

Remarks for the Record

The Honorable Ted Yoho (Former Member of Congress)

House Foreign Affairs Committee

“The USAID Betrayal”

February 13, 2025

Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Meeks and the members of this Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the full committee today on this important topic, titled; “USAID Betrayal.” That’s a strong and damning title, and I look forward to having an engaging discussion about US assistance and international engagement with you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of this historically bipartisan committee.

I had the honor to serve in the U.S. Congress from 2013-2021. I served on this committee and the Agriculture Committee during those 8 years. During the 115th congress, I had the privilege of chairing the Foreign Affairs Asia-Pacific Subcommittee. I also served in Congress as the Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Effective Foreign Assistance, where my colleague Adam Smith and I brought together Members and staff from across the aisle to explore and advance policies and initiatives to improve our international assistance.

I went through a metamorphic change in my approach to foreign aid during my time in Congress. Entering congress, I wanted to eliminate all foreign aid, but soon learned from bipartisan Congressional Delegations to Africa and Latin America that not all aid programs were bad. I became a strong proponent of effective aid programs and for reforming our foreign assistance agencies and programs to increase their impact in service of our national interests. I developed a strong belief that properly designed, efficient and effective foreign aid that is aligned with U.S. foreign policy advances American interests in several critical ways: 1. It projects American leadership and values; 2. It broadens and deepens alliances and economic relations; 3. It challenges the influence of our adversaries and malign actors; 4. It promotes regional stability and thus prevents future conflicts and denies safe havens for violent extremist organizations; and 5. It protects Americans from disease outbreaks through pandemic preparedness, prevention and response.

Secretary Rubio has stated that our international assistance must advance U.S. national interests by making America safer, stronger and more prosperous. This is a commonsense approach that should always be the standard. Another way of thinking about this is that U.S. assistance must pass two critical tests. First, the programs must be designed and implemented in a manner that aligns with and advances U.S. foreign policy, national security and economic priorities. Secondly, all USG funded assistance programs must demonstrate program efficiency and value

for money. We must come together on a bipartisan basis to support assistance that meets these criteria and to oppose assistance that does not. We simply cannot afford to be investing in programs that are not effective and strategic. While in Congress, I repeatedly called for and introduced legislation to mandate bilateral and multilateral aid reviews, and I call on the members of this committee to prioritize such legislative action.

This can be accomplished by reauthorizing in law the objectives and authorities of our foreign assistance apparatus, and it must be done in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion. If not, foreign assistance programs will deviate from their core purpose over time, resulting in reduced effectiveness, diminished bipartisan support, and the erosion of America's credibility with our international partners.

As Congress endeavors to reduce our national debt and reign in government spending, it will be necessary to apply a greater strategic focus to a limited budget for international assistance. We simply cannot afford to be doing too many things in too many places, as this only dilutes the humanitarian and strategic impact of our foreign assistance. Successive Democratic and Republican Administrations have tried to narrow USAID's aperture and graduate countries off assistance, but none have succeeded meaningfully. This must be part of the plan for our assistance efforts going forward. All countries must be put on a journey to self-reliance, and we must concentrate our efforts in the geographies and sectors where we can have the greatest impact. We also must adhere to the fundamental objectives we set out for our aid, such as lives saved, health improved, economic growth and prosperity achieved. Our development programs must maintain purity of purpose, and should not weigh into social policy areas where there is strong political disagreement.

We must put economic growth at the center of our foreign aid strategies and programs. Unlocking the power of the free market to achieve sustained economic growth is the only lasting solution to eradicate extreme poverty, and it puts our partners on a path to move from aid to trade. Investments in health, education, and agriculture enable partner countries to chart a path towards increased prosperity. However, we must do more to support market-based economic growth through increased investments in critical infrastructure and in programs that improve governance and financial management, and spur trade and investment. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) also play a critical role when it comes to U.S. Government efforts to spur economic growth in developing countries.

Another vital area for U.S. leadership is in addressing global food insecurity. I spent my career in the agriculture sector, and I understand that productive agriculture and food security is the bedrock of prosperous and secure societies. During my time in Congress, I worked with and championed USAID Feed the Future Innovation labs at our world-renowned land grant universities. These programs invest in biotechnology and other agriculture research areas, and

connect our university leaders with farmers in low-income countries to help them in developing better farming practices that lead to increased incomes, improved health and more stable communities and nations. On top of that, U.S. agriculture exports to Feed the Future focus countries have increased dramatically, showing how smart assistance programs can create economic opportunity for Americans. My alma mater, the University of Florida, leads the Feed the Future Livestock Innovation Lab, and I was proud to partner with the leaders of this innovation lab to support their work in Africa. Another successful program is the food supplement, known as RUTF. (Ready To Use Therapeutic Food). This product is funded by USAID, carries the American flag on every pack, and is made with US agricultural products sourced from over 27 states. The dramatic scale up of RUTF production and delivery in recent years is responsible for saving the lives of millions of vulnerable, young children. RUTF is a clear-cut example of America first international assistance, where we invest alongside other donors in an American product that is both highly cost-effective in saving lives and a powerful tool for building good will for America.

An often overlooked and underappreciated component of effective U.S. foreign assistance is how the U.S. government leverages its leadership position within international organizations. The United States played the lead role in establishing the World Bank and United Nations systems, yet we have ceded leadership and allowed our adversaries to increase their influence within these multilateral institutions. Renewing U.S. leadership at these international organizations requires increased engagement to exert our influence and an honest assessment of the value these organizations provide. We should adopt the same type of multilateral aid review model as those undertaken by other leading donors, which base investment decisions on organizational performance and alignment with foreign policy priorities. The U.S. is the largest funder and shareholder in the vast majority of international organizations, and we must take back the power in these relationships in order to maximize the benefits of U.S. participation. The U.S. also must lead within independent multilateral organizations that have demonstrated unique value for money and development impact and that share the cost burden and provide a force-multiplier to U.S. investments.

US foreign aid programs needed a reboot, and the question before Congress now is how to design the future of U.S. international assistance. While undertaking the necessary and hard work to reform foreign aid, let us not lose sight of the strategic purpose that it serves and the goodwill it has generated for our nation.

I have complete confidence that if Congress comes together as Americans and does what's best for the nation by putting our international assistance programs on a path of reform and optimization, your actions will leave a more secure, healthier nation and a more stable world for the next generations to follow. Lastly, it's the right thing to do and exemplifies the best of America.

Again, I want to thank you Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Meeks and the committee members for the opportunity to weigh in on this important topic. I yield back.

Ted S. Yoho, DVM,

Former Member of Congress 2013-2021

HFAC and Agriculture Committee