

Statement for the Record United States Agency for International Development
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and Pakistan Affairs
Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
“U.S. Interests in South Asia and the FY 2020 Budget Request”
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Chairman Sherman, Ranking Member Yoho, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for inviting me here to discuss the Administration’s Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request for the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) assistance programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is an honor to testify before you and a pleasure to be here alongside my colleagues, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Ambassador Alice Wells, and Acting Assistant Administrator Gloria Steele.

I would like to begin by thanking our colleagues, the brave women and men in our military who have served in Afghanistan – who, in some cases, have given their lives – and their families. Our gratitude also goes to the American civilians who serve in both Afghanistan and Pakistan: USAID’s Foreign Service Officers and development professionals; diplomats of the U.S. Department of State; colleagues from across the interagency, and, the men and women who are working shoulder to shoulder with us to implement U.S. programs in the region. I would also like to thank the hundreds of local Afghan and Pakistani citizens who work – and sacrifice – alongside us to ensure their countries’ futures are ones filled with increased access to opportunities, enhanced stability, and a hopeful tomorrow for their children.

As USAID Administrator Mark Green has stated, USAID’s goal is to end the need for foreign assistance. Our Agency’s objective is to support partners to become self-reliant and capable of

leading their own development journeys. A key stepping stone on the path to self-reliance is ensuring governments are responsive and accountable to their citizens, and to the international community. We make progress toward this by increasing private-sector-led economic growth, strengthening citizen-responsive democratic governance and enhancing health and education outcomes, but we must also reduce conflict and counteract the drivers of violence, instability, and other security threats.

The President's FY 2020 Budget Request for assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan reflects our nation's efforts to advance our national security interests and increase regional stability. These budget levels continue a downward trend as our assistance portfolios mature towards more sustainable levels. Although the FY 2020 request is reduced in comparison to FY 2018, both Missions will continue to implement a significant suite of assistance programs.

The FY 2020 request aligns with the Administration's South Asia Strategy. Released in 2017, it lays out the United States' national security and foreign policy priorities in the region and informs USAID's management of civilian assistance in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Our Missions in Kabul and Islamabad, in collaboration with the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, have developed Country Development Cooperation Strategies, or CDCSs, that directly align USAID's programming within the South Asia Strategy.

For Pakistan, the FY 2020 request includes \$48 million in Economic Support and Development Funds (ESDF). A more stable, secure, prosperous Pakistan that counters violent extremism in its territory and plays a constructive role in the region is in both our countries' interests. USAID's

FY 2020 civilian assistance request for Pakistan will complement Pakistan's own domestic development efforts and support U.S key interests: supporting the newly merged Districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) formerly called the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), working with Pakistan's civil society to promote tolerance and combat drivers of extremism, and promoting private sector-led economic growth.

The FY 2020 request represents significantly lower civilian assistance levels compared to previous appropriations. This reflects the outcome of a presidentially determined review of all assistance to Pakistan. Nonetheless, civilian assistance will continue because simply put, Pakistan's trajectory matters to the United States. While our governments do not always see eye-to-eye, civilian assistance can both help shape that trajectory and support U.S. security and economic interests.

The FY 2020 request allows us to maintain an effective and appropriate relationship with Pakistan that addresses both national security and economic objectives. The FY 2020 request for USAID aligns with our Pakistan CDCS, and supports the following core U.S. Government objectives in Pakistan: 1) helping consolidating Pakistan's civilian government control on the border with Afghanistan, particularly in newly merged Districts of KP; 2) supporting civil society's efforts to build a more tolerant Pakistan; and 3) promoting private sector led economic growth, including creating opportunities for U.S. businesses.

For Afghanistan, the FY 2020 request is \$400 million in ESDF, guided by the core priorities of peace, security, and reconciliation; free and fair elections; private-sector competitiveness; and

Afghanistan's path to self-reliance. Civilian assistance will help the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) to complete essential reforms and become more responsive to its citizens. It is anticipated that our request for \$400 million for Afghanistan will be adjusted downward as a result of a recent program review.

FY 2020 resources for USAID will continue our focus on accelerating private-sector-driven and export-led economic growth, including the growth of high-value agriculture; sustaining and advancing social gains in health, education, and women's opportunities; and increasing the Afghan government's accountability to its citizens. These priorities underpin our CDCS goal, which is for Afghanistan to become a more inclusive, economically viable, and self-reliant country with which the U.S. Government can better partner in our National Security Strategy.

Support for Afghan women will remain an important focus for USAID. Afghan women's rights and opportunities have advanced with the continued support from the American people, and expanding these gains is a cornerstone of USAID's strategy. USAID's commitment to sustain women's programming reflects a goal of increasing women's participation in civil society and the peace process, the economy, and higher education.

A recent Embassy Kabul-led Afghanistan assistance review directed all agencies to focus on three priorities: support the Afghan peace process; preserve the Afghan state's stability (including support for citizen-responsive, democratic governance to guard against conditions that enable terrorist safe havens); and assist Afghanistan's transition to self-reliance by promoting export-led, market-driven, private sector growth, while providing support for civil society. We

recognize that an inclusive peace agreement and an end to conflict are crucial for Afghanistan's long-term prosperity and self-reliance. USAID's FY 2020 budget request will continue to support the advancement of these efforts.

USAID's CDCS aligns with these objectives by focusing on: accelerating private sector-led economic growth in key population centers; advancing gains made over the past 18 years, particularly for women and girls, in education, and health; and increasing accountability between the Afghan government and its citizens through improved service delivery, reduced corruption in key ministries, and credible elections. U.S. Government civilian assistance helps create the conditions necessary for peace and self-reliance by focusing on long-term, broad based development and reinforcing efforts to reduce violence and stimulate a political settlement to end the conflict with the Taliban. In addition, the U.S. Government also leverages other donor commitments and closely coordinates with our Afghan partners.

Over the past several years, with vital support from Congress, we have taken clear measures in Afghanistan and Pakistan to ensure our assistance promotes stable, inclusive, and increasingly prosperous countries. We appreciate Congress' recognition that USAID's development programs are critical components for achieving U.S. national security objectives, and that the stability our programs help countries achieve will ultimately improve the prosperity of the United States, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and our regional partners.

USAID is committed to investing development assistance strategically in Afghanistan and Pakistan to support the Administration's South Asia Strategy. U.S. assistance remains a critical

tool to promote regional stability, and more broadly, U.S. national security. We will continue to make these important contributions while also safeguarding taxpayer funds. It is an honor to discuss with you today what USAID is doing in that regard.

Thank you and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.