

Gene R. Harris
Director
U.S. Commercial Liaison Office
Inter-American Development Bank

Gene R. Harris, originally from rural Oregon, has served since September 2002 as Director, U.S. Commercial Liaison Office, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Washington, D.C. where he encourages and assists U.S. firms in accessing the Bank's funding in twenty-six countries in Latin America. From August 1998 to September 2002, he served as the Senior Commercial Officer, U.S. Commercial Liaison Office, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), London, where he assisted U.S. firms in accessing EBRD funding in the Bank's twenty-seven countries of operation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Mr. Harris has extensive private and government international experience, mainly in developing countries. He has a Ph.D. in Political Science, African Studies and Problems of Developing Countries, from Boston University and a B.A. and M.A. in Government and International Affairs from George Washington University. He participated in cultural exchange programs, has been a University Professor, Oil Company and Petroleum Service Company Executive, and consultant and advisor to foreign governments, before he joined the Foreign Service. He has lived and worked overseas more than half of his adult life.

Mr. Harris joined the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service in 1983 and was assigned to Alexandria, Egypt where as Principal Commercial Officer he opened a new USFCS Office. He was transferred to Cairo, Egypt in 1985 for three years as the Deputy Senior Commercial Officer, where, among other activities, he organized major trade events. Mr. Harris was then assigned for three years as Regional Senior Commercial Officer in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire, where he established the first ever USFCS regional operation coordinating commercial promotion in West and Francophone Africa, and covered all fifty-one countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa for African Development Bank (AfDB) funded project procurement by U.S. firms. He was the first officer overseas to perform this commercial liaison function to a Multilateral Development Bank as mandated by the 1988 Omnibus Trade Act. He was then assigned as SCO to Dublin, Ireland, where he developed an aggressive commercial program encouraging U.S. firms to use Ireland as a gateway to Europe, one of the most lucrative markets in the world, and organized and led the first U.S. Trade Missions to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Harris, after three years in Ireland, curtailed his assignment to establish a new Regional SCO position covering eighteen countries in East and Central Africa based in Nairobi as part of the Administration's emphasis on the role of free market enterprise and the private sector in the development of democracy in less developed countries, and on developing a more active American commercial presence in Africa. In addition to developing a regional strategic commercial program for East and Central Africa, he provided input to the strategic commercial plan for all of Sub-Saharan Africa and made significant contributions to a strategic plan for the involvement of the private sector in food security as part of the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative, a major U.S. program in Africa.

Mr. Harris is fluent in French, currently studying Spanish, is married (His spouse is a Foreign Service Officer serving in Washington, D.C.), has two daughters, and is an avid horseback rider and traveler. He has received several Department of Commerce performance awards, and a Meritorious Honor Award from the State Department.