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**STATEMENT BY DAVID CREEKMORE
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**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND
RELATED PROGRAMS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

MARCH 1, 2013

Madame Chairwoman, on behalf of Internews, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to testify on the importance of access to reliable, quality, local news and information. We are very grateful for the Subcommittee's leadership and support for programs that strengthen global civil society and improve access to information. We urge the Committee to continue funding such media and civil society development programs through the Department of State and the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in fiscal year 2014. We request that the Subcommittee:

- Continue to support local media development in Afghanistan and Pakistan as they go through critical social and political transitions.
- Continue to support independent media and journalists in Burma, and an emergent generation of media entrepreneurs and advocates, critical to the building of a stable democratic society.
- Continue to support and expand on the Internet freedom agenda, ensuring that all citizens of the world enjoy access and use of an affordable, safe and uncensored Internet.

- Increase investment in independent media as a tool for addressing pressing global health issues, including HIV/AIDS.

Internews, an international non-profit organization headquartered in California, has been working to improve the flow of civic minded, locally-produced news and information for 30 years. We have worked in over 75 countries and trained more than 80,000 people in journalism and media skills. Today we are active from Peru to Mongolia working with local partners in pursuit of a better world.

EXPANDING THE INTERNET FREEDOM AGENDA

The Internet continues to bring unprecedented opportunities for freedom of expression and access to information. The Internet is driving down geographic, economic and cultural barriers and is supporting political and economic development worldwide. The Internet's promise, however, remains unfulfilled and under threat due to persistent gaps in governance, access, affordability and safety. This is a critical moment for the development of one the world's richest resources.

Following 30 years of support for a free and independent media, Internews, in partnership with the U.S. State Department, is helping give people the ability to freely and safely access information and make their voices heard around the world, including in some of the most digitally dangerous places in the world.

Internews leverages venture capital-style investment in cutting-edge technologies to grow internet access in safe and secure ways for millions of Internet and mobile-phone users. A new wave of cyber threats, too, bring unprecedented challenges for journalists and civic leaders, requiring new tactics and strategies that must be continuously developed and deployed to ensure online safety

No efforts to build and support reliable and safe media and communications are worthwhile without the internet and telecommunication backbones that make it all possible. A multipronged effort to empower civil society and business sectors in 20 + countries is expanding their ability to engage in public policy dialogues and advocacy on issues of essential relevance to Internet freedom. They are also bringing previously unknown voices to international fora dealing with Internet governance and infrastructure development.

We ask that the Committee continue US government support, through funds provided for the Department of State, for Internet freedom programs for fiscal year 2014.

QUALITY NEWS AND INFORMATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Critical to a successful transition in 2014 in Afghanistan is an independent and self-sustaining pluralistic media sector which provides essential information and education to all Afghans, while playing a crucial watchdog role in support of government accountability. Through programing supported by USAID, Internews has been providing essential support to the media sector since 2002.

Salam Watandar, a national radio service providing news, information and entertainment to a network of 53 Afghan-owned local radio stations in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, is one such service that Internews has developed and helped support since 2003. Many of the 53 Afghan-owned stations were established through USAID-funded Internews programs. The broadcast of these local provincial voices has opened up a critical platform for public dialogue and programing continues to engage all citizens and allows each province to be connected to national information.

In addition to Salam Watandar, Internews also works with other partners to build a sustainable media landscape. In 2012, Internews-founded partner, Nai Supporting Open Media in

Afghanistan, launched the independent and accredited Nai Media Institute (NMI), offering the first two year vocational Diploma in Media course in Afghanistan. Internews has also worked with local partners to establish a network of four *Anaar* Multimedia Centers in Afghanistan's main provincial cities with the aim of increasing access to information, building civil society networks, and enabling citizens' entrepreneurial development. Internews is investing in all our local partners, helping them to become sustainable independent organizations for the future.

In Pakistan, Internews is the only international media development organization operating continuously in the country since 2003. Programs focus on underserved populations in some of the most challenging areas of the country and include training journalists, supporting a network of press clubs, curriculum reform and providing humanitarian information services in flood affected areas. The overall strategy is to increase the reach, quality, and quantity of news and information.

We ask that the Committee continue US government support, through funds provided for the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of State, for local, independent media in Afghanistan and Pakistan for fiscal year 2014.

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS IN BURMA

Internews has been working in Burma since 2001 and continues to consistently support media development through journalism trainings, skills-building and access to information. Internews-trained journalists reached affected populations and revealed to the world the devastation of Cyclone Nargis, watchdogged two elections, a referendum, the attack on Aung San Suu Kyi and her repeated incarcerations and releases.

Today, the country's media enters a new era of challenge and responsibility: even in the current climate of reform, their work will not be easy and the fledging internal media must

continue to be supported. Internews is deeply invested in Burma's continued progress and brings unrivaled experience to the pursuit of developing a well-informed, increasingly democratic and a more just Burma.

We ask that the Committee continue US government support, through funds provided for the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of State, for local, independent media in Burma for fiscal year 2014.

HARNESSING MEDIA TO RESPOND TO IMPROVE GLOBAL HEALTH

In nearly a decade of work in Sub-Saharan Africa, Internews has seen the critical impact that accurate information has on public health. Supported by USAID, our projects have stimulated accurate, responsible, and effective local media coverage on HIV/AIDS and pandemic health issues. In Kenya, a PEPFAR grant was used to train and mentor journalists to educate the public on effective HIV prevention and treatment methods. Over time, these journalists matured into some of the best on the continent; some went on to cover Kenya's disputed presidential election and subsequent political crisis, using the skills they learned to draw the world's attention. Three of them were nominated for CNN's Journalist of the Year award.

CONCLUSION

We believe that a major goal of US foreign policy should be universal access to quality, local and accurate information. Local media, citizen media, and civil society institutions armed with communications technologies can empower communities and amplify American approaches to development, diplomacy and national security.