

House Appropriations Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs

FY2026 Public Witness Hearing Written Testimony

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of foreign affairs funding in FY2026. Let me begin by acknowledging Chairman Diaz-Balart's longstanding efforts to address severe acute malnutrition, and Ranking Member Frankel's strong commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls around the world. Your work is appreciated and advanced by U.S. investments within the United Nations. The accounts funded by this Subcommittee support U.S. assessed and voluntary contributions to the UN. Within the State Department, we request \$1.741 billion for the **Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account** and \$459.8 million for the **International Organizations and Programs (IO&P) account**. We also recommend \$1.481 billion for the **Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA) account** and \$444 million for the **Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account**, and support bill language that enables us to pay our contributions to UN peacekeeping at the full assessed rate. We hope that you will also consider funding important **bilateral and multilateral health programs**, including the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (\$795 million), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (\$2 billion), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (\$340 million), and global polio eradication activities (\$85 million).

For nearly 80 years, the UN has been a critical force-multiplier for the U.S., helping marshal the international cooperation, financial and material resources, and political will necessary to take on global challenges that no country, no matter how powerful, can address alone. Through this work, the UN has delivered tangible benefits for all Americans. For example, through its peacekeeping operations, which stabilize some of the world's most volatile conflict zones without requiring the U.S. to deploy its own troops, the UN helps make America stronger. By spurring global cooperation to take on fentanyl trafficking, helping reduce overdose deaths in the U.S. by 25%, the UN helps make Americans safer. And by contracting with American businesses, providing an infusion of \$2.2 billion into the U.S. private sector in 2023 alone, the UN helps make America more prosperous.

The Importance of U.S. Engagement with the UN

The CIO account funds U.S. assessments for more than 40 organizations, including the **UN regular budget (UNRB)**. The UNRB funds the UN's core activities, including efforts to monitor and improve compliance with legally-binding sanctions adopted by the UN Security Council targeting the activities of terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS and rogue states like North Korea; special political missions in Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, and other countries that work to advance peace negotiations, support development of effective governing institutions, coordinate humanitarian and development assistance, and facilitate free and fair elections; and human rights investigatory mechanisms that seek to document and expose abuses in a host of contexts, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Iran's suppression of peaceful protests, and the Taliban's growing repression of women. CIO also funds U.S. assessments for critical UN specialized agencies, including the **International Atomic Energy Agency**, which has been working to ensure the safety of nuclear power plants in Ukraine, and the **Food and Agriculture Organization**, which focuses on long-term efforts to fight hunger and support sustainable agriculture, food safety, and animal health.

None of this comes for free, of course, but given how varied and geographically dispersed these activities are, the UNRB is a bargain for American taxpayers. Overall, the UNRB is equivalent to just one-quarter of

the annual budget of Rhode Island. In light of how critical these investments are for the advancement of American interests and the value for money they provide to American taxpayers, it is critical that the U.S. fully fund its share of the UNRB.

Another key aspect of the UN's global footprint is its **peacekeeping operations**, which work to mitigate conflict in strategically important regions of the world by standing between warring parties, protecting civilians from violence, facilitating humanitarian assistance to communities in need, and supporting the development of rule of law and democratic processes in fragile states. These efforts promote core U.S. foreign policy interests because they reduce the intensity of civil wars and keep armed conflicts from spilling over borders, all while not requiring the U.S. to put its own soldiers in the field. They are also cost-effective, **having been found repeatedly by the GAO to be one-eighth the cost to American taxpayers of deploying U.S. forces.**

UN peacekeeping has evolved significantly since the UN Security Council established the first mission in 1948, and it remains an essential tool for the international community to address emerging crises in fragile states. This is particularly true in the Central African Republic (CAR), where peacekeepers are working to protect civilians from interethnic violence and help the government extend its authority in ungoverned spaces. CAR is in a rough neighborhood, located next to the Sahel region, where affiliates of Al-Qaeda and ISIS have seized control of large swathes of territory in recent years, and where nearly half of all deaths in the world attributed to terrorism in 2023 occurred. Experts note that these insurgents are gaining ground partially because of the security vacuum created by a drawdown of Western military assistance and the withdrawal of peacekeepers from Mali. By holding the line in CAR, UN peacekeepers are helping to provide a bulwark against the further expansion of these violent jihadist forces.

Unfortunately, since FY2017, our nation has accrued more than \$1.4 billion in arrears because of Congressional enforcement of an arbitrary cap on U.S. contributions. It is crucial that this Subcommittee act to pay our peacekeeping dues at the full assessed rate, as well as pay down a portion of our arrears through the CIPA and PKO accounts.

I would be remiss if I didn't also note the UN's ongoing commitment to making its operations more cost-effective, efficient, and fit for purpose. **On March 12th, the Secretary-General announced a major new reform initiative** aimed at identifying efficiencies in the way the UN works, reviewing mandate implementation to ensure the UN's efforts are aligned with contemporary needs, and pursuing deeper structural changes and program realignment to streamline operations. To be successful, the UN80 Initiative will require continued strong and constructive engagement by the U.S.

Investing in Global Health

With direct relationships in over 150 health ministries globally and the ability to engage with countries in ways that no single country can replicate, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** plays a lead role in amplifying key U.S. investments in PEPFAR, global immunizations, malaria, and pandemic preparedness and response efforts. Through continued U.S. leadership, the WHO also strengthens U.S. industry, expands U.S. influence, protects U.S. health security, and amplifies U.S. world class research. For instance, for every dollar in assessed contributions the U.S. sends to the WHO, about \$0.46 comes back to our economy through procurement contracts; in 2023, the WHO purchased American goods and services valued at \$51 million. The WHO also acted decisively to impose international controls on synthetic opioids that have killed thousands of Americans and cost our economy more than \$1.5 trillion. American research institutions lead the world in health sciences R&D and host nearly 1 in 10 WHO collaboration centers –

more than any other country. And by “pre-qualifying” medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics for emergency use against deadly diseases, the WHO provides an accelerated path to procurement of safe, effective, reliable and high-quality American health innovations.

Polio is extremely contagious, causes death and lifelong paralysis, and has no cure, yet is preventable with a simple, safe, and cost-effective vaccine. Since 1988, U.S. investments in **global polio eradication** have helped reduce wild polio cases by 99.9%, from 350,000 annually across 125 countries to fewer than 100 cases in 2024 in just two countries. U.S. leadership has protected over 20 million children from paralysis by helping to vaccinate more than 370 million children multiple times each year. Yet one in five children do not have access to lifesaving vaccines like those for polio, and until polio is eradicated, American children will remain at risk. If polio eradication efforts are stopped, polio cases could reach up to 200,000 new cases annually. U.S. polio eradication efforts help prevent the reintroduction of the disease within our borders, which happened in 2022 when the first case of paralytic polio in decades was confirmed in New York. During that outbreak, a single polio case incurred approximately \$139,000 in public health labor costs alone, compared to the cost of only a few dollars to vaccinate a child against polio abroad. Eliminating polio globally ensures that Americans remain protected from this debilitating disease that can reach our country in as little as 36 hours and harm America’s health, national security, and economic interests. And until polio is eradicated, the United States must mitigate the threat of an outbreak by continuing to vaccinate citizens against polio. The annual estimated cost of those efforts is \$700 million.

Since its founding in 2000, **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance’s** market-driven approach has helped to deliver life-saving vaccines to the world’s poorest countries at the lowest possible cost, immunizing a whole generation – more than a billion children – and preventing more than 17.3 million deaths, halving child mortality in lower-income countries. Gavi has delivered more than 1.5 billion vaccines, many of which were procured from U.S. manufacturers. In fact, Gavi directly contributes to advancing America’s prosperity as the world’s leading purchaser of U.S.-produced vaccines and also supports U.S. jobs by deploying technology manufactured in Florida, California, Ohio, Michigan, Utah, and Washington. FY26 funding for Gavi will ensure that two new malaria vaccines are available to children in regions hardest hit by malaria. These vaccines not only save lives from malaria, but data also show they result in a 13% reduction in all-cause mortality among children. Gavi has generated \$220.5 billion in economic benefits from \$1.5 billion in donor country resources mobilized since 2008. The return-on-investment is clear: every \$1 spent on immunization in Gavi-supported countries yields as much as \$54 when considering the value of costs averted plus the value of lives saved. What’s more, since 2000, 19 countries have successfully transitioned from relying on Gavi support to fully financing their own immunization programs, and 100% of Gavi countries met their co-financing obligations in 2022. Going forward, countries will contribute more than 40% of their own routine vaccine costs. FY26 Gavi funding of \$340 million, the same request as for FY25, will help Gavi immunize an additional 500 million children and prevent at least 8 million deaths while generating an additional \$800 million in efficiency savings by reducing vaccine prices across at least 50% of its portfolio over its next Strategic Cycle from 2026-2030.

Malaria not only causes devastating health impacts but also cripples economies, leading to instability and increased migration. Addressing malaria at its source reduces the root causes of migration, protects U.S. borders, and promotes economic growth in regions of strategic importance to the U.S. According to WHO’s 2024 World Malaria Report, there were an estimated 263 million malaria cases in 83 countries in 2023. Additionally, the rate of malaria cases has increased slightly since 2022, but malaria deaths have declined over the past decade, with the exception of a spike during the pandemic. As of January 2025, 45 countries and one territory have been certified malaria-free by WHO. Despite strides in expanding access to

insecticide-treated nets and medicines to help prevent malaria, particularly for young children and pregnant women, the past decade has shown that progress won't be linear. The threat of malaria resurgence in the U.S. remains real – illustrated by local transmission of malaria in Florida, Texas, and Maryland in 2023. The global malaria response has faced several mounting threats, such as drug and insecticide resistance, layered humanitarian crises, resource constraints, new invasive mosquito species on the African continent, and the impact of more severe and frequent natural disasters. To date, malaria investments have averted nearly 12.7 million deaths and more than 2.2 billion cases of disease, representing one of the biggest - if not the biggest - returns on investment in global health in recent years. While this tremendous progress should be celebrated, it is also a stark reminder of how much more must be done. Still today, malaria is responsible for the death of one child nearly every minute.

The impact is especially severe in Africa, which bears 94% of malaria cases and 95% of malaria deaths. The WHO Africa Region's healthcare systems are severely strained, with children under 5 accounting for 73.7% of all malaria deaths in the region. The Eighth Replenishment of the **Global Fund** set an ambitious goal of \$18 billion over three years to jumpstart progress in ending the world's three most ancient diseases. This investment would save 23 million lives, reduce mortality rates for HIV, TB, and malaria by 64%, and yield \$19 in health gains and economic returns for every dollar invested. As the primary funder of more than half of all malaria interventions globally, the Global Fund is vital for cutting malaria caseloads by an estimated 66% from 2020 to 2026. Working in partnership with the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) - currently operating in 30 partner countries - National Malaria Control Programs, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund optimizes and scales up proven, cost-effective interventions such as bed nets, indoor residual spraying, anti-malarials, rapid diagnostic tests, and vaccines. These initiatives safeguard American health by preventing imported cases of malaria and potential outbreaks on U.S. soil.

Congress's Critical Role

U.S. foreign assistance has improved global health outcomes, stabilized countries undergoing conflict, and provided lifesaving humanitarian assistance to people in need. Important new and innovative investments in foreign assistance were made during the first Trump Administration, and the new Administration decided to take a fresh look at these investments.

We hope the Administration and Congress will determine that strong support for innovative and effective foreign assistance, rather than funding cuts, make America stronger and more prosperous. We know that numerous UN agencies, funds, and programs have received notices from the U.S. government terminating their funding, in many cases despite prior Administration determinations that this same work was "lifesaving" and should continue. These programs have enjoyed generations of support from Republicans and Democrats in Congress, in part because they save millions of lives and make our country safer. As it stands though - to give one example of many - the U.S. has terminated a program that helped Mexican authorities predict and prevent money laundering from illicit drug manufacturing and trafficking. Ending this and other programs - such as those that identify, prevent, treat, and contain deadly diseases within countries of origin and stop their spread before they reach U.S. shores - endangers the lives of Americans.

Restoring these programs will ensure a more stable and peaceful world and preserve our country's leadership at a time when our geopolitical rivals are eager to supplant American influence. This Subcommittee has long sought to maintain our leadership role on the world stage. As the new Administration and Congress work to establish a new foreign assistance infrastructure and mission, it is critical that the Executive Branch disburse funding at the levels and according to the conditions that Congress specifies.