

Connecting the West to the East

An Interview with Julio Rojas,
Chief Executive Officer, U.S. and Americas, and Head, Corporate and Institutional Banking, Americas, Standard Chartered

EDITORS' NOTE Appointed as CEO, Americas in June 2011, Julio Rojas is based in New York City and is responsible for all of the bank's businesses in North America and Latin America. Effective October 2015, he also assumed the role of Head, Corporate and Institutional Banking, Americas. Rojas has been with Standard Chartered Bank for over 25 years. Prior to his current role, Rojas was the Acting Global Head, Financial Institutions and Regional Head of Financial Institutions, Americas. He also held positions as the General Manager of Banco Standard Chartered and Regional Head Financial Institutions, Europe based in London. Before joining Standard Chartered Bank, he worked at First Interstate Bank of California. Rojas is an executive board member of the Institute of International Bankers; a board member of the Hong Kong Association of New York; a member of the Board of Directors of British American Business; and a member of The Partnership for New York City. He graduated with an economics degree from the University of Geneva, Switzerland and holds an M.B.A. from University of Miami.



Julio Rojas

COMPANY BRIEF Standard Chartered PLC (sc.com) is a leading international bank, listed on the London, Hong Kong, and Mumbai stock exchanges. It has operated for over 150 years in some of the world's most dynamic markets and earns more than 90 percent of its income and profits in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. With 1,200 branches, outlets, and offices in 71 countries, Standard Chartered offers exciting and challenging international career opportunities for around 86,000 staff. It is committed to building a sustainable business over the long term and to upholding high standards of corporate governance, social responsibility, environmental protection, and employee diversity. Standard Chartered Bank has a history dating back to 1902 in the Americas and operates across 13 markets in the region. They include the U.S. (New York, Newark, Houston, Miami, San Francisco, Washington, D.C.), Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. The bank's primary function in the region is to facilitate trade and investment flows between the Americas and Standard Chartered Bank's core geographies of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Would you talk about the history of Standard Chartered and how important the focus on the Americas has been?

Standard Chartered Bank resulted from a merger between The Chartered Bank and The Standard Bank in 1969. These banks grew with the expansion of trade between Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Chartered Bank started in 1853, and opened in Mumbai, Kolkata and Shanghai in 1858. This was followed by Hong Kong and Singapore in 1859. The Standard Bank, founded in 1862, started business in Port Elizabeth, South Africa the following year. It's presence in Africa expanded to cover Southern, Central, and Eastern Africa.

With trade embedded in the DNA of the bank, we have been connecting the West to the East for over 150 years. Our presence in Europe and the Americas bridges western companies and banks with opportunities across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

We are unique for our diversity. Our staff represents over 130 nationalities worldwide. Across the Americas, we're in New York, Newark, Houston, Miami, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and South America. This region alone represents almost 50 different nationalities.

How important is it that you provide seamless service region to region?

It is absolutely critical. A key competitive advantage lies in our ability to connect clients to some of the fastest and most dynamic growth markets in the world. Our business strategy is focused on supporting our clients across borders. To ensure alignment, we have incentivized our relationship managers to proactively think about what the client needs, irrespective of country, location, or product, while upholding the highest standard of risk management and regulatory expectations.

How broad is the client focus for Standard Chartered?

We have a clear strategy and commitment to build deep relationships with our clients. This is consistent through how we support retail and private banking, the middle market – which we call commercial banking – and corporate institutional clients throughout Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

In Europe and the Americas, the focus is specifically on supporting corporate and institutional clients, which includes multinational corporations, financial institutions, and development organizations seeking access to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Domestic service activity within the U.S., which is very well served by local banks, is not our focus. Our strategy is purely on cross-border activities such as trade, and the investment flows.

Where is innovation taking place within the business?

Innovation starts at how we provide better access to different products and solutions, and is deeply ingrained with how we operate.

To ensure that our retail clients can have access to banking anytime, anywhere and through a channel of their choice, we developed an award-winning application called Breeze, which allows access to online banking on the go. Similarly, to establish a comprehensive banking platform for treasurers to manage and grow their business, we developed an application called Straight2Bank, which offers a full range of solutions across cash management and trade finance.

While technology supports our ability to service the client, it's very important to ensure that our teams and colleagues are innovative in terms of how they look for solutions. Our corporate values support this approach. One of our key values is creativity, which ensures an environment for people to think out of the box in looking for solutions to better serve clients. Another value is being international, which is a key differentiator for the bank as it leverages our diversity and promotes a multifaceted approach to innovation.

How do you ensure that the technology we see in banking doesn't take away from the personal relationships?

At the end of the day, we have to make sure that we have a relationship manager who fully understands and supports the client. The relationship manager is the point of contact that provides the client access to the franchise. Behind him, we leverage technology so that the whole bank supports him in terms of information and execution. How we use technology to integrate all of the support functions across the countries where we operate remains a lynchpin of success.

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Is young talent still coming into banking and do they understand the type of careers they can have?

Young talent today seek out organizations not just by opportunities for career growth, but by what the organization stands for and whether it is consistent with their beliefs. In our case, we are a strong believer in the need to make a difference in the communities in which we operate. This is reflected in our brand promise, "Here for good."

Through our sustainability programs, we strive to make sure everything we do supports sustainable economic growth. We aspire to be a responsible company, and we want to invest in our communities. To achieve this, we developed a very strong engagement framework where our staff operates not just by how their actions support the business but also by what we represent to the society at large. Every employee at Standard Chartered gets three days of paid leave for volunteering where they can apply their own skills and expertise to support a cause or organization of their choice. Last year, over 86,000 volunteer days were used globally.

Standard Chartered also offers opportunities to work in some of the world's most dynamic and fastest-growing markets. I am pleased that our graduate and internship programs typically see over 120,000 applications for 700 positions a year. We attract strong talent and remain focused on providing the right opportunities and environment to continue doing so.

Would you also touch on your support of women entrepreneurs in New York?

Our technology incubator for women entrepreneurs program illustrates how much we value diversity and inclusion – which is all about ensuring that people are treated with the same respect regardless of nationality, gender, or sexual orientation.

Partnering with the Zahn Innovation Center, an incubator that nurtures entrepreneurial initiatives at the City College of New York (CCNY), we became actively involved in encouraging women entrepreneurship in the New York technology start-up scene. What's really interesting is how data indicates that women-founded tech start-ups produce much better returns than their male counterparts, despite receiving less funding.

We engaged with CCNY and the Zahn Center to try and address the gender gap when it comes to women entrepreneurship in technology. CCNY shares many similarities with Standard Chartered. Like us, the college has over 150 years of history. It is very diverse, and 75 percent of its student body is from minority backgrounds. What's unique about the student population is also how most of its students are first-generation college students, which often translates into an even stronger work ethic in their endeavors and passion to succeed.

We opened a women entrepreneurship resource center in the Zahn Center earlier this year. Our staff, in conjunction with CCNY and the Zahn Center, actively provides mentorship, coursework support, and access to an extensive network to support women entrepreneurs navigating the challenges of starting a business. The first year of our program culminated in an entrepreneurship competition where we awarded a woman-led team with seed capital to launch their business. This Fall, CCNY will be launching a women's entrepreneurship elective course, which we collaborated on.

We are proud to see that women participation at the Zahn Center following our program's introduction increased from 17 percent to 38 percent. Our colleagues' belief and active participation is clearly making a difference.

Do we need to change the way we think about growth in China and at what point has that market emerged?

China was averaging 12 percent growth for a number of years, and thanks to that growth, they have taken a large percentage of the population out of poverty. Today, largely as result of China's shift to a consumption-led economy, they are averaging 7 percent growth. This rebalancing ensures that the growth is sustainable. It also signals a stronger focus on the quality of growth, which is much more valuable than only seeking higher growth rates.

China's trade is expected to double in size by 2020, with the next phase of growth coming from growing trade with emerging markets. The World Trade Organization expects China's share of world trade to rise to 20 percent or more by 2030. China is the world's second largest economy. It is only a matter of time before it becomes the world's largest. Taking a longer term approach by rebalancing their growth from an export-led and

manufacturing-based economy to one which includes a more consumer-oriented service economy will put it in good stead.

What is your perspective on Brazil, and are they facing more systemic problems?

Brazil is going through a challenging time. It's economy has gone through a very fast growth phase and has come through some very strong institutional challenges. They're facing negative growth this year, and certain institutional challenges remain. However, we remain optimistic about the economy and are confident that the Brazilian economy will develop into one of the world's biggest over time.

Brazil has incredible talent and capabilities in manufacturing and engineering. This is apparent in its trade flows. Over the years, Brazil's trade corridors have grown beyond Latin America to include Africa and China.

Are you surprised to see how strong the emphasis on Africa has become?

Many of the world's fastest growing economies are in Africa. Backed by a large workforce and a growing middle class, we expect that the continent will have the world's largest workforce by 2035. This is evidenced by how over 40 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa are less than 15 years old. This population has the potential to become a very important consumer market, which in turn presents significant opportunities across multiple economic sectors including agriculture, infrastructure, and consumer goods.

One of Africa's most pressing challenges is the need for better infrastructure and reliable electricity. Two out of three people don't have access to electricity. In recognition of this, we are proud to have recently doubled our commitment to \$5 billion as part of President Obama's Power Africa campaign, which supports better electricity access in Africa. Through Power Africa, we can collaboratively provide greater access to electricity.

Standard Chartered is well-positioned to advise and support the financing of power plants, and I am confident that this will have a positive effect on the broader economy.

We're big believers in the potential of Africa, and no strangers in facilitating our U.S. clients' growth trajectory in Africa. Our history of over 150 years in sub-Saharan Africa and presence across 15 markets positions us well to support Africa's development and our clients' African growth ambition. ●