

Maccio and Pascal in Inter-American Dialogue: Are Relations Stable Between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago?

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An oil spill originating in Trinidad and Tobago has reportedly caused environmental damage along Venezuela's coastline, according to the Venezuelan government. Haynes Boone Partners [Sudan I. Maccio](#) and [Larry Pascal](#) were featured in a Q&A for the *Inter-American Dialogue*, examining the spill's potential impacts on coastal fishing communities and how the incident could affect relations and joint development projects between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago.

Read Maccio and Pascal's Q&A below.

The oil spill that originated in Trinidad and Tobago's offshore Main Field on May 1 has generated headlines far larger than its reported size. Trinidad's Heritage Petroleum contained the incident the same day, releasing what authorities describe as just 10 barrels. Venezuela's government, however, declared 'serious environmental damage' across two states and the Gulf of Paria, demanding reparations under international law. Such stark disparities between operator-reported volumes and political statements immediately after an oil spill are not uncommon, and the affected public is understandably worried.

For coastal communities in Sucre and Delta Amacuro—where fishing sustains daily livelihoods—even a modest spill triggers immediate economic anxiety: restricted fishing zones, depressed seafood prices and reputational damage to local catches. These effects can easily outlast the physical contamination itself. On bilateral cooperation, the incident arrives at a genuinely delicate moment. Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago have been warming ties since Maduro's ouster, with shared ambitions over the Gulf of Paria's hydrocarbon re-sources. A dispute of this nature, if mismanaged, could slow the trust-building needed to advance joint development projects. More broadly, this episode illustrates a structural challenge both countries must address—expanding offshore production while managing shared environmental exposure. Robust joint monitoring and transparent incident reporting are not obstacles to growth—they are prerequisites for it. In short, the rebuilding of Venezuela's regulatory apparatus will need to address environmental concerns as well in order to achieve its long-term goals for sustained economic development.”

Read the full *Inter-American Dialogue* article [here](#).