 the incursion of criminal networks into protected
20 areas.

21 (9) On March 24, 2021, the Senate unani-
22 mously approved Senate Resolution 22 (117th Con-
23 gress), reaffirming the partnership between the
24 United States and the Republic of Ecuador, and rec-
25 ognizing the restoration and advancement of eco-

1 nomic relations, security, and development opportu-
2 nities in both nations.

3 (10) On August 13, 2021, the United States
4 and Ecuador celebrated the entry into force of the
5 Protocol to the Trade and Investment Council
6 Agreement between the Government of the United
7 States of America and the Government of the Re-
8 public of Ecuador Relating to Trade Rules and
9 Transparency, recognizing the steps Ecuador has
10 taken to decrease unnecessary regulatory burden
11 and create a more transparent and predictable legal
12 framework for foreign direct investment in recent
13 years.

14 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

15 It is the sense of Congress that—

16 (1) the United States should take additional
17 steps to strengthen its bilateral partnership with Ec-
18 uador, including by developing robust trade and in-
19 vestment frameworks, increasing law enforcement
20 cooperation, renewing the activities of the United
21 States Agency for International Development in Ec-
22 uador, and supporting Ecuador’s response to and re-
23 covery from the COVID–19 pandemic, as necessary
24 and appropriate; and

1 (2) strengthening the United States-Ecuador
2 partnership presents an opportunity to advance core
3 United States national security interests and work
4 with other democratic partners to maintain a pros-
5 perous, politically stable, and democratic Western
6 Hemisphere that is resilient to malign foreign influ-
7 ence.

8 **SEC. 4. FACILITATING ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL TIES.**

9 The Secretary of State, in coordination with the Sec-
10 retary of Commerce, the United States Trade Representa-
11 tive, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the heads of other
12 relevant Federal departments and agencies, as appro-
13 priate, shall develop and implement a strategy to strenght-
14 en commercial and economic ties between the United
15 States and Ecuador by—

16 (1) promoting cooperation and information
17 sharing to encourage awareness of and increase
18 trade and investment opportunities between the
19 United States and Ecuador;

20 (2) supporting efforts by the Government of
21 Ecuador to promote a more open, transparent, and
22 competitive business environment, including by low-
23 ering trade barriers, implementing policies to reduce
24 trading times, and improving efficiencies to expedite
25 customs operations for importers and exporters of

1 all sizes, in all sectors, and at all entry ports in Ecua-
2 uador;

3 (3) establishing frameworks or mechanisms to
4 review the long term financial sustainability and se-
5 curity implications of foreign investments in Ecua-
6 dor in strategic sectors or services;

7 (4) establishing competitive and transparent in-
8 frastructure project selection and procurement proc-
9 esses in Ecuador that promote transparency, open
10 competition, financial sustainability, and robust ad-
11 herence to global standards and norms;

12 (5) developing programs to help the Govern-
13 ment of Ecuador improve efficiency and trans-
14 parency in customs administration, including
15 through support for the Government of Ecuador's
16 ongoing efforts to digitize its customs process and
17 accept electronic documents required for the import,
18 export, and transit of goods under specific inter-
19 national standards, as well as related training to ex-
20 pedite customs, security, efficiency, and competitive-
21 ness;

22 (6) spurring digital transformation that would
23 advance—

24 (A) the provision of digitized government
25 services with the greatest potential to improve

1 transparency, lower business costs, and expand
2 citizens' access to public services and public in-
3 formation;

4 (B) the provision of transparent and af-
5 fordable access to the internet and digital infra-
6 structure; and

7 (C) best practices to mitigate the risks to
8 digital infrastructure by doing business with
9 communication networks and communications
10 supply chains with equipment and services from
11 companies with close ties to or susceptible to
12 pressure from governments or security services
13 without reliable legal checks on governmental
14 powers; and

15 (7) identifying, as appropriate, a role for the
16 United States International Development Finance
17 Corporation, the Millennium Challenge Corporation,
18 the United States Agency for International Develop-
19 ment, and the United States private sector in sup-
20 porting efforts to increase private sector investment
21 and strengthen economic prosperity.

22 **SEC. 5. PROMOTING INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

23 The Administrator of the United States Agency for
24 International Development, in coordination with the Sec-
25 retary of State and the heads of other relevant Federal

1 departments and agencies, as appropriate, shall develop
2 and implement a strategy and related programs to support
3 inclusive economic development across Ecuador’s national
4 territory by—

5 (1) facilitating increased access to public and
6 private financing, equity investments, grants, and
7 market analysis for small and medium-sized busi-
8 nesses;

9 (2) providing technical assistance to local gov-
10 ernments to formulate and enact local development
11 plans that invest in Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian
12 communities;

13 (3) connecting rural agricultural networks, in-
14 cluding Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian agricultural
15 networks, to consumers in urban centers and export
16 markets, including through infrastructure construc-
17 tion and maintenance programs that are subject to
18 audits and carefully designed to minimize potential
19 environmental harm;

20 (4) partnering with local governments, the pri-
21 vate sector, and local civil society organizations, in-
22 cluding organizations representing marginalized
23 communities and faith-based organizations, to pro-
24 vide skills training and investment in support of ini-

1 tiatives that provide economically viable, legal alter-
2 natives to participating in illegal economies; and

3 (5) connecting small scale fishing enterprises to
4 consumers and export markets, in order to reduce
5 vulnerability to organized criminal networks.

6 **SEC. 6. COMBATING ILLICIT ECONOMIES, CORRUPTION,**
7 **AND NEGATIVE FOREIGN INFLUENCE.**

8 The Secretary of State shall develop and implement
9 a strategy and related programs to increase the capacity
10 of Ecuador’s justice system and law enforcement authori-
11 ties to combat illicit economies, corruption, transnational
12 criminal organizations, and the harmful influence of ma-
13 lign foreign and domestic actors by—

14 (1) providing technical assistance and support
15 to specialized units within the Attorney General’s of-
16 fice to combat corruption and to promote and pro-
17 tect internationally recognized human rights in Ec-
18 uador, including the Transparency and Anti-Corrup-
19 tion Unit, the Anti-Money Laundering Unit, the
20 Task Force to Combat Corruption in Central Amer-
21 ica, and the Environmental Crimes Unit;

22 (2) strengthening bilateral assistance and com-
23 plementary support through multilateral anti-corrup-
24 tion mechanisms, as necessary and appropriate, to
25 counter corruption and recover assets derived from

1 corruption, including through strengthening inde-
2 pendent inspectors general to track and reduce cor-
3 ruption;

4 (3) improving the technical capacity of prosecu-
5 tors and financial institutions in Ecuador to combat
6 corruption by—

7 (A) detecting and investigating suspicious
8 financial transactions, and conducting asset for-
9 feitures and criminal analysis; and

10 (B) combating money laundering, financial
11 crimes, and extortion;

12 (4) providing technical assistance and material
13 support (including, as appropriate, radars, vessels,
14 and communications equipment) to vetted specialized
15 units of Ecuador’s national police and the armed
16 services to disrupt, degrade, and dismantle organiza-
17 tions involved in illicit narcotics trafficking,
18 transnational criminal activities, illicit mining, and
19 illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, among
20 other illicit activities;

21 (5) providing technical assistance to address
22 challenges related to Ecuador’s penitentiary and cor-
23 rections system;

24 (6) strengthening the regulatory framework of
25 mining through collaboration with key Ecuadorian

1 institutions, such as the Interior Ministry’s Special
2 Commission for the Control of Illegal Mining and
3 the National Police’s Investigative Unit on Mining
4 Crimes, and providing technical assistance in sup-
5 port of their law enforcement activities;

6 (7) providing technical assistance to judges,
7 prosecutors, and ombudsmen to increase capacity to
8 enforce laws against human smuggling and traf-
9 ficking, illicit mining, illegal logging, illegal, unregu-
10 lated, and unreported (IUU) fishing, and other illicit
11 economic activities;

12 (8) providing support to the Government of Ec-
13 uador to prevent illegal, unreported, and unregulated
14 fishing, including through expanding detection and
15 response capabilities, and the use of dark vessel
16 tracing technology;

17 (9) supporting multilateral efforts to stem ille-
18 gal, unreported, and unregulated fishing with neigh-
19 boring countries in South America and within the
20 South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management
21 Organisation;

22 (10) assisting the Government of Ecuador’s ef-
23 forts to protect defenders of internationally recog-
24 nized human rights, including through the work of
25 the Office of the Ombudsman of Ecuador, and by

1 encouraging the inclusion of Indigenous and Afro-
2 Ecuadorian communities and civil society organiza-
3 tions in this process;

4 (11) supporting efforts to improve trans-
5 parency, uphold accountability, and build capacity
6 within the Office of the Comptroller General;

7 (12) enhancing the institutional capacity and
8 technical capabilities of defense and security institu-
9 tions of Ecuador to conduct national or regional se-
10 curity missions, including through regular bilateral
11 and multilateral cooperation, foreign military financ-
12 ing, international military education, and training
13 programs, consistent with applicable Ecuadorian
14 laws and regulations;

15 (13) enhancing port management and maritime
16 security partnerships to disrupt, degrade, and dis-
17 mantle transnational criminal networks and facili-
18 tate the legitimate flow of people, goods, and serv-
19 ices; and

20 (14) strengthening cybersecurity cooperation—

21 (A) to effectively respond to cybersecurity
22 threats, including state-sponsored threats;

23 (B) to share best practices to combat such
24 threats;

1 (C) to help develop and implement infor-
2 mation architectures that respect individual pri-
3 vacy rights and reduce the risk that data col-
4 lected through such systems will be exploited by
5 malign state and non-state actors;

6 (D) to strengthen resilience against
7 cyberattacks, misinformation, and propaganda;
8 and

9 (E) to strengthen the resilience of critical
10 infrastructure.

11 **SEC. 7. STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE.**

12 (a) STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE.—
13 The Secretary of State, in coordination with the Adminis-
14 trator of the United States Agency for International De-
15 velopment, should develop and implement initiatives to
16 strengthen democratic governance in Ecuador by sup-
17 porting—

18 (1) measures to improve the capacity of na-
19 tional and subnational government institutions to
20 govern through transparent, inclusive, and demo-
21 cratic processes;

22 (2) efforts that measurably enhance the capac-
23 ity of political actors and parties to strengthen
24 democratic institutions and the rule of law;

1 (3) initiatives to strengthen democratic govern-
2 ance, including combating political, administrative,
3 and judicial corruption and improving transparency
4 of the administration of public budgets; and

5 (4) the efforts of civil society organizations and
6 independent media—

7 (A) to conduct oversight of the Govern-
8 ment of Ecuador and the National Assembly of
9 Ecuador;

10 (B) to promote initiatives that strengthen
11 democratic governance, anti-corruption stand-
12 ards, and public and private sector trans-
13 parency; and

14 (C) to foster political engagement between
15 the Government of Ecuador, including the Na-
16 tional Assembly of Ecuador, and all parts of
17 Ecuadorian society, including women, indige-
18 nous communities, and Afro-Ecuadorian com-
19 munities.

20 (b) LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING.—The Adminis-
21 trator of the United States Agency for International De-
22 velopment, working through the Consortium for Elections
23 and Political Process Strengthening or any equivalent or
24 successor mechanism, shall develop and implement pro-

1 grams to strengthen the National Assembly of Ecuador
2 by providing training and technical assistance to—

3 (1) members and committee offices of the Na-
4 tional Assembly of Ecuador, including the Ethics
5 Committee and Audit Committee;

6 (2) assist in the creation of entities that can
7 offer comprehensive and independent research and
8 analysis on legislative and oversight matters pending
9 before the National Assembly, including budgetary
10 and economic issues; and

11 (3) improve democratic governance and govern-
12 ment transparency, including through effective legis-
13 lation.

14 (c) BILATERAL LEGISLATIVE COOPERATION.—To
15 the degree practicable, in implementing the programs re-
16 quired under subsection (b), the Administrator of the
17 United States Agency for International Development
18 should facilitate meetings and collaboration between mem-
19 bers of the United States Congress and the National As-
20 sembly of Ecuador.

21 **SEC. 8. FOSTERING CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP.**

22 The Administrator of the United States Agency for
23 International Development, in coordination with the Sec-
24 retary of State and the heads of other relevant Federal
25 departments and agencies, shall develop and implement

1 programs and enhance existing programs, as necessary
2 and appropriate, to improve ecosystem conservation and
3 enhance the effective stewardship of Ecuador’s natural re-
4 sources by—

5 (1) providing technical assistance to Ecuador’s
6 Ministry of the Environment to safeguard national
7 parks and protected forests and protected species,
8 while promoting the participation of Indigenous com-
9 munities in this process;

10 (2) strengthening the capacity of communities
11 to access the right to prior consultation, encoded in
12 Article 57 of the Constitution of Ecuador and re-
13 lated laws, executive decrees, administrative acts,
14 and ministerial regulations;

15 (3) supporting Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian
16 communities as they raise awareness of threats to
17 biodiverse ancestral lands, including through support
18 for local media in such communities and technical
19 assistance to monitor illicit activities;

20 (4) partnering with the Government of Ecuador
21 in support of reforestation and improving river, lake,
22 and coastal water quality;

23 (5) providing assistance to communities af-
24 fected by illegal mining and deforestation; and

1 (6) fostering mechanisms for cooperation on
2 emergency preparedness and rapid recovery from
3 natural disasters, including by—

4 (A) establishing regional preparedness, re-
5 covery, and emergency management centers to
6 facilitate rapid response to survey and help
7 maintain planning on regional disaster antici-
8 pated needs and possible resources; and

9 (B) training disaster recovery officials on
10 latest techniques and lessons learned from
11 United States experiences.

12 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION TO TRANSFER EXCESS COAST**
13 **GUARD VESSELS.**

14 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
15 gress that the United States should undertake efforts to
16 expand cooperation with the Government of Ecuador to—

17 (1) ensure protections for the Galápagos Marine
18 Reserve;

19 (2) deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated
20 fishing; and

21 (3) increase interdiction of narcotics trafficking
22 and other forms of illicit trafficking.

23 (b) AUTHORITY TO TRANSFER EXCESS COAST
24 GUARD VESSELS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ECUADOR.—
25 The President shall conduct a joint assessment with the

1 Government of Ecuador to ensure sufficient capacity ex-
2 ists to maintain Island class cutters. Upon completion of
3 a favorable assessment, the President is authorized to
4 transfer up to two ISLAND class cutters to the Govern-
5 ment of Ecuador as excess defense articles pursuant to
6 the authority of section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act
7 (22 U.S.C. 2321j).

8 (c) GRANTS NOT COUNTED IN ANNUAL TOTAL OF
9 TRANSFERRED EXCESS DEFENSE ARTICLES.—The value
10 of a vessel transferred to another country on a grant basis
11 pursuant to authority provided by subsection (b) shall not
12 be counted against the aggregate value of excess defense
13 articles transferred in any fiscal year under section 516
14 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2321j).

15 (d) COSTS OF TRANSFERS.—Any expense incurred by
16 the United States in connection with a transfer authorized
17 by this section shall be charged to the recipient notwith-
18 standing section 516(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act of
19 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2321j(e)).

20 (e) REPAIR AND REFURBISHMENT IN UNITED
21 STATES SHIPYARDS.—To the maximum extent prac-
22 ticable, the President shall require, as a condition of the
23 transfer of a vessel under this section, that the recipient
24 to which the vessel is transferred have such repair or re-
25 furbishment of the vessel as is needed, before the vessel

1 joins the naval forces of that recipient, performed at a
2 shipyard located in the United States.

3 (f) EXPIRATION OF AUTHORITY.—The authority to
4 transfer a vessel under this section shall expire at the end
5 of the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enact-
6 ment of this Act.

7 **SEC. 10. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**

8 (a) SECRETARY OF STATE.—The Secretary of State,
9 in coordination with the heads of other relevant Federal
10 departments and agencies as described in sections 4, 6,
11 and 7(a), shall—

12 (1) not later than 180 days after the date of
13 the enactment of this Act, submit to the appropriate
14 congressional committees a comprehensive strategy
15 to address the requirements described in sections 4,
16 6, and 7(a); and

17 (2) not later than 2 years and 4 years after
18 submitting the comprehensive strategy under para-
19 graph (1), submit to the appropriate congressional
20 committees a report describing the implementation
21 of the strategy.

22 (b) ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGEN-
23 CY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.—The Adminis-
24 trator of the United States Agency for International De-
25 velopment, in coordination with the heads of other relevant

1 Federal departments and agencies as described in sections
2 5, 7(b), and 8, shall—

3 (1) not later than 180 days after the date of
4 the enactment of this Act, submit to appropriate
5 congressional committees a comprehensive strategy
6 to address the requirements described in sections 4,
7 7(b), and 8; and

8 (2) not later than 2 years and 4 years after
9 submitting the comprehensive strategy under para-
10 graph (1), submit to the appropriate congressional
11 committees a report describing the implementation
12 of the strategy.

13 (c) SUBMISSION.—The strategies and reports re-
14 quired under subsections (a) and (b) may be submitted
15 to the appropriate congressional committees as joint strat-
16 egies and reports.

17 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—
18 In this act, the term “appropriate congressional commit-
19 tees” means the Committee on Foreign Relations of the
20 Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the
21 House of Representatives.

22 **SEC. 11. SUNSET.**

23 This Act shall terminate on the date that is 5 years
24 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

○