

Open Letter to the President of Panama

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His Excellency José Raúl Mulino President of the Republic of Panama Palacio de las Garzas Panama City, Panama

Mr. President,

I am writing to you as an ordinary Panamanian.

Not as an economist.

Not as a politician.

Not as a journalist.

Just as someone who wakes up every morning in this small country that somehow became one of the most important crossroads on Earth.

Sometimes I think we Panamanians forget how extraordinary our country actually is.

We complain about traffic.

We complain about prices.

We complain about politics.

And then a giant ship passes through the Panama Canal carrying goods from one side of the world to the other, and we are reminded that the entire planet knows the name of our country.

Not because of our size.

Not because of our military.

Not because of our population.

But because of a strip of water that changed world history.

Every Panamanian grows up with this reality.

The Canal is not just infrastructure.

It is part of our national identity.

Many countries have monuments.

We have one of the most important engineering achievements in human history.

And that is something worth being proud of.

When foreigners arrive in Panama City, they are often surprised.

They expect a small tropical capital.

Instead, they find skyscrapers rising above the bay.

Modern highways.

International banks.

Luxury hotels.

Restaurants filled with people speaking Spanish, English, Chinese, French, and languages from every corner of the world.

From a distance, Panama can look rich.

And in some ways it is.

But ordinary Panamanians know there are really two Panamas.

One Panama shines.

The other struggles.

One Panama lives in modern apartment towers overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

The other lives in neighborhoods where every increase in electricity prices matters.

One Panama invests millions.

The other carefully calculates the cost of groceries before entering the supermarket.

One Panama discusses international finance.

The other worries about rent, medicine, and school supplies.

Both Panamas are real.

And both deserve attention.

One of the great achievements of our country has been stability.

While many nations in the region have suffered from political chaos, hyperinflation, or violence, Panama has generally moved forward.

Not perfectly.

Not without mistakes.

But forward.

People work.

Businesses open.

Tourists arrive.

Ships continue to cross the Canal.

Life continues.

This stability is often underestimated because it becomes visible only when it disappears.

Please protect it.

At the same time, stability alone is not enough.

Parents do not raise children merely to inherit stability.

They hope for opportunity.

Many young Panamanians graduate from universities with ambition and talent.

Yet too many feel that success depends more on connections than merit.

Too many believe that the best opportunities remain concentrated among a small group of people.

That perception, whether fully true or not, damages trust.

And trust is one of the most valuable assets a country can possess.

There is another thing that makes Panama special.

We are a meeting place.

A bridge.

A nation built on movement.

People arrive here from all over the world.

Some stay.

Some leave.

Some build businesses.

Some build families.

Very few countries possess this unique position.

The challenge is ensuring that globalization benefits ordinary citizens, not only corporations and investors.

Mr. President,

The world knows Panama because of the Canal.

But the future of Panama will not be decided by ships.

It will be decided by classrooms.

By hospitals.

By entrepreneurs.

By workers.

By pensioners.

By families trying to build a decent life.

History has already given Panama a privileged geographic position.

The next challenge is to ensure that every Panamanian benefits from it.

Because a country does not become great when the world admires it.

A country becomes great when its own people feel proud of the lives they are able to live there.

Respectfully,

An Open Letter Author

P.S. A Citizen's Audit of the Country

It is easy to judge a government by speeches. It is much harder to judge it by the everyday experience of ordinary citizens.

To better understand the current state of Panama, I have attempted to evaluate the country across four areas that shape daily life.

- Stability and Security: 4.5 / 5

Panama remains one of the more stable countries in Latin America. Political

transitions are generally peaceful, institutions function, and citizens enjoy a level of predictability many neighboring countries would welcome.

- Economy and Standard of Living: 4.0 / 5

The country benefits from the Canal, international trade, logistics, banking, and services. However, prosperity remains unevenly distributed, and many citizens feel disconnected from headline economic success.

- Social Well-Being: 3.5 / 5

Healthcare, education, and public services have improved over time, but significant inequalities remain between urban and rural areas, and many families still face financial pressure.

- Development and Future Prospects: 4.5 / 5

Panama possesses enormous strategic advantages, strong infrastructure, and long-term economic potential. The challenge is transforming national advantages into opportunities that are broadly shared across society.

Final Score: 4.13 / 5 — A Country Standing at a Privileged Crossroads

Panama has achieved something many nations seek: stability, international relevance, and sustained economic growth.

Its next chapter is not about becoming richer.

It is about ensuring that national success is felt as clearly in family kitchens, schools, clinics, and neighborhoods as it is in ports, banks, and government statistics.