

**STATEMENT BY
DR. DAN E. DAVIDSON
PROFESSOR, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE
AND
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN COUNCILS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION:
ACTR/ACCELS**

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

MARCH 1, 2013

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present this statement on behalf of the American Councils for International Education. I am requesting that the Subcommittee recommend funding in the fiscal year 2014 State, Foreign Operations bill at least at the level requested by the Administration in fiscal year 2013 for programs under the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and in support of continued assistance for East Europe and Eurasia, including several assistance models in the educational sector that are making a major difference for the successor generation of leaders in that part of the world.

My name is Dan E. Davidson and I have worked in Russia, Eurasia, and East Europe as a scholar, teacher, and director of several major assistance initiatives for nearly 40 years. I am president of American Councils for International Education, a nonprofit organization that works in the republics of the former Soviet Union, East Europe, Afghanistan, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Founded in 1974, American Councils is one of the leading and best-known U.S. organizations administering U.S. Government, World Bank, foreign government, and privately funded exchange and educational development programs.

ACHIEVING DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM

Since 2003, the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia, the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, and the “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan have taken place. At the same time, however, particularly in recent years, there have been disturbing counter-trends in the reassertion of authoritarian policies and repression of basic freedoms in Belarus and Uzbekistan and marked anti-Western posturing in Russia which included the unilateral closure of our USAID Mission there. Clearly, much remains to be done if continued advancement of democratic freedoms, as well as economic and social reform, is to be achieved.

However, the Administration with support from Congress has made significant progress in building the official relationship with Russia in areas, such as launching the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission to expand relations into many new areas. I was honored to be invited to participate in the ongoing work of the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Innovation.

Congress has played a vital role in defining our national goals for East Europe, Eurasia, and, more recently, with Afghanistan. It did so by enacting the FREEDOM Support (FSA) and the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Acts and other creative programs that have done much to build relations of respect and trust with new generations of citizens across this very large and strategic region. This Subcommittee, in particular, deserves credit for embracing these activities. In the early years of this century, unfortunately, the FSA and SEED Acts were seriously weakened in favor of a more generic, “one size fits all” approach to both the educational and research exchanges, as well as U.S. technical assistance programs.

I would particularly like to thank this Subcommittee for its continued support of the Department of State's Title VIII, Research and Training for Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union Program. American Councils is among the administering organizations for this program. Title VIII remains critical to our national security interests, by fostering relationships in research and training that are essential for the larger goals established by the FREEDOM Support Act.

I recommend that the U.S. continue this Administration's policy of strengthening and re-focusing our exchange activities with the nations of the former Soviet Union and East Europe, even as the U.S. government continues to hold some of the priorities and replicate program models that have functioned well in Eurasia, especially in Central Asia, Afghanistan, South Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa and other parts of the Muslim world.

There is particular need for programs focused on professional development, the support of teachers and those who train them, such as the Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP), as well as curriculum development and support for modern educational assessment systems. These programs are particularly important, as one teacher can have an impact on hundreds or thousands of students. New national testing systems improve educational policy formation and contribute greatly to the elimination of corrupt practices surrounding university admissions in many of these nations.

These U.S. exchange and assistance programs focus on transparency, ethnic diversity, and access to educational opportunity, through a sustained and affirmative effort to reach beyond the traditional elites and residents of capital cities. More importantly, they provide a significant long-term multiplier effect at relatively little cost as alumni networks in the home countries take on increasingly important roles in government, the private sector and the NGO community. For that reason, Madam Chairwoman, I ask that the Subcommittee include language in support of the following exchange programs:

Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX)
American-Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE)
Youth Exchange and Study (YES)
U.S. - Poland Parliamentary Youth Exchange Leadership Program
Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP)
Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP), Eurasia/Balkans
Professional Fellowship Program (PFP)
Educational Advising Centers (Education USA)
National Security Language Initiative - Youth (NSLI-Y)
Critical Language Scholarships Program (CLS)
Intensive Summer Language Institutes (for US teachers of Chinese and Arabic)
Title VIII (Research and Training in East European/Eurasian Regions)
Educational Seminars (for teachers and principals)
Near East South Asia Undergraduate Exchange Program (NESA)

FOREIGN OPERATIONS PROGRAMS

The U.S. currently supports a number of relatively new and unusually important assistance programs in the Eurasian/South East Europe region, which, based on my own experience, deserve particular consideration as models of focused U. S. assistance. Each contributes to meeting the challenges of preparing a new generation of citizens for the demands of the globalized economy and the concomitant needs for stronger workforce development, professional education, reduction of corruption, and greater social cohesion.

INDEPENDENT STANDARDIZED TESTING: A CHANGE IN THE ACADEMIC CULTURE OF NATIONS

In 2002, at the invitation of the government of Kyrgyzstan, the U.S. embarked on a small but important program to assist that nation in creating an open and objective system for the distribution of federal scholarship awards to entering university students. This program has become a model for Georgia, which is now in its sixth year of merit-based admissions to higher education, and Ukraine, which is now in its fifth year of standardized and basically corruption-free higher education admission, funded, in part, by the USAID. The Georgian system is now fully self-sufficient. The Kyrgyz project has survived ethnic conflict and the collapse of two successive governments, but it still needs modest assistance to operate normally.

IN CONCLUSION

Madam Chairwoman, as you proceed with decisions on the fiscal year 2014 bill, I request that you continue to provide strong funding for the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs programs, particularly the programs mentioned in this statement. Also, I ask that you provide continued funding for the accounts for the states of Eurasia and Eastern Europe to insure adequate support under your bill for much needed programs in educational development and exchange.

Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to present my views to the Subcommittee.