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U.S. Development Policy in Africa

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Good afternoon, Chairman Payne, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on U.S. development policy in Africa today.

When I appeared before this subcommittee last April, I discussed the road ahead for sub-Saharan Africa and how USAID is confronting challenges and promoting positive change. Unfortunately some troubling political trends continue to have a negative impact on the continent's development: the undemocratic change of government in Madagascar; the unsettled political landscape in Zimbabwe; increasing restrictions on the political space in Ethiopia; and evidence of democratic backsliding in countries such as Senegal. Most recently, the efforts of Niger's former president to consolidate power and remain in office past the end of his elected term led to his removal by the military, in what we hope will be a temporary setback for the consolidation of democracy in that country.

In each of these settings, poor governance and political instability directly undermine the prospects for a better future for Africa's children. By 2025, the population of sub-Saharan Africa will exceed one billion people, more than half of whom will be under age 24, and the ability of each state to respond to its people's needs will be tested like never before. With at least 17 elections scheduled in Africa in 2010, we find ourselves with a uniquely far-reaching opportunity to support democratic transformation and sustainable development.

USAID is undertaking major programs to address the continent's critical, interlaced challenges of chronic health issues, persistent food insecurity, poverty, climate change, political instability, and weak governance. Each of these priorities is inextricably linked to the others; failure in one area will limit progress in all. But by addressing these issues in an integrated manner, we hope to see an increasing number of democratic African countries with lower poverty rates, on a sustainable path of growth, who are no longer dependent on foreign aid.

The story is not all bad. Many countries have made significant progress. Economic growth has become more rapid and more widespread since the mid-1990s. In 2001-08, around three-quarters of the population in sub-Saharan Africa lived in countries with at least moderate growth in per capita income. That performance is expected to improve over 2008-14 according to the most recent projections from the International Monetary Fund, with over 85 percent of Africans living in countries with at least moderate economic growth.

More rapid and widespread growth is delivering significant declines in poverty. In the 1990s, an estimated 58 percent of Africans lived below the poverty line. That fell to 51 percent in 2005 and is projected to fall further,

to 38 percent in 2015 and 33 percent in 2020. This progress is both very encouraging and very fragile. The key challenge is to maintain and build on these much improved trends.

The United States has already made extraordinary commitments to health crises such as HIV/AIDS, which have resulted in equally extraordinary progress. Ten years ago, few dreamed that we would be able to provide life-saving drugs to 2.4 million people, care for another 11 million affected by HIV/AIDS, and provide vital counseling and testing to a staggering 29 million people. We have done so, thanks to the courage and vision of the PEPFAR program. However, AIDS is still the leading cause of death among women aged 15-44, and three of every five Africans living with HIV are women. So President Obama has challenged us to again stretch our vision with the Global Health Initiative (GHI), a \$63-billion program to improve health around the world. Over the next six years, we aim to do no less than prevent another 12 million new cases of HIV around the world, including in 35 African countries, and avert 54 million unintended pregnancies; to cut the number of tuberculosis cases in half and prevent three million child deaths; and to eliminate leprosy entirely. We will reduce the burden of malaria for 450 million people, representing 70 percent of the at-risk population in Africa, and expand our efforts to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the same time, we will not only significantly improve Africa's health, but we will also create more efficient, effective, sustainable systems that will provide services long after the initiative has ended. We are deliberately focusing on removing the barriers and constraints that hobble health systems by training health workers, improving health financing strategies, and ensuring equitable access to health services.

GHI's nutrition programs will work in coordination with the Administration's new Feed the Future Initiative, a groundbreaking effort aimed at significantly and sustainably reducing hunger and poverty in the developing world. Changing dietary habits, population growth, and environmental threats pose new challenges to meeting the world's demand for food, and countries cannot grow economically when their citizens do not have enough food to eat. Feed the Future will help countries achieve a permanent solution to food insecurity, where every person in a society has access, at all times, to enough food for an active and healthy life. This solution requires sustained economic growth, stronger markets, and increased productivity in the agriculture sector. It involves taking steps to improve nutrition, and ensure that women and vulnerable groups participate in this growth and in agricultural development. It also requires a sustainable approach to protecting the natural resources upon which a large majority of the world's poor depend for their livelihoods. Feed the Future integrates all of these needs into a comprehensive, country-led strategy to catalyze agricultural growth by raising the incomes of the poor, increasing the availability of food, and reducing under-nutrition, while supplementing our ongoing emergency programs that alleviate the immediate impacts of hunger. President Obama has pledged a minimum of \$3.5 billion over three years to combating poverty and hunger through agricultural development and nutrition programs -which has in turn leveraged more than \$18.5 billion in commitments from other donors. Just the U.S. portion of this effort has the potential to transform a staggering number of lives.

In Africa, Feed the Future builds on the supplemental resources that Congress provided to USAID in 2009 for the Global Food Security Response. With these resources USAID was able to increase funding for four West African countries and a regional program seven-fold, resulting in significant increases in rice yields in Nigeria and Liberia and increased sales of staple foods by smallholders in Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. This has laid an excellent foundation on which to build as the United States scales up its food security activities.

Because of Africa's heavy dependence on natural resources and agriculture, food security is inextricably linked to climate change. By 2020, fluctuations in rainfall and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events may halve the yield of rain-fed agriculture in some African countries. Climate change could also have severe repercussions on public health, as the range and timing of vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, shifts.

USAID is focused on reducing emissions from energy use and landscapes. In many African countries, our climate change work will also emphasize adaptation. Africa is particularly vulnerable to climate change because of its dependence on natural resources and agriculture. This vulnerability is compounded by developmental challenges such as endemic poverty, weak governance, limited access to investment and capital, environmental degradation, and conflict. Our approach includes integrating aspects of climate change adaptation into our bedrock programs in infrastructure, health, water, agriculture, conflict, education, and other sectors. We also plan to expand investments in climate science, hydrologic predictions and diffusion of information, and analysis that identifies vulnerabilities and evaluates adaptation strategies. We will then use this information to coordinate effective responses with all actors, from the affected communities to partner governments.

From climate change to food security to health, good governance will be critical to making these changes sustainable. For years we have concentrated our efforts on a few high-profile, post-conflict countries, such

as Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And while supporting stability in countries emerging from conflict will continue to be a priority, we must also begin to spend more energy and resources preventing fragile but functioning democratic systems from backsliding and addressing the festering governance challenges in countries like Guinea, Niger, and Madagascar. After years of improvement, the last two years have seen a striking increase in coups, conflict, and government oppression in Africa. In the coming years, we intend to work harder to help support and consolidate the democratic gains we've seen in some countries.

To do so, our missions in Africa need the flexibility to respond promptly to windows of opportunity or to mitigate the risk of backsliding. While U.S. assistance cannot determine the fate of a given country, the universities of Pittsburgh and Vanderbilt conducted a study in 2008 that clearly links our assistance to the overall democratic performance of recipient countries. Thus, our FY 2011 request reflects the need to fund democracy and governance activities to address more proactively the challenges to democratic consolidation we see in countries, such as Senegal, Mozambique, and Zambia, rather than waiting until their problems become full-blown crises.

We need to focus addressing on the long-term institutional and structural weaknesses that compromise the rule of law, erode the quality of governance, and make citizens subservient to their governments, rather than the other way around. Until these challenges are addressed, Africa will never live up to its vast development potential.

President Obama's decision to visit Ghana on his first trip to Africa has caused some healthy soul-searching among countries that consider themselves to be more influential on the continent, but whose democratic progress is nowhere near what it should be. While in Ghana, President Obama said, "Development depends on good governance. That is the ingredient which has been missing in far too many places, for far too long. That's the change that can unlock Africa's potential."

Consistent with the President's vision, USAID's efforts at promoting better governance are an integral part of our development agenda. Functioning, democratic states directly contribute to development gains and economic growth. This is particularly important in sub-Saharan Africa, where our democracy and governance programs will be critical to the effectiveness of our substantial investments in health, food security, and climate change.

At least 17 nationwide elections are scheduled in Africa this year alone. But Africa's challenges extend beyond a given election, and elections alone do not make a democracy or even assure democratic transformation; they are a snapshot of democratic trends, not the whole story. That is why USAID also works to strengthen the rule of law, improve governance, support a dynamic civil society, and promote a free and independent media. These elements of democracy are just as important as the ballot box. Voices need to be heard, systems need to function, impartial justice needs to be dispensed, human rights need to be protected every day, not just on election day. This is the foundation for long-term democratic change.

In FY 2009, USAID programmed about \$89 million for political competition and consensus building in Africa—a third of our budget for democracy and governance on the continent. Our goal is to support the creation of fair and credible election systems, not to determine electoral winners. We strive only for free, fair, and impartial political processes, not particular outcomes. We support the right of leaders to govern, but only if they win elections fair and square. Incumbents in several African countries, however, have no interest in receiving international assistance that aims to improve the quality and credibility of elections. Fear of losing power motivates them to manipulate laws, institutions, and processes to create a playing field so uneven that their opponents stand no chance of winning, even when a majority of citizens would support them. In these cases, USAID works closely with the State Department, other donors, local media, and civil society to exert pressure for reforms that will lead to more credible electoral outcomes.

We do so because we believe that leaders who manipulate elections are living on borrowed time. As African societies and political systems continue to develop, the expectations of people toward their governments continue to rise. Political processes that don't meet these expectations can trigger instability and even violent conflict, which can set a country's development progress back a generation. In these cases, USAID and its partners must consider the broader public interest as distinct from the narrow self-interest of particular political leaders.

In less than a month, the first multiparty elections since 1986 will be held in Sudan. The process has been halting. The date was postponed four times due to delays in administering the census, passing the electoral law, and other preliminary steps. Voter registration was not sufficiently publicized and there were some allegations of fraud and intimidation. Concerns about the credibility of the electoral process, and about

citizens' ability to freely express their will, are multiplying. But the elections are a requirement of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended Sudan's long and bloody civil war. If we dismiss the importance of these elections out of fear of an uncomfortable outcome, then we are letting down the long-suffering people of Sudan and risking an ominous downward spiral. If elections are not held, the crucial 2011 referenda on the future status of southern Sudan and Abyei would almost certainly be derailed as well. Should the referenda be significantly delayed or cancelled, there is a very real possibility that Sudan would once again plunge into a devastating war, from which it would be very difficult to recover.

We are therefore working hard to ensure that these elections are the best they can be, with assistance that focuses on civic and voter education, political party development, and election administration and observation. We are also helping prepare for the 2011 referenda, in which eligible voters will decide whether southern Sudan should remain part of Sudan or become an independent nation, and in which voters in Abyei will decide whether to join southern Sudan or remain part of northern Sudan.

Despite persistent efforts by those who benefit from the status quo, in much of Africa, we are beginning to see real roots of change and democracy sprouting. Twenty years ago, the organization Freedom House characterized only three African countries as free and 33 as not free. Today, the number of free countries has risen to nine, while the number of not free countries has dropped to 16. Amidst all the bad news, it is easy to overlook the quiet, incremental successes also taking place. Consider the remarkable democratic transformation underway across southern Africa. During the past 18 months alone, Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia have all experienced peaceful elections. Although all these countries still face challenges over the long-term, such as the dominance of the ruling party, their relatively steady democratic progress stands in sharp contrast to the chaos and discord of neighboring Zimbabwe. According to the Afrobarometer public opinion surveys, citizens of southern Africa have become gradually more accustomed to democracy and increasingly less tolerant of alternatives, such as military rule.

Elections are only one step in a long process that is required for true democratic transformation. Indeed, the United States' sustained support for the process of democracy—from the halls of government to the village household—will be critical to creating and sustaining an environment where it can grow and thrive. In concert with our simultaneous commitments in health, food security, and climate change, we are confident that we will soon see Africa begin to realize its full development potential.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Subcommittee for your continued support for USAID and our programs.