

TESTIMONY OF  
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SUBMITTED TO  
THE  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS  
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The Nature Conservancy thanks the Committee for its strong support to international conservation and urges the Committee to continue this tradition by appropriating in FY 2016 at least the FY2015 levels.

This would mean \$250 million for conservation of biodiversity within the Development Assistance and Economic Support Funds accounts of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); an amount for the Global Environment facility (GEF) at least equal to the anticipated annual pledge level; a continuation of the \$55 million special item (first voted in FY2014) to support the fight against wildlife trafficking especially of elephant ivory and rhino horn; and appropriate funding for international climate action including the new Green Climate Fund.

Foreign assistance has been an important part of U.S. international policy since the Marshall Plan more than sixty years ago. Support for such assistance draws upon many sources, including the innate generosity of the American people in the face of acute needs in poor countries. But it also reflects a consensus that such assistance – including to conservation of natural resources -- is in our own national interest. I could cite many leaders over many years, but will for brevity quote only three.

In a hearing on March 12, 2013, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said

*“Many countries important to the United States are vulnerable to natural resource shocks that degrade environment, frustrate attempts to democratize, raise the risk of regime-threatening instability, and aggravate regional tensions.”*

Long before then, two Presidents said –

*The dangerous depletion or contamination of the natural endowments of some nations – soil, forest, water, air – will add to their environmental and health problems, and increasingly to those of the global community.*

Ronald Reagan, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 1988

and

*...I am more and more convinced that conservation is a basis of permanent peace.*

Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944

We agree, and we urge the Committee to consider this long record of bipartisan support as it allocates the foreign assistance budget for FY2016.

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the lands and waters upon which all life depends. Our work in the United States and abroad is closely related. For example, our work with ranchers in the American West informs our current program in Kenya at the Northern Rangelands Trust, where we are helping to introduce better grazing practices and more efficient marketing of cattle, in ways that boost local people's income, their security against Somali raiders from across the border, and the trends for local wildlife. Poaching in this area has begun to decline. Elephants are stable, and many other species are gaining.

A healthy natural environment is crucial to genuinely sustainable economic and social development. Too often, short-term considerations drive bad choices, whose results can be catastrophic for both the natural world and for the people who live by means of that world. A healthy and sustainable environment promotes peace and security. The United States and the world need national security, we need economic security, we need food security, we need what is being called "human security" in all its aspects – and these require, at the most fundamental level, a healthy and sustainable natural world.

Climate change will make many current bad trends worse. Natural systems not only need help to adjust to climate change -- they can sometimes be part of the solution to climate change. For example "green infrastructure" can mitigate storm surges and sequester carbon that would otherwise go into the atmosphere. Climate assistance accounts merit and should receive continued investments in line with U.S. government pledges and global needs. We urge the committee to support the existing Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) and to provide important initial support toward the early work of the new Green Climate fund.

The Conservancy supports local conservation groups in the developing world that work to raise the effective level of protection at parks and nature preserves established by the local governments. We work with local communities to increase the constituency for conservation. We support sustainable development projects to create jobs and improve the productivity and standard of living of rural people. Our work with village-controlled marine protected areas in the

islands of East Asia has shown that improved conservation can raise local incomes significantly. We are working cooperatively with landowners in Africa to promote conservation on private lands and keep migration routes open for large mammals. We are working with governments across the Caribbean to improve fishing and tourism.

We are a private, non-profit organization. Our last private capital fund campaign raised more than \$1 billion, more than \$100 million of that for our international work. But peer-reviewed research has shown that funding shortfalls in international conservation are much larger than even the Conservancy, and our allies in the conservation movement, can realistically raise. Governments must help or the conservation mission is likely to fail and the world's people will suffer the consequences. Fortunately, governments are stepping up to this challenge. Norway is contributing billions of dollars for forest conservation in the developing countries; this pledge makes Norway the world's largest donor to conservation. The German government has started a new international conservation fund. The Conservancy has established a presence in Europe where our staff, working with local groups, are urging the European governments to do more -- and with success.

We urge the Committee to provide firm legislative guidance to USAID, directing the Agency to maintain enhanced conservation of natural resources as a mission essential to the long-term and sustainable development of the world. We welcome the Agency's Biodiversity Strategy, which recognizes that conservation and sound natural resource management are essential building blocks for development and growth. We urge you to instruct the Agency to actively promote large regional conservation programs. Experience has shown that such programs, including current work in the Congo and Amazon basins, and the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), are often the most efficient way to address problems that do not respect national borders.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the world's largest source of funding to global environmental and conservation issues. About one-third of its investments are in conservation. Each dollar of the U.S. quota is leveraged by four dollars from other donor countries, and then further leveraged by local countries' match, so that the final leverage on U.S. appropriated funds is very great -- by some calculations, as high as 50 to 1. This is a degree of leverage not obtainable in any other way, and merits continued support to the GEF.

Thank you this opportunity to testify. .