# DEMOCRACY SUPPORT STRATEGIES IN AFRICA

## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

OF THE

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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# DEMOCRACY SUPPORT STRATEGIES IN AFRICA

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 18, 2016**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:35 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The subcommittee will come to order and first of all I want to say to our distinguished witness I apologize—and to our guests who are here—that we do have a series of votes that have just been called.

But I would like to get my opening comments. My good friend and colleague, Karen Bass, the ranking member, will join us immediately after the votes and then we'll just proceed with the hearing.

But thank you for being here. Thank you for your patience with this delay while floor votes occur.

The administration has increased funding for democracy in governance in Africa in the 2017 proposed budget by more than $168 million from the actual Fiscal Year 2015 funding.

Many of us in Congress, realizing the importance of helping to facilitate free, fair and transparent elections in Africa, have long supported funding increases in this area. So it's very much welcomed.

However, there are questions concerning the effective use of funds. According to the administration's budget explanation for Fiscal Year 2017, "priority countries in Africa are falling behind in democracy, human rights, and governance, showing the deepest declines compared to other regions in the past 5 years."

The administration seems to have declined to intervene significantly in countries important to the U.S. interests such as Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, and Djibouti. Using Ghana as an example where the democracy funding request dipped slightly for Fiscal Year 2017, this hearing will examine U.S. electoral policy moving forward.

In recent years, there has been a troubling trend in Africa toward leaders changing constitutions to allow them to run for a third term, not previously provided for in the law.

The administration indeed has urged the Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda, for example, not to go for a third term. Neither leader heeded the call for restraint in this regard.

In Burundi, the third term has caused serious upheaval and violence, resulting in an attempted coup, killing dozens of people, a crackdown on civil liberties and nearly 484,000 people internally displaced or seeking asylum in other countries. This situation was caused by an election many felt was unacceptable.

Other leaders, taking the Burundi and Rwanda example, are trying to seek extensions of their term in office as well. For example, Democratic Republic of the Congo's President Joseph Kabila is faced with a Constitution that not only limits him to two terms but prevents him from changing the Constitution to accommodate extending his rule.

However, President Kabila's government is taking it slow in preparing for scheduled elections in November and is trying to undo the Constitution by requiring his continuing in office past the December 19 expiration of his mandate despite the constitutional restrictions.

There was violence caused by an earlier Kabila attempt to change the Constitution and it has been widely predicted including by our own U.S. Department of State that even greater violence would result if the Kabila term is extended despite the constitutional bar for a third term.

Even when election processes improve, problems can develop that cause mistrust which can lead to rejection of an election results and to more violence.

Such results don't fade away easily. In Ghana, extremely close elections in 2008 led to mistrust of the process, especially when one district had to revote and held the key to who would be President.

Four years later, advanced biometric technology failed, casting further doubt in the minds of some voters. As one of our witnesses today will share with us, there are concerns for the elections later this year based on an accumulation of suspicions from past elections, even though the 2008 and 2012 were not judged by international observers to be particularly problematic.

The case of Ghana points out key questions. When does the international community enter an election process and when does it exit? When do we know whether elections in a particular country need no further intervention? Does intervention have to be massive or are there tweaks in capacity building we can provide that will help make all the difference between an acceptable election or one in which voters refuse to accept the outcome?

Election support is not merely a matter of money. It involves faith in the transparency and the fairness of the election process itself. The international community cannot achieve such trust among voters on our own.

The country in question must experience a meeting of the minds between the ruling party and the government and the political opposition.

There must be clear effective rules for elections that create a level playing field for all candidates and parties involved in the election process. Whatever flaws there may be in any election, the

losing candidate must accept a legitimate loss and prepare for the next election.

We look forward to hearing from our distinguished government witnesses about their strategies to effectively help governments hold free, fair, and transparent elections, and we look forward to our private witnesses as well to tell us how our strategies are working, what their recommendations are on how to make it even better.

Again, we do have votes and the subcommittee will stand in recess for a brief period of time.

[Recess.]

Mr. DONOVAN [presiding]. I apologize to our witnesses and our guests. We just finished voting. Chairman Smith had another obligation. So my name is Dan Donovan. I'm a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and a member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizatons and I'll be conducting the hearing.

Let me introduce our first panel of witnesses. Ambassador Bruce Wharton, United States Department of State. Ambassador Bruce Wharton joined the African Bureau as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in December 2015.

In his last assignment he served as the U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe from September 2012 to November 2015. He has served in several other positions with the African Bureau and in the Bureau of International Information Programs.

Ambassador Wharton entered the Foreign Services in 1985 and has served in U.S. Embassies in Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, South Africa, Guatemala, and Zimbabwe. In Africa he has also worked in Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana.

Mr. Thomas Staal is currently the acting Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance at USAID.

He has worked for USAID since 1988, beginning in Sudan as an emergency program officer, and has worked in the USAID regional office in Kenya managing food aid and project development throughout eastern and southern Africa.

Most recently, Mr. Staal served as the USAID Mission Director in Ethiopia. Before joining USAID he worked with World Vision as their country representative in Sudan.

Our third panelist is Mr. Steven Feldstein, U.S. Department of State. He is a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor where his primary responsibility is for work in Africa on international labor affairs and international religious freedom.

Previously, Mr. Feldstein served as the director of the Office of Policy in the Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning at USAID and served as counsel on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations where he oversaw a portfolio that included oversight over all U.S. foreign assistance agencies, budgets and programs, State Department management and operations, and international organizations.

I welcome all our panelists today and I thank you for your testimony you're about to give. So we'll start. Mr. Wharton, if you

would give your remarks for the 5 minutes, Ambassador. Thank you very much.

**STATEMENT OF MR. D. BRUCE WHARTON, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Ambassador WHARTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify today on democracy support strategies for Africa.

While the people and governments of Africa have made significant strides in recent years, they and we must still address the challenges associated with the closing of political space in certain countries.

Over the next few minutes I would like to talk about both the progress that's been made and where more work still remains to be done.

Our country has long been committed across administrations and party lines to partnering with the people and governments of Africa to promote democracy, human rights, and good governance.

Strengthening democratic institutions is in fact the first pillar of President Obama's 2012 Presidential Policy Directive for Africa.

Now, in the past year there have been political openings and electoral successes in countries ranging in size from Cape Verde to Nigeria and including Burkina Faso, Senegal and Benin.

I have had the honor of being part of U.S. delegations to several of the recent Presidential inaugurations. An election itself, though, is neither the beginning nor the end of democratic process.

Even the democratically-elected leader may choose to ignore term limits, may manipulate the electoral process for personal advantage or may impose restrictions that impede opposition.

We face such situations in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda, just to name a few. It's vital that the United States stay the course with policies and programs that foster democracy in the long run, no matter how great the challenge.

And democracy does not happen overnight. Instability, insecurity, corruption, and inequality stand in the way and that is why we must engage in aggressive diplomatic and assistance efforts to help resolve conflicts, implement peace agreements, support elections, and preserve democratic space and we have seen some successes.

In the Central African Republic, for example, the recent peaceful election of President Touadera and the continuing democratic transition are positive steps. But sustained international attention is essential to ending the cycle of violence and helping create long-term stability.

We are helping to build CAR's judicial structure including development of its special criminal court. We are focusing on community-level peace and reconciliation and expanding access to justice through legal training and mobile courts.

Nigeria's 2015 elections were historic not just for sub-Saharan Africa's most populous country and largest economy but for the entire continent.

We work very hard up front at the highest levels of the administration to impress upon all parties the need for an election that was free, fair, credible, and peaceful and this is what Nigeria delivered.

People showed up early to vote, stayed late to ensure their votes were counted, and ultimately elected a new government. This was the first peaceful democratic transfer of power to an opposition party in Nigeria in history and U.S.-Nigerian relations are stronger today than they have been in many years.

Now we stand ready to support the commitments Nigeria made this month at the UK Anti-Corruption Summit on issues such as beneficial ownership, fiscal and tax transparency, asset recovery and open contracting.

Opportunities and challenges abound. No fewer than 16 African countries have national elections this year. We will continue to support regular democratic transitions of power and speak out against those in power who seek to change constitutions to extend their own tenure.

Regular democratic transitions provide opportunities for Africans to participate in the political process and hold their governments accountable while contributing to the stability across the continent.

Transparent and credible elections help prevent feelings of injustice and alienation that can lead some to extremism and violence. In advance of elections, we support programs to counter violence and promote reconciliation, working with leaders from diverse political, religious, and ethnic groups to promote tolerance, respect, and reform. It is clear that those investments pay dividends.

We greatly appreciate the subcommittee's recognition of the fundamental importance of democracy in Africa and again ask your help in supporting our relevant funding requests.

We are working to ensure that the fiscal 2016 allocations for democracy, rights, and governance in Africa reflect the most strategic allocation of scarce resources. We know the challenges are great but believe that the comprehensive approach we are pursuing is making progress and this will ultimately benefit the people of the United States as well as the people of Africa.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Wharton follows:]

**Testimony of**
**Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary David "Bruce" Wharton**
**Bureau of African Affairs**
**U.S. Department of State**
**before the**
**House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations**
**Democracy Support Strategies in Africa**
**May 18, 2016**

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify on democracy support strategies for Africa and our ongoing work with our African and other international partners to support democratic transitions and opportunities for progress. Unfortunately, while the people and governments of Africa have made significant strides in recent years, they and we must still contend with and address the challenges associated with backsliding and closing political space. Over the next few minutes, I would like to talk about both the progress that's been made and where more – sometimes much more – still needs to be done.

The United States has long been and remains committed to partnering with the people and governments of Africa to promote democracy, human rights and good governance. Strengthening democratic institutions at all levels is in fact the first pillar of President Obama's 2012 Presidential Policy Directive for Africa, and it is a priority reflected in the President's budget requests for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) programs over the past several years, culminating in an FY 2017 request of more than $343 million, which is 50% above the 2015 initial actual level. However, appropriated funding for DRG in Africa, within the global context of other priorities, has been constrained, which has made it difficult to sustain some of the democratic gains in and counter some of the backsliding in Africa.

Africa is home to the world's youngest and fastest growing population, which presents significant opportunities for transformation and growth as well as significant challenges. In this past year, there have been political openings and

electoral successes– including in countries ranging in size from Cabo Verde to Nigeria, and including Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Benin. I have personally had the honor of being part of the U.S. delegations to several presidential inaugurations. Others in the Administration, including members of the President's cabinet, have led delegations to similar events – evidence of the importance of democratic gains not only to the people of Africa, but also to the United States.

An election, though, is neither the beginning nor the end of democracy. Even a democratically elected and duly inaugurated leader may choose to ignore constitutional limitations on terms of office, manipulate the electoral process to personal or party advantage, or impose restrictions on political space to silence legitimate opposition. It's important, therefore, that the United States and our partners not take anything for granted, but remain vigilant and continue the policies and programs that will foster long-term legitimate governance and democratic institutionalization.

With this in mind, the Bureau of African Affairs, along with our colleagues in other bureaus and agencies, employs a wide range of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic advocacy, foreign assistance programs, and other tools to promote and advance human rights and democracy. My colleagues from USAID and State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, which administer many of these programs, will address these in greater detail.

The Link Between Instability and Democracy

Democracy is a laudable goal, but it cannot and does not happen overnight. Hurdles and challenges including instability, insecurity, corruption, inequality and terrorism stand in democracy's way. This is a primary reason that from Mali to Burundi, and South Sudan to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), we are engaged in aggressive diplomatic and assistance efforts to help resolve conflicts, implement peace agreements, support elections, promote inclusive politics, and prevent backsliding.

In Mali, we continue to urge all sides to accelerate their efforts to implement the peace accord signed in June 2015. Significant implementation delays have

prolonged the security vacuum in northern Mali, making it difficult to advance reconciliation, reintegration, and development. Despite these obstacles, we remain committed to advancing an inclusive peace through dialogue with all actors, security sector reform and stabilization, and support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

In the Central African Republic (CAR), the recent peaceful election of President Touadéra and ongoing democratic transition are positive steps, but sustained international interest and attention are essential to ending the cycle of violence and putting the country on a path towards long-term stability and security. Working bilaterally and with international partners such as the UN, AU, and EU, we are supporting inclusive, representative, human-rights-based approaches to governance that facilitate post-conflict stabilization and recovery. Rule of law and accountability are essential for CAR's future, and we are helping to build CAR's judicial structure, including the development of its Special Criminal Court. We are also working to help citizens throughout CAR, regardless of ethnic or religious background, by focusing our long-term development programming on community-level peace and reconciliation and expanding access to justice through sexual and gender-based violence legal training and mobile courts. As I said at the outset, an election and inauguration are a good start, but citizens need to know they can have confidence in their governments to govern them justly and well.

The story in Burundi hasn't been nearly as promising, and we are continuing to employ diplomatic engagement at all levels to urge support for the East African Community-led regionally-mediated dialogue, which we continue to believe presents the best route for peacefully resolving the conflict. We are hopeful that the repeatedly delayed dialogue will resume on May 21 in Arusha, Tanzania, and we continue to encourage all stakeholders to participate without pre-conditions or redlines. We have also encouraged accountability for abuses and violations of human rights and attempts to undermine democracy in Burundi by sanctioning eight individuals thus far from both sides of the conflict. Former Congressman Thomas Perriello, the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, has made frequent visits to Burundi, DRC, and other countries in the region, seeking diplomatic solutions to the current crisis in Burundi and to the impending crisis in the DRC, and will attend the dialogue in Arusha.

In the DRC, we are committed to supporting timely, credible, and peaceful elections, which should culminate in the country's first democratic transition in executive power. This milestone would go a long way in solidifying the country's fragile progress towards stability, democratization, and development over the past decade. We are very concerned, however, by President Kabila's increasing efforts to stay in office beyond his constitutional term limit, including delaying elections and overseeing increased repression against civil society and opposition leaders. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported a significant increase in repression in 2015 and a more rapid increase in repressive acts in the first months of 2016. If the DRC goes down the road of Burundi, the resulting instability could be significantly worse, with far more wide-spread consequences for the region.

The highest levels of the U.S. government are engaged in ensuring that the voices of the Congolese people determine the future of Congo. President Obama has called President Kabila, and Secretary Kerry has met with him on a number of occasions – most recently on April 22– to underscore the importance of timely elections and a transition in leadership. We continue to engage with all stakeholders about the electoral process, including on the prospect for a technical dialogue to reach consensus on next steps. In addition, we have stated privately and publicly that the United States is prepared to impose targeted sanctions against individuals responsible for human rights violations. We have an existing sanctions regime for the DRC, which includes the authority to sanction individuals responsible for undermining democratic institutions as well. We will continue to do everything we can to support democracy in this country, which plays such a pivotal role in the stability and economic development of Central Africa.

Success Stories

As daunting as those challenges might sound, it's important to recognize some of the many successes of the past year.

Nigeria's 2015 elections were an historic moment not just for Nigeria but for the entire continent. People showed up early to vote, stayed late to ensure their votes were counted, and ultimately elected a new government -- the first peaceful,

democratic transfer of power to an opposition party in Nigerian history. U.S.-Nigerian relations are stronger than they have been in many years, and we continue to strengthen this partnership by collaborating to address our shared priorities, including by helping Nigeria defeat Boko Haram and improve security, fight corruption, and promote economic growth. We recognize and stand ready to support Nigeria's strong commitments this month at the UK Anti-Corruption Summit on beneficial ownership, fiscal and tax transparency, asset recovery, and open contracting.

The November 2015 election in Burkina Faso was peaceful, transparent, and considered credible by all participants. This commendable outcome was not always certain, however. Just three months earlier, the presidential guard attempted to seize power, holding the transitional president and prime minister hostage. But the Burkinabe would not accept this and raised their voices for democracy. They worked with civil society, religious leaders, and the international community to restore the transitional government and hold elections. Over the past two years the Burkinabe people have repeatedly demonstrated their strong commitment to democracy in the face of adversity, and we have consistently stood by them. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield led our delegation to Ouagadougou for President Kabore's inauguration in December, and we look forward to working with his government and Burkinabe people to advance our partnership.

Benin's March 2016 election was deemed credible by international observers. Over the past 25 years, the Beninese people and their leaders have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to the democratic process. This election, once again, proved the strength and vibrancy of Benin's democracy. Former President Boni Yayi deserves great credit for the orderly and timely transition to President Talon, as does former Prime Minister Zinsou, whom President Talon defeated in the election, and whose respect for the election results was a superb example of leadership and support for democracy.

Peaceful Transition and Promoting Good Governance and Civil Society

The countries I just discussed – both the successes and the continuing challenges – are just a sample of those with ongoing or impending democratic transitions. No fewer than 16 African countries have national elections this year, with several others holding local or municipal votes as well. We will continue to support regular democratic transitions of power, which means, among other things, that we do not support those in power changing constitutions purely as a means of extending their own tenure: this undermines the institutions of democracy, the legitimacy of governance, and the democratic process. We believe regular democratic transitions provide opportunities for Africans to participate in the political process and hold their governments accountable, while contributing to stability across the continent. As President Obama said in his historic address to the African Union (AU) last year, "Sometimes you'll hear leaders say, 'Well, I'm the only person who can hold this nation together.' If that's true, then that leader has failed to truly build their nation."

Successful leaders work to foster the development of a strong civil society and institutions that can support the peaceful transitions of power; that is the way to long-term stability. When electoral events are successful and democratic, they also help prevent feelings of injustice and alienation that can lead some to heed the siren call of extremism and violence. We support programs to counter violence and promote reconciliation, working with leaders from diverse political, religious, and ethnic groups to promote tolerance, respect, and reform. Working with local and international human rights groups, the United States identifies, prevents and counters violence against women and marginalized communities, including LGBTI persons. All of these efforts, in one way or another, feed into the larger goal of helping the people and countries of Africa build a more democratic future.

We've seen some major electoral successes, but there have been setbacks as well. Solid democratic governance is not simply about elections, and therefore we will continue to promote respect for universal human rights, support civil society, and fight corruption. And we are working with our African partners to ensure that governments deliver essential services, independent judiciaries enforce the rule of law, and that professional security forces respect human rights. Through the Security Governance Initiative (SGI), we are partnering with six initial countries - including Mali -to strengthen African processes and institutions so they more

effectively and efficiently answer the needs for citizen security. Through SGI, we work closely with African parliaments and civil societies so that African militaries and police can be more accountable, respectful of the rule of law, and are able to sustain themselves to carry out their functions under democratically elected governments.

The United States is also committed to supporting the Open Government Partnership (OGP), of which ten African countries are currently members. Through OGP, governments partner and build trust with civil society to work together to make governments and government services more accountable, participatory, and transparent. African countries in OGP are working with civil society to promote reform, and are embracing tools such as open budgeting, open contracting, open data and access to information to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Nigeria announced its intention to join this month at the UK Anti-Corruption Summit, where countries recognized the role OGP can play in furthering anti-corruption efforts. This year, South Africa has played a global leadership role as the OGP co-chair, and we have seen other African countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia embrace OGP as a mechanism for reforms by building new platforms for good governance initiatives and engaging with civil society in collaborative ways.

The United States seeks to strengthen the legal framework and management practices for democratic governance to improve governments' capacity to respond to citizens. U.S.-funded programs strengthen the capacity of electoral institutions, support improved political processes, increase awareness of civic responsibilities, encourage nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide civic education and citizen advocacy, and encourage citizen participation in governance. We call upon all governments to respect and uphold their citizens' fundamental freedoms of speech, association, and expression. And when we see that a government is failing to defend these rights – or, in the worst cases, is actively preventing its citizens from exercising them – we make known our displeasure, loudly and clearly.

The Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) and USAID work closely with our embassies to assess risks for violence surrounding key upcoming African elections, so that diplomatic and programmatic

efforts can mitigate these risks. CSO has also worked directly with local government stakeholders. For example, in the run-up to Nigeria's 2015 elections, CSO deployed an electoral security advisor to work with the country's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and enhance its electoral violence prevention efforts in coordination with USAID and its partners.

The Critical Role of Women

A key element of U.S. action in promoting more democratic and inclusive societies is the advancement of the status of women and girls. As the Secretary of State has said, "our goal is as simple as it is profound: to empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity." When women actively participate at all levels of political decision-making, we know that we are all safer, that our efforts at peacebuilding are stronger, and that around the world, constitutions and peace agreements are more inclusive, just, and lasting. This is not a notion or an idea; it is a fact.

But women in Africa continue to face – and fight to overcome – systemic obstacles to their political participation in all levels of decision-making. For example, women parliamentarians in Kenya have amplified their voice and influence through training sponsored by the Department of State. To comply with the country's 2/3 gender rule, many women are nominated, rather than elected, to serve in their county assemblies. As a result, they are often marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes by elected members. However, after receiving leadership, media, and advocacy training, the women have used the skills they have learned to resolve conflict within their political parties and caucuses; utilize radio and social media to discuss issues such as domestic violence; and effectively mobilize grassroots support to develop constituencies that will increase their chances of winning in the next election. As one participant stated, "Only when you are trained do you realize you are capable of doing the work."

The U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security outlines commitments to ensure women's participation in peace negotiations and reconstruction, protect women and children from conflict abuse, and address the

needs of women in disaster response. It seeks to empower women and girls as equal partners in preventing conflict, as well as to ensure their representation in peacemaking and protect them from violence. The United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally is complementary in scope and serves to marshal U.S. expertise and capacity to address gender-based violence. The Strategy represents a multi-sector approach that includes the justice, legal, security, health, education, economic, social services, humanitarian, and development sectors.

Public Diplomacy Tools

U.S. assistance funds programs for civil society monitoring of government activities, including programming to promote and protect independent media coverage of elections, and improve political party organization. We also develop civil society capacity to further democracy and human rights. These programs strengthen the ability of civil society organizations to influence governments on behalf of citizens, increase accountability and transparency, advocate for political reform, build partnerships with public and private sectors, and promote more inclusive societies.

We also employ public diplomacy tools such as the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), among others. YALI in particular has already been developing the next generation of African leaders who are steeped in democratic, humanitarian values and who are building programs and policies in their home countries that will bear fruit for years to come. Separately, the Fulbright and Humphrey Fellowship programs allow us to bring promising, up-and-coming African students and professionals to the United States for professional development, networking, and practical work experiences to assist in capacity building in critical areas such as good governance and human rights. We also provide funding to prepare foreign university-level students for leadership roles, and fund speakers on democracy-related issues. The Voice of America, individual embassy public affairs programming, and interviews and op-eds by senior Department of State officials, including the Secretary, have helped magnify our pro-democracy messaging across Africa.

Conclusion

We appreciate the Committee's interest in addressing the need to support democracy in Africa and again ask for your help in supporting our relevant funding requests. How we allocate funds is a reflection of how we define our priorities, and we believe there is no higher priority than continuing and expanding Africa's democratic growth. We know that the challenges are great, but we believe that the comprehensive approach that we are pursuing is making progress and promoting democracy, human rights and good governance that will ultimately benefit the United States and all of Africa. This will be a long-term process that requires persistence and sustained partnerships. With your help we have made significant strides over the past few years, but more work remains to be done.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Ambassador.

Mr. Staal, the Chair recognizes you for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. THOMAS STAAL, ACTING ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. STAAL. Thank you, Chairman Donovan, members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

As part of our mission to end extreme poverty and promote democratic resilient societies, USAID is a leader in democracy assistance around the world including in Africa.

Several countries saw progress in the conduct of elections since the subcommittee held a hearing on this subject last year including in Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and the Central African Republic.

Many national and regional institutions have improved their capacity to facilitate credible elections including electoral bodies we supported in Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire. Citizens are more engaged and connected than ever.

With our support, domestic election observers are leveraging innovative technology and carrying out advanced parallel vote tabulations—PVTs—to confirm election results.

In Nigeria, we trained 3,000 domestic monitors to do PVTs and also in Zambia and Cote d'Ivoire. Yet, Africa still faces important challenges. The youth desperately want the chance to have a say in their future. But several African leaders refuse to pass the baton.

The average age of the 10 oldest African leaders is 78½ years old while the average age of an African citizen is just 19½.

The trend of abolishing or extending term limits continues and incumbents are employing tactics to create an uneven playing field long before they face the election.

Leaders are, unfortunately, sharing worst practices including using surveillance technologies and imposing complex legal and fiscal restrictions on civil society and the media.

As more citizens go online, authorities are restricting Internet access, as we saw last week during Uganda's Presidential inauguration. Recent crackdowns like the ones we've seen in Burundi, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not only a threat to democracy but to regional security.

For decades, USAID has supported African reformers and citizens who seek to promote good governance and democratic processes. Our support helps build the enabling conditions for credible elections to take place—strong judiciary and legislature, competitive parties, a free press and free Internet and an engaged civil society.

These efforts would not be possible without our partners including those testifying later today and our local African partners play a critical role in sustaining democratic gains as well.

Our strategic approach to electoral assistance is informed by several lessons learned over the last number of years.

First, USAID's electoral investments are tailored to the specific political context in and out of the country and informed by long-term partnerships with the host government and civil society to support the foundations of a democratic movement and a democratic government.

For instance, the positive impact of our electoral efforts in Nigeria and Zambia were the result of many years of sustained engagement in broader democracy assistance in both countries.

USAID's democracy officers across our missions in Africa help us maximize the opportunity to expand democratic gains and overcome challenges.

Second, our long-term electoral assistance is coupled with flexibility to respond to unforeseen challenges and windows of opportunity. For example, in Guinea's elections we quickly mobilized our elections and political processes funds to keep reporters broadcasting the vote count. This reassured the public and opposition parties that the process was fair.

Third, our early and robust conflict mitigation efforts have made a difference in averting electoral violence. For example, we supported the West Africa Network for Peace Building's early warning system to mitigate trigger points for electoral violence, for instance, in Burkina Faso.

In Cote D'Ivoire, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives mobilized a successful arts campaign to promote peaceful political participation and in Nigeria, we integrated conflict mitigation across all of our multi-year programs.

And fourth, we proactively empower political parties, civil society and the media to combat efforts by incumbents to close the space for political engagement.

As part of President Obama's Stand With Civil Society Initiative we are creating a hub for African civil society to share tactics and successes to overcome common restrictions that they face.

Our global Information Security Coalition has trained and mentored African organizations and individuals in digital and mobile security.

And then, finally, we coordinate closely with our diplomatic and donor partners to maximize impact as we did in Nigeria to ensure that displaced populations could vote and CAR to promote local peace building before the elections.

So as we look ahead, we will seek to sustain democratic gains in Ghana, in Zambia, and other countries; promote peaceful and inclusive elections, in Kenya; and encourage a timely and credible election timetable in the DRC, in partnership with democratic reformers.

Thank you very much and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Staal follows:]

Testimony of Acting Assistant Administrator Thomas H. Staal, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on
Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
"Democracy Support Strategies in Africa"
May 18, 2016

**Introduction**

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

USAID is deeply committed to supporting democratic governance in Africa as part of our mission to end extreme poverty and promote democratic, resilient societies. Africa is on the rise, the continent has some of the youngest populations and fastest growing economies in the world, yet extreme poverty remains concentrated in its fragile states. Development is not sustainable without a legitimate, responsible government that can deliver services in an inclusive manner as well as a vibrant civil society that channels citizen interests and promotes accountability.

Elections are not the sole marker of democracy—especially as some incumbents in Africa and elsewhere narrow or close altogether the space for competition, participation, and a free press long before an election is held. A healthy democracy requires checks and balances—a strong judiciary and legislature, competitive political parties, a free press, respect for human rights, and an engaged civil society.

That is why we support reformers who push forward democratic progress and citizens who seek to have their voices heard. We partner with peacemakers like Imam Omar, Archbishop Dieudonné, and Reverend Guerékoyame from the Central African Republic (CAR) who facilitated inter-faith dialogue in advance of recent elections, which helped solidify a fragile peace. We support young leaders like Ako Essan Emile who volunteered at a radio station to counter fear and misinformation during Côte d'Ivoire's 2015 elections. We collaborate with officials like Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman Attahiru Jega who helped instill voter confidence in the electoral process. These change agents—and the communities they empower—are the drivers of democratic progress in Africa.

USAID is a leader in democracy and electoral assistance around the world, including in Africa. Over the past decade, we have provided electoral assistance to over 34 countries on the continent, including more than a dozen countries in 2015. Today, I will highlight democracy trends in Africa both positive and negative, USAID's strategic response to them, and the challenges and opportunities ahead.

**Trends**

As you are well aware, there have been important democratic transitions and opportunities for progress in the democracy, human rights, and governance sector as well as some setbacks across Africa since the Committee's hearing last year. Many national and regional institutions have

improved their capacity to facilitate credible, free, and fair elections. In part due to our support, electoral bodies—such as those in Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire—have made great strides in facilitating inclusive and peaceful voting processes. We increasingly rely on experts from countries like Ghana and Senegal to share lessons learned with their peers in developing democracies. African regional institutions are playing a more positive role in encouraging credible elections, negotiating democratic transfers of power, and anticipating the potential for electoral conflict. They are also more vocal and decisive in condemning unconstitutional seizures of power and coups. For example, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are carrying out increasingly sophisticated election observation missions that are in line with international and regional standards.

Citizens are more engaged politically, including traditionally marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities. Citizens are more connected than ever. A recent Pew study found that roughly two-thirds or more of citizens in seven African countries (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda) owned a cell phone. Youth in particular are leveraging technology to engage and demand greater accountability. In Nigeria's 2015 elections, candidates appealed to youth through targeted social media and canvassing. With support from USAID and other donors, domestic election observers have leveraged digital and SMS technologies to improve the transparency and credibility of electoral processes. Our observation partners often use tablets, SMS, and other technology tools to quickly and accurately transmit electoral data, analyze results, and report information. They are increasingly using advanced techniques, such as parallel vote tabulation, or quick counts, to confirm election results. In Nigeria, USAID and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development" have partnered for more than 5 years on support to support increasingly sophisticated domestic observation groups and quick counts. In Zambia and Côte d'Ivoire, we also supported parallel vote tabulations.

Several countries saw progress in the conduct of recent elections. Shortly after your hearing on this topic in March last year, Nigeria's elections culminated in the first successful democratic transfer of power from an incumbent to an opposition leader in the country's history. Côte d'Ivoire held peaceful elections in October 2015, avoiding a return to conflict. Burkina Faso's November 2015 elections led to the first new leader in almost 30 years. The Central African Republic (CAR) overcame three years of brutal conflict to hold elections that allowed for a democratic hand-over from a transitional government. These transitions are an inspiration to others in the region.

Nevertheless, Africa continues to face important challenges that threaten to erode democracy and development gains. Africa's youth desperately want economic opportunities and the chance to have a say in their future. As President Obama highlighted during his trip to East Africa last summer, Africans will surely be better off if their leaders allow new blood and new ideas to take hold. Yet, several African leaders refuse to pass the baton, changing the rules of the game to maintain their grip on power. This is especially troubling in a continent where there is a youth bulge and leadership often does not reflect the demographics of the population. The average age of the ten oldest African leaders is 78.5, while the average age of an African citizen is 19.5. If provided the necessary support and opportunities, young people can be incredible partners in

development, helping to sustain our efforts for generations to come. Indeed, young people are the driving force for positive change in many societies today.

The worrying trend of abolishing term limits continues. Almost two-thirds of African countries had two-term presidential limits in their constitutions in 2000. Since then, eleven countries have had sitting presidents try to remove those limits, with eight having succeeded. In Burundi, President Nkurunziza's insistence on seeking a third term set off a political crisis that has plunged the country into violence and undermined the implementation of the Arusha Agreement. In Uganda, once a promising democracy, the ruling party continues to pursue steps to extend President Museveni's presidency and is increasingly intolerant of dissent. Uganda's main opposition candidate was arrested last week and charged with treason, in an environment of closing political space.

Many incumbents are employing tactics to create an uneven playing field long before they face an election. They misuse state resources for political gain, harass and detain opposition candidates, restrict civil society groups, block independent media, and jail journalists and bloggers. Leaders are sharing "worst" practices, including using surveillance technologies and imposing complex legal and fiscal restrictions on civil society. While many countries face real concerns about violence and conflict around elections, we have also seen a worrying trend by governments to restrict independent media and civil society in the name of national security.

As more citizens go online to stay informed and civically engaged, authorities have increasingly restricted internet access. Last week, Uganda blocked access to Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp during its presidential inauguration, repeating a similar shutdown that occurred during polling in February. Authorities in Congo-Brazzaville and Chad similarly blocked internet and phone access during recent elections. During Tanzania's October 2015 elections, authorities cited a controversial cybercrime law to arrest and detain domestic observers and opposition parties.

These tactics not only dampen voter confidence in political processes, but also reduce the credibility and legitimacy of governments. From Burundi to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), government attempts to impede democratic progress have resulted in massive citizen protests and violent crackdowns. These government abuses are a threat to democracy and security. The principal drivers of political violence and violent extremism are rooted in injustice—including discrimination, corruption, and abuse by security forces—according to a recent Mercy Corps study. Addressing these democracy deficits will be critical to helping ensure Africa's progress is not eroded by political instability and conflict.

**USAID Support**

For decades, USAID has partnered with African governments, political parties, and civil society to promote democratic political processes. Our efforts help create the enabling conditions for free and fair elections to take place. Our goal is to support a legitimate, peaceful, and inclusive process, not a particular outcome.

These efforts would not be possible without our international electoral assistance partners including the National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), who will also testify today. These and other partners leverage their vast networks and decades of expertise to maximize our collective impact. We increasingly partner with local organizations, many of whom have benefitted from technical and capacity building assistance from our international partners. Local partners play a critical role in helping to sustain democratic gains and avert backsliding.

USAID recently outlined our strategic approach to electoral assistance in Africa in a report to Congress required under the FY 2016 appropriations law. Our strategic approach to electoral assistance in Africa is informed by several lessons learned. As I mentioned earlier, elections are not an isolated event; they play out in the context of larger political processes. A poorly run or violent election is a symptom of broader governance problems. **So first, USAID's electoral investments are tailored to the specific political context of a country, embodied in country level strategies. They are informed by long-term partnerships with host governments and civil society to support the foundations of democratic government**. For instance, the positive impact of our recent electoral efforts in Nigeria and Zambia was the result of many years of broader, sustained engagement in both countries.

USAID's cadre of democracy officers across more than 27 Missions in Africa is attuned to local contexts and informs our strategy to maximize opportunities to expand democratic gains and overcome challenges that might hinder progress. Our officers, in partnership with our strong local staff, help design multi-year election and political processes programs that integrate lessons learned from previous election cycles and incorporate best practices from other countries.

Our electoral assistance complements our longer-term investments to enable democratic processes to take hold. Recognizing that there is great variation in country circumstances and political histories, our broader efforts are guided by USAID's Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance. For instance, in relatively well-performing democracies, such as Ghana, we help consolidate democratic institutions. In countries where the space for civil society is closing, such as Uganda, we expand avenues for citizens to have a say in government decisions. In fragile and conflict-affected states, including Liberia, we improve governments' ability to deliver services, build confidence in government, and reduce tensions. In closed spaces, we monitor human rights abuses and support civil society and media. These are illustrative examples of how we tailor our efforts, since we also invest more broadly in each context and adapt to shifting political dynamics.

**Second, our long-term electoral assistance is coupled with the flexibility to respond to unforeseen challenges and windows of opportunity.** USAID's Elections and Political Processes (EPP) fund allows the Agency to meet unanticipated needs, address windows of opportunity before they close, and pilot innovative programs. For example, EPP funds were used to support last year's snap elections in Zambia caused by the death of President Sata. In less than 90 days, USAID and its partners were able to organize civil society election monitoring and a quick count. In Guinea, U.S. diplomatic efforts to broker a peaceful election were strengthened because USAID was able to deliver crucial support to the process, including civil society observation and an extensive peace messaging effort. When results were delayed, we

quickly mobilized EPP funds to keep reporters in the field broadcasting the vote count, which kept the public informed and reassured opposition parties that the process and results were fair.

**Third, our early and robust conflict mitigation efforts have made a difference in averting electoral violence.** The USAID Election Security Assessment Framework has been employed in various countries throughout the region to identify conflict risk factors and inform our response in advance of elections. In light of security challenges in West Africa, USAID has invested in early warning systems. In cooperation with the State Department, we support initiative for ECOWAS and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding to monitor and mitigate violence triggers before they escalate, including around elections. For instance, in advance of Burkina Faso's November 2015 elections, civil society groups from the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding monitored and generated reports of local incidents that could set off broader violence. Thanks to the early warning, we increased support to over 14 radio stations across the country to promote peaceful messages and counter hate speech.

USAID leverages its flexible response funds—including its Complex Crises Fund and Transition Initiatives account—to complement its longer-term electoral assistance with strategic investments in conflict mitigation. For instance, in Côte d'Ivoire, USAID efforts to promote messages of tolerance and inclusive engagement helped usher in peaceful elections. Leveraging arts and media to engage citizens and promote peaceful messages, especially among youth, proved highly effective. USAID supported multimedia campaigns to promote engagement by all political and ethnic groups, and especially by women, youth, and traditional figures. Ivorian artists—like singer Bamba Ami Sarah and rapper Nash—helped spread a message of peaceful participation through concerts, billboards, popular TV shows, and a music video that went viral on social media. These messaging activities engaged over 280,000 people in 61 communities.

In Nigeria, we integrated conflict mitigation across all programs. Coupled with concerted U.S. outreach to stakeholders at every level, these efforts helped ensure a successful outcome. Our innovative #VotenotFight campaign, led by Nigerian musician 2face Idibia in partnership with NDI, reached 62 million Nigerians via radio, social media, and grassroots events. Alongside IRI, we facilitated the Abuja Peace Accord, a non-violence pledge signed by all candidates.

The role of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission was also critical in securing peaceful, credible elections. Although the introduction of biometric voter cards led to delays and there were problems with the electronic card readers, INEC had contingency plans in place to resolve issues when they arose. In collaboration with the State Department and IFES, we assisted INEC in its security coordination across the Nigerian government. Despite attacks in the northeast and long lines, Nigeria's citizens set out bravely and patiently to have their voices heard. In the midst of blackouts in some polling stations, election officials used flashlights and car lights to continue counting until every vote was in. INEC Chairman Attahiru Jega's steadfast leadership was pivotal in ensuring the security and integrity of the elections.

**Fourth, we proactively empower political parties, civil society, and the media to combat efforts by incumbents to close the space for political engagement**. Efforts to chip away at fundamental freedoms can seriously impede Africa's democratic trajectory. In countries where elections are simply not competitive because incumbents stack the decks in their favor, support

for civil society is essential to longer-term democratic development. Alongside the State Department, we are committed to advancing President Obama's Stand with Civil Society Initiative to expand the space for civil society. For instance, in Uganda, USAID supported civil society to advocate for legislative improvements to the country's highly restrictive NGO bill. We are also dedicated to supporting the Open Government Partnership (OGP), through which governments partner directly with civil society to improve transparency, accountability, and fight corruption. African countries in OGP working with civil society to promote reform, and are embracing tools such as open budgeting, open contracting, open data and access to information to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Ten African nations are members of OGP, and that number continues to grow, with Nigeria's announcement this month of its intention to join. This year, South Africa has played a global leadership role as the OGP co-chair, and we have seen other African countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia embrace OGP as a mechanism for reforms by building new platforms for good governance initiatives and engaging with civil society in collaborative ways.

In partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Aga Khan Foundation, and South Africa-based CIVICUS, we are creating a hub for African civil society organizations to share tactics to overcome common restrictions they face. In partnership with Counterpart International, our global Information Safety and Capacity Project monitors internet freedom trends and has trained and mentored over 250 African civil society organizations and individuals—including at-risk LGBTI activists—to improve their digital and mobile security.

Civil society plays an important watchdog role in elections through domestic election observations. With our assistance, NDI and Nigerian civil society partner Transition Monitoring Group deployed over 3,000 citizen monitors during Nigeria's elections. They conducted a quick count that independently confirmed the outcome of the election and was viewed as a high quality source by other election watchers and donors.

Citizens also need access to unbiased information to make informed choices about elections and their leaders. We work across the continent to improve the professionalization of journalists, support media managers, and improve online and offline security. We also help partners leverage technology to promote transparency during elections. For instance, in Zambia we are using cellphones to deliver pre-recorded training to political party poll watchers in conjunction with a simplified printed guide to reach more people. In Niger's elections this year, we supported efforts to educate voters and collect feedback on elections through social media.

Across Africa, we support political party development and encourage the inclusion of women and youth in politics. For instance, in Niger and Uganda, we worked with parties to elevate the perspectives of women and youth in their party manifestos. In Senegal, we trained women on how to register for party lists and run for office under the country's new gender parity law.

**Finally, we coordinate closely with partners in the diplomatic and donor community to maximize impact**.

Ahead of the vote in Nigeria, we collaborated with interagency and donor colleagues to ensure that displaced Nigerians would be able to vote. As a result, INEC established a task force for internally displaced persons (IDPs), which was instrumental in advising INEC to set up special voting centers in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States and to distribute permanent voter cards for IDPs. Our Mission also organized meetings with the State Department, other donors, and NGO partners to discuss and resolve issues around the voter cards and electoral security.

In CAR, we collaborated with interagency and donor colleagues to facilitate a peaceful election. We took part in concerted diplomatic efforts through the Atrocities Prevention Board to elevate attention to CAR and build support for investments in conflict mitigation, social cohesion, and interfaith dialogue. These peacebuilding activities mitigate violence in advance of elections. We also provided support to re-scheduled legislative elections, filling a critical gap so that they could be held before the transitional government mandate ended.

**Challenges and opportunities ahead**

Africa's upcoming elections present important challenges and opportunities. In Ghana and Zambia, USAID is providing comprehensive electoral assistance that complements our broader democracy, human rights, and governance programs. In Ghana, we are helping the Ghana Electoral Commission to improve its online and social media outreach and training journalists on election coverage. We are promoting political participation by women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups and supporting civil society to carry out civic education and domestic observation activities. We are also supporting conflict resolution efforts. In Zambia, we are training political parties and civil society to better monitor elections—including through a quick count—and build public confidence in the electoral system.

USAID is applying the lessons learned from our conflict mitigation strategies in Burkina Faso, CAR, and Nigeria to our electoral and democracy support in Kenya and the DRC. In Kenya, our current electoral support program for the 2017 elections includes a strong focus on mitigating ethnic polarization to avoid a repeat of 2007's post-election violence. It seeks to restore public confidence in the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and the judiciary. We will empower women candidates so that they can garner meaningful representation under the anticipated implementation of Kenya's two-thirds gender principle—requiring that no more than two thirds of any government body be comprised of one sex. USAID remains the largest bilateral donor to Kenyan civil society, which has been increasingly restricted. We will continue to support civil society efforts to promote participation, accountability, and transparency.

We remain very concerned about political developments in the DRC, including last year's violent crackdown on protesters and the ongoing arbitrary arrest of activists. The U.S. government continues to urge the government to commit to a timely, credible election as stipulated in the Constitution. We will work with diplomatic colleagues to encourage the government to establish a credible electoral timetable and pave the way for a peaceful transfer of power through elections, which will best serve the interest of the Congolese people. We will continue to help build the capacity of political party leaders, including cultivating women and youth who can modernize Congolese parties and their outreach to constituencies. We are

training journalists to provide neutral electoral coverage and monitor hate speech and supporting those who are harassed or detained. We are also training justice officials in alternative electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

**Conclusion**

Elections alone are not sufficient for democracy to take hold, but they do provide a critical moment for citizens to express their views and hold their governments accountable. Throughout Africa, we support local democracy advocates who work tirelessly to ensure citizens can have their voices heard through the ballot box. We also support them as they seek to build the pillars that safeguard against attacks on the democratic process: an independent judiciary; credible electoral officials and electoral laws; a free press and a free internet; and a vibrant civil society.

From Burkina Faso to Nigeria, this past year underscored Africans' desire for peaceful and democratic elections. Our strategic investments, while noteworthy, were only one slice of a bigger picture—without strong political will and local champions, democratic progress is not possible. As we look forward, we will continue to support and empower African democracy advocates who are committed to promoting peaceful and inclusive political participation. We appreciate your support and the resources that fund our diplomatic and foreign assistance efforts.

Thank you for your counsel, guidance, and support. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you very much for your opening statement, Mr. Staal.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Feldstein for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. STEVEN FELDSTEIN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. FELDSTEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass and members of the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today.

Advancing democracy in Africa is a top priority for the administration. In the last year we have seen significant democratic advances in several countries.

Nigeria, for example, held successful elections last year that led to the country's first democratic transition between parties since the end of military rule.

Similarly, I just returned from a trip to Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic where both countries elected reform-minded Presidents. Each country now has a moment of opportunity to enact bold reforms and build democratic foundations.

Despite these positive developments, democracy in other parts of Africa has deteriorated. In too many places the pre-electoral environment and the space available for civic participation remains restrictive and flawed.

Too many entrenched leaders continue to manipulate their countries' constitutions, judiciaries and electoral processes to indefinitely extend their time in office.

They systematically thwart citizens' rights to choose their leaders without pressure or fear and those who protest in the street are arrested, detained, tortured and beaten.

Recent events in Uganda illustrate how a government can curb fundamental freedoms and eviscerate the credibility of an electoral process. Leading up to and following the February 18th elections, the Government of Uganda harassed and arrested opposition supporters, restricted media, and pressured civil society.

During the contest itself, Uganda blocked social media and limited communications. In the days following the elections, security forces held opposition candidate Besigye under house arrest for 42 days. The government arrested Mr. Besigye again last week, the day before President Museveni's inauguration.

He has reportedly been charged with treason and transferred to a maximum security prison in part because of his demand for an independent international audit of the election.

Uganda has banned all live reporting of opposition party protests and arrested dozens of others. The government has also put forward a bill that would give it outright power to control communications.

We have repeatedly urged the government to protect and preserve the basic freedoms of citizens and will continue to do so.

I recently visited Burkina Faso, which is an example of a country where a leader's overreach led to unrest and ultimately his removal from power but also where we are partnering with new leadership to chart a more democratic way forward.

A vibrant civil society led by an energized youth movement of artisan musicians—Le Balai Citoyen or Citizen's Broom—broke 27 years of one-man rule and gave rise to the country's first democratic elections since 1978.

As Burkina Faso takes a step forward, other leaders in the region continue to undermine democracy by changing constitutions and using additional means to extend their stay in office.

For example, Rwanda President Paul Kagame has repeatedly stated his commitment to respect constitutional term limits and to mentor a new generation of leaders. We were deeply disappointed when earlier this year Kagame announced his intent to stand for a third term and held a snap constitutional referendum to cement this decision.

In making this choice, he missed a significant opportunity to deepen democracy in Rwanda and demonstrate global leadership.

The violence currently afflicting Burundi is a revealing example of how anti-democratic policies, namely violating the Arusha Accords by running for a third term, can rapidly lead to widespread human rights violations, civilian casualties and increased risk of mass atrocities.

The ongoing crisis in Burundi has resulted in hundreds of lives lost and over 260,000 refugees fleeing the country. Burundi has experienced 10 years of progress in reconciliation and development but is now deeply destabilized and struggling with a crumbling economy.

Burundi is a cautionary tale for the unfolding political crisis in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to the DRC's Constitution, the President is limited to two terms in office.

Elections are scheduled for November 2016 at which point the DRC should experience its first democratic transition in power which would mark a monumental step toward solidifying the DRC's fragile democratic progress.

Instead, President Kabila is delaying elections through a strategy of "glissement," or slippage, and refusing to announce his intention to step down at the end of his term.

The government continues to undermine the democratic process by harassing, arresting and intimidating civil society and opposition leaders.

Security forces are increasingly willing to use excessive force including against peaceful protestors. This combustible combination threatens the security of the DRC and the broader stability of central Africa.

We believe that officials within the DRC Government have the individual responsibility to uphold human rights. We have repeatedly made clear that the U.S. is prepared to impose targeted sanctions against those responsible for human rights violations or propagating violence and we do believe the voices of the Congolese people should determine the future of the Congo.

I'd like to highlight a final issue: Fighting corruption and kleptocracy. In too many countries, the rent-seeking opportunities of elected office provide a lucrative incentive for entrenched leaders to steal from state coffers and cling to power.

Unfettered access to state resources personally enriches rulers with ill-gotten gains and provides leaders with the means to buy the loyalty needed to sustain power.

In conclusion, we will continue to advance a democracy strategy with a strong emphasis on respect for the rule of law, human rights and civil society.

To be successful, we need sufficient resources to support our efforts and we appreciate your support.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Feldstein follows:]

**Testimony of**
**Deputy Assistant Secretary Steven Feldstein**
**Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor**
**before the**
**House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on**
**Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations**
**Democracy Support Strategies in Africa**
**May 18, 2016**

Thank you Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on Democracy Support Strategies in Africa.

Advancing democracy in Africa is a top priority for the Administration. This reflects a core U.S. value as well as what African citizens want for themselves. People across the continent are demanding greater voice, participation and accountability in how they are governed. Surveys such as Afrobarometer consistently show high majorities of African citizens want democracy – 71% in a recent poll. Citizens are demanding more from their governments—better services, transparency, greater accountability to the people, and expanded opportunities to benefit from economic growth.

In the last year, several countries have experienced significant democratic advances. Nigeria held successful elections in 2015 that led to the country's first democratic transition between parties since the end of military rule in 1999. And this month, Nigeria announced its intention to join the Open Government Partnership, highlighting its commitment work with civil society to increase transparency and accountability, and combat corruption. Similarly, I just returned from a trip to Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic (CAR), where both countries held successful elections, emerging from transitions and electing reform-minded Presidents. Each of these three countries now has a moment of opportunity to make important changes and build on these foundations.

Despite these positive developments, however, democracy in other parts of Africa has deteriorated. As Freedom House's 2016 Freedom in the World report shows, in too many places the pre-electoral environment and the space available for civic participation remains restrictive and flawed. Too many entrenched leaders continue to manipulate their countries' constitutions, judiciaries, and electoral processes to indefinitely extend their time in office. They systematically

thwart citizens' rights to choose their leaders without pressure or fear, and those who protest on the street are sometimes arrested, detained, tortured and beaten.

Civil society has made great strides in promoting the transparent conduct of elections, but governments have become increasingly sophisticated in limiting democratic space. For example, the governments of the Republic of Congo, Chad and Uganda all blocked access to online media during national elections in an attempt to limit the free expression of their citizens, control information, and reduce international scrutiny. Despite challenges, civil society has become increasingly effective in organizing election observation, conducting parallel vote tabulations, and conveying real-time information of electoral irregularities. This growth in civil society – alongside our investments to build the capacity of electoral commissions, strengthen political parties, educate the electorate, register voters, and monitor elections – help mitigate irregularities before, during, and after election day.

Nigeria is a good example where support for the national election commission, voter education, and civil society monitoring all contributed to a largely effective, fair, and peaceful presidential election process. Through our Fundamental Freedom Fund, DRL was able to provide $1.4 million to the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) to support election observer missions. The presence of observers signaled that domestic and international audiences were keenly watching the process, and helped deter election spoilers and avert widespread vote rigging from taking place.

But for all the progress in promoting transparent elections, many governments seek to close space for political opposition and civil society, as well as restrict media access, well before election day. These governments often control the flow of information through state-owned media, restrict or close down access to the internet, and harass and arrest journalists. Impunity and lack of investigation by officials when journalists are killed creates an environment of intimidation and fear for the media.

These same governments also limit freedom of assembly and expression – they intimidate civil society activists, and arrest or "disappear" members of the opposition, often under the guise of promoting state security. Even in cases where those arrested are not charged or held in detention for very long, these actions send a threatening signal to those who seek to criticize the regime in power or challenge incumbents at the polls. These tactics impede the development of viable opposition and entrench autocratic leaders.

Recent events in Uganda illustrate how a government can curb fundamental freedoms to such an extent that it undermines the credibility of elections. Leading up to and following the February 18 elections, the Government of Uganda harassed and arrested opposition supporters, restricted media and increasingly pressured civil society. During the contest itself, Uganda blocked social media and limited communications. In the days following elections, opposition candidate Kizza Besigye was held under house arrest for 42 days, and has been detained several times following the April 1 lifting of the house arrest. Mr. Besigye was arrested again on May 11, the day before President Museveni's inauguration, and has reportedly been charged with treason, in part because of his demand for an independent international audit of the election. Uganda has also banned all live reporting of opposition party Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) protests and arrested dozens of others. The Government of Uganda has put forward the Communications (Amendment) Bill that would seek to give the government outright power to control communications, all under the rationale of "citizen protection and security." The United States has repeatedly urged the Government of Uganda both privately and publicly to protect and preserve the basic freedoms of citizens, as guaranteed by the country's constitution. We will continue to do so even as we maintain a close relationship with the Government of Uganda focused on our shared priorities of promoting regional security and advancing the development of the Ugandan people.

We continue to identify ways to advance democratic practices in difficult operating environments. You may recall that the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) won all 546 parliamentary seats in the 2015 general election. This striking victory was not a reflection of overt fraud on election day, or a deficit in technical capacity to hold credible elections. Rather, it underscored how a highly restrictive political space prevents competitors from getting involved. In a statement following the polls, the United States expressed deep concern over continued restrictions on civil society, media, opposition parties, and independent voices and views. During his August 2015 visit to Addis Ababa, President Obama underscored that "when all voices are being heard, when people know that they're included in the political process, that makes a country stronger and more successful and more innovative." Following the President's visit, Assistant Secretary Malinowski has visited Ethiopia three times to press the government to address human rights concerns, seek the release of wrongly imprisoned journalists, and most recently to participate in the Democracy and Human Rights Working Group to discuss tangible steps the Ethiopian government can take to address these issues.

I recently visited Burkina Faso, which is an example of a country where a leader's overreach led to unrest and ultimately his removal from power, but also where the United States is partnering with new leadership to chart a more stable, inclusive, and democratic way forward. Blaise Compaore's effort to extend his term in power in October 2014 was met with widespread popular resistance. A vibrant and active civil society led by an energized youth movement of artists and musicians - "Le Balai Citoyen," or Citizen's Broom – broke 27 years of one-man rule and gave rise to the country's first democratic elections since 1978. Newly elected President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré has pledged to address a number of concerns raised by civil society and has taken encouraging initial steps, such as passing an anti-corruption law that requires certain officials to publically declare their assets and forbids officials from receiving gifts worth more than 60 dollars. Sustained engagement from civil society will be essential to ensuring the Burkinabe government continues to take concrete steps to address the issues citizens have raised.

As Burkina Faso takes steps toward a democratic future, other leaders in the region continue to undermine democracy and legitimate, inclusive politics by changing constitutions and using other means to extend their stay in office. For example, in the past, Rwandan President Paul Kagame has repeatedly stated his commitment to respect constitutional term limits and to mentor a generation of leaders able to sustain Rwanda's economic growth and stability. We were deeply disappointed when earlier this year Kagame announced his intent to stand for a third term and held a snap constitutional referendum to cement this decision with barely two weeks' notice. In making this choice, he missed a significant opportunity to deepen democracy in Rwanda and demonstrate global leadership.

The violence currently afflicting Burundi is a revealing example of how anti-democratic policies – namely the President violating the Arusha Agreement in running for a third term – can rapidly lead to widespread human rights violations, civilian casualties, and an increased risk of mass atrocities. The ongoing crisis in Burundi has resulted in hundreds of lives lost and over 260,000 Burundian refugees fleeing the country. A country that had experienced 10 years of progress in reconciliation and development is now deeply destabilized and struggling with a crumbling economy. During his travel to the region in April, Assistant Secretary Malinowski pressed the Government of Burundi to deliver on promises to allow access to international human rights monitors, to release scores of political prisoners, to ensure accountability for human rights abuses, and to commit to the regionally-mediated dialogue as the best route to a political resolution to the crisis.

We will continue to support the Burundian people's peaceful pursuit of their democratic rights and freedoms. We are strongly urging all sides to work with the newly appointed East African Community facilitator, former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, and are hopeful that the regionally-mediated dialogue will resume on May 21 in Arusha. We are calling on all key actors to commit to participating in the regionally-mediated dialogue without preconditions or redlines, and to uphold the Arusha Agreement as an essential pillar for stability in Burundi.

Burundi is a cautionary tale for the unfolding political crisis in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). According to the DRC's constitution, the President is limited to two terms in office. Elections are scheduled for November 2016, at which point the DRC should experience its first democratic transition in power, which would mark a monumental step towards solidifying the DRC's fragile progress towards democratization, stability, and development. Instead, President Kabila is delaying elections through a strategy of "glissement" or slippage, and refusing to announce his intention to step down at the end of his term. The government continues to undermine the democratic process through an increased pattern of harassment, arrests, and intimidation against civil society activists and opposition leaders. Security forces are demonstrating an increasing willingness to use excessive force, including against peaceful protestors. This combustible combination of violent repression, the silencing of opposition voices, and erosion of DRC's democratic institutions threaten the security of the DRC, and in turn the stability of Central Africa. Prompt action is required to reverse these troubling trends and create conditions conducive to preparations for elections that will allow the Congolese people to peacefully participate in the selection of their next leader.

The protection of political space is an indispensable ingredient to such elections and long-term stability in the DRC. In this context, we are partnering with a range of Congolese and international partners to ensure that citizens have access to up-to-date information about the political process, and that those leading the fight for transparency are equipped with the right tools and support to effectively advocate for the rights of all Congolese. The Lifeline Fund, a multilateral initiative with support from 17 governments, including the U.S., provides emergency assistance to civil society organizations under threat or attack, and has been a critical tool in the DRC and throughout the continent. In fact, Africa has received the most support from Lifeline over the past five years—almost 40% more than any other region. Such demand demonstrates how important this fund is for advancing our democratic equities.

In response to the mounting repression in the DRC, we believe that people within the DRC government have an individual responsibility to uphold human rights. We have repeatedly made clear that the United States is prepared to impose targeted sanctions against individuals responsible for human rights violations or violence. We believe the voices of the Congolese people should determine the future of Congo.

I'd like to highlight two final issues: fighting kleptocracy and holding security forces accountable for human rights abuses. The Panama Papers are a stark reminder of the pervasiveness of corruption and the need for strong anti-corruption efforts. In too many countries, the rent-seeking opportunities of elected office provide lucrative incentive for entrenched rulers to steal from state coffers and cling to power. Unfettered access to state-owned or managed resources not only personally enriches rulers with ill-gotten gains, but it provides leaders with the means to buy the loyalty needed to sustain power. The nexus of corruption and entrenched leadership requires sustained high-level attention and pressure. Following the anti-corruption conference in the UK last week that Secretary Kerry participated in, we will work closely both with African countries that signed specific pledges on tackling corruption to help them advance those efforts, and with civil society organizations across the continent to expose leaders who benefit from corrupt practices at the expense of their own people.

Further democratic consolidation in Africa is also dependent on rights-respecting security forces that answer to civilian governments and protect, rather than target, citizens. This is, unfortunately, a persistent challenge across the continent, and one that we raise regularly with our government counterparts as part of our efforts to build strong democracies and meaningful security partnerships. Assistant Secretary Malinowski underscored these concerns repeatedly during a four-day visit to Kenya in early April, and I have raised them in recent conversations with the Governments of Nigeria and the Central African Republic. In countries where security forces have questionable human rights records, citizens require access to justice, in order to hold both states and other citizens accountable for breaches of the law.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, along with my colleagues from the State Department and USAID, we will continue to advance a democracy strategy with a strong emphasis on respect for inclusive, legitimate politics, human rights and protection for civil society. To do this, we need the resources to support our diplomatic and foreign assistance efforts and we appreciate your support. We will continue to work with African leaders and citizens that seek to strengthen and

sustain democratic governance and protect and promote universal human rights. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you for your statement, Mr. Feldstein.

Before I ask my questions I'd also like to recognize the opposition leaders from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are with us here today. Welcome.

I'll begin the questioning by asking maybe Ambassador Wharton, the United States has strategic interest in Africa and sometimes they seem to overcome the commitments to democracy in various countries.

How can there be a consistency in U.S. policy for democracy in Africa if strategic countries aren't sanctioned for violations and at times less strategic countries are sanctioned for the same behavior?

Ambassador WHARTON. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman.

It is a difficult balance. We have to pursue in one moment though a broad variety of our interests and concerns in Africa and I believe that in countries where we have an bimportant security relationship could include Uganda, could include Rwanda, could include Ethiopia.

We can actually use that opening—the points of contact and the points of discussion on security—as a means of raising our broader concerns about human rights, citizen rights, rule of law, electoral process. So we need to be able to pursue these things simultaneously.

But as I said, it does require a balanced nuanced approach.

Mr. DONOVAN. One question, Ambassador.

Do the countries give us any reasons for these violations? Do they violate their own agreements with us or their own constitutions when it's brought to their attention?

Ambassador WHARTON. One of the characteristics that I have noticed among certain African leaders is this huge emphasis on stability and what I believe is a mistaken assumption that lack of change equals stability.

But in a country like the DRC, for example, that has a terrible history of bloodshed and violence, I think that there is at least among some of the current leadership the idea that maintaining things under control and maintaining stability is the best way to ensure progress into the future.

Again, I think that's a mistaken assumption and that's one of the talking points—one of the messages that we seek to relay to counterparts in countries like the DRC. We do believe that the democratic process which, of course, is much more than elections, is the surest way toward bringing citizens into political life and ensuring progress and stability.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Staal, I'd like to ask, in the omnibus bill that we passed last year, Congress legislated that USAID shall implement civil society and political competition and consensus-building programs abroad in a manner that recognizes the unique benefits of grants and cooperation agreements.

To what extent has USAID followed this mandate to date?

Mr. STAAL. Thank you for that question. It's a critical issue that we do take very seriously and in fact we're in consultations right now with members of the committee and our implementing partners to look at this balance of grants and cooperative agreements,

with contracts, to make sure that it's meeting the needs of everybody involved.

Each country we look at specific conditions in that country to make sure that the programs that we have are relevant to, and appropriate to and meeting the needs there.

Overall, our balance has been about two-thirds have gone to grants and about one-third to cooperative agreements—to contracts, and what we're doing is working on some supplemental guidance for our contract officers who would do the awards to make sure that it's clear exactly what the standards are and that it's consistent and that it's—and we're doing that in a consultative fashion with our implementing partners.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you. The clock hasn't started so I don't know if my time is nearly up. So let me just ask Mr. Feldstein a question before we move on.

You mentioned providing funding for election observations in IRI and NDI. Since the wave of democracy in the 1990s fewer U.S. election observer missions have been supported.

How critical are these observation missions at this point since it's been reported that there's a backsliding on democratic election process in many African countries?

Mr. FELDSTEIN. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman.

I think that the process supporting electoral observation issues is a critical part to supporting our democracy efforts in several ways.

First of all, I think it signals very specifically that the international community is paying particular attention to a given situation. It also is able to get a wider array of eyes on the ground to observe a particular situation, especially in the area of a contested election, where we believe there is risk of instability or risk of violence.

So a good example is where we did fund a successful electoral observation mission recently was Nigeria where I think there were significant concerns about the potential for violence breaking out in the country but I think in part because of strong messaging, a diplomatic strategy paired with eyes on the ground we were able to work with all sides and actually lead to a very successful outcome.

Not all situations warrant this type of investment. It is expensive and is something that takes a certain commitment. But I think in places where there is a viable contested election and there is the potential for some problems I think this can be a very important tool for us to continue using.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you very much. My time has had to have expired by now. The Chair now recognizes the ranking member of the subcommittee, my friend, Congresswoman Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to follow up on a couple of questions with Mr. Staal.

The chair was asking you questions about some of the contracts and all democracy related and I just wanted to ask you if we give any contracts to for-profit organizations to help with democracy and election U.S.-based and also do we provide any contracts to indigenous groups in various countries where we're working?

Mr. STAAL. Thank you for that question, Ranking Member Bass.

I can get you some details of specific contracts. I have to admit I don't have them off the top of my head.

[The information referred to follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MR. THOMAS STAAL TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE KAREN BASS

To answer this question, we analyzed total USAID assistance for elections held in calendar year 2015 in sub-Saharan Africa. USAID provided $31.4 million in assistance for elections to seven countries in Africa with 2015 elections—Nigeria, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Zambia, and Guinea. One hundred percent of the $31.4 million in total assistance was provided through assistance agreements, which by their very nature do not permit the implementing organizations to take a profit. Additionally, USAID provided 35 percent—or $11.1 million—of the total elections assistance for these seven countries to local host country organizations through sub-grants.

Ms. BASS. Okay.

Mr. STAAL. We do some contracting in individual cases in certain countries. As I mentioned, the majority—about two-thirds of our programs are done through grants and cooperative agreements. But in certain circumstances——

Ms. BASS. But grants—so tell me a little bit about that. Grants and cooperative agreements with who or what?

Mr. STAAL. Those are primarily with nonprofit organizations.

Ms. BASS. U.S.-based?

Mr. STAAL. U.S.-based, yeah. And then in certain cases we do provide direct funding to local organizations in given countries where they have the capacity.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. STAAL. So, for instance, in Ghana which is further along than some others we're able to work directly with civil society organizations and give them assistance.

Ms. BASS. I attended the summit last year, especially the YALI part of it where President Obama was in a townhall meeting with the YALI participants and one of them stood up and said that they wished that some of the millions of dollars that we provide in Africa could actually go to African organizations.

And to me, when I think of leadership development, I think of it at a lot of different levels. So we worry about elections but what about all of the leadership so that people develop the capacity to run for office and wondering what level of investment we have there?

Mr. STAAL. That's a critical question. Thank you very much, and we believe very strongly in that as well and we can do that, we feel, through a variety of mechanisms.

Sometimes it's through a U.S., usually a nonprofit organization, who in turn then can provide support to a number of indigenous organizations and in some cases where the indigenous organizations have the capability, the management and financial capability we're able to provide funding directly to them.

Ms. BASS. And the question is what is our investment in helping them obtain that capacity?

Mr. STAAL. Absolutely. That is part of our civil society strengthening programs to build that capacity management, accounting and so on and, frankly, for instance, in Kenya we have a program working with the women voters to build their capacity to vote, to run

as candidates and even after they become leaders to do that. There's a whole process of work through that.

Ms. BASS. So if you would, I would appreciate you providing a breakdown. I would like to know how much funding goes to for profit U.S.-based organizations, nonprofits and then how much goes to indigenous groups and what is our funding for capacity building.

Mr. STAAL. Sure.

Ms. BASS. You know, just like with Feed the Future——

Mr. STAAL. Yes.

Ms. BASS [continuing]. The goal is for Africans to feed Africans.

Mr. STAAL. That's right.

[The information referred to follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MR. THOMAS STAAL TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE KAREN BASS

In answer to your question, and as described previously, an analysis of USAID's support for elections in calendar year 2015 in sub Saharan Africa across seven countries (Nigeria, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Zambia, and Guinea), reveals USAID provided 65 percent or $20.3 million to U.S. based organizations to manage electoral assistance programs, while the remaining 35 percent ($11.1 million) was managed by local host country organizations through sub-grants.

Ms. BASS. And so, to me, while we focus on elections, let's focus on building the capacity as well.

Ambassador Wharton, you mentioned that sometimes stability can be confused with not changing leadership.

I do worry sometimes though in those countries where from the U.S. perspective we push term limits and want people to step down. But I worry sometimes as to whether or not there really is the leadership there. Given that we have so many experiences around the continent—the failed states that sometimes in our urgency for turnover in leadership we can wind up with that.

So I'm wondering what your thoughts are. DRC, for example, Liberia, any number of countries where elections are pending and where we're nervous. I don't think we're nervous about Liberia in terms of the President staying there but we certainly are in DRC.

What is your concern or your opinion about leadership potential there?

Ambassador WHARTON. Well, two or three thoughts come to mind. Thank you for the question, of course.

The first is is that we're not in this alone—that we need to seek coalitions of African partners that share our concerns. This should not be the United States versus the DRC or the United States versus Liberia.

This should be something that the AU takes on as they had with Burundi, for example. I think we'll be much more effective if we approach these problems of governance and term limits from that broader perspective.

Ultimately, I believe that democracy is a process. An election is part of that process. It's our view that when someone stays in power for a long, long time that process slows down and stops.

Ms. BASS. Sure.

Ambassador WHARTON. So one of the responses to that is to look at how we build stronger institutions that are stronger than individuals, to paraphrase what President Obama said in Ghana, and that includes military institutions, frankly.

A military that responds to civilian control is an important part of the democratic process—a free media—civil society that's strong and capable of taking off the sorts of work that civil society does in our country, for example. So those are partial responses to this longer problem.

I think that several African leaders have said to me, you need to give us time, we're young democracies, we're still maturing, and there's some point to that. But I would love to be able to watch African political systems skip generations the way some of their technical adaptations have skipped generations and move ahead more quickly so we will work on that.

Ms. BASS. I think that's a good point. I often register that point as to look where we were 50 years into the United States.

Things were a mess, and we have expectations that countries will establish a democracy and 2 years later they're going to function like us as though we don't have any warts here, as though our elections go off with no problems.

Mr. Staal, with everything I would like to ask you about also and that is support that we might have to the AU. So in other words, it's one thing for us to support individual countries but given that this is a priority of the AU, you know, what level of support do we provide to the AU for capacity building leadership development?

And then finally, for Mr. Feldstein, there are 54 countries on the continent—some would argue 55, if you want to get into that. There are a lot of elections that happen peacefully, orderly. A lot of transitions of power. Oftentimes we just focus on the problem. So maybe you could speak to the elections that went well.

Why did they go well? Why was there a peaceful transition in Namibia, for example? Several countries on the continent had elections that were run well, peaceful transitions of power and we gave them very little attention.

Mr. STAAL. Thank you for the question about the support to the AU. We actually have a USAID Foreign Service Officer based in Ethiopia who sits with the Ambassador to the AU—a USAID staff person managing several programs, actually providing capacity building to the AU on a number of things based on their request for assistance on the peace building, on other things.

And then, of course, we also have support to many of the regional organizations—ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD. That's a critical part of our support.

Ms. BASS. In terms of the AU I was thinking specifically on the democracy leadership development, and I appreciate that.

Mr. STAAL. Right. Okay.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Mr. FELDSTEIN. Thank you for the question regarding good as well as bad elections, and I fully agree with you that there are many instances of places that had good elections in the past year.

I would add to Burkina Faso and Central African Republic, Benin, Cote D'Ivoire, and Namibia, as you mentioned as well, and I think those are not only good examples and models for the region but I think there's a lot of lessons learned that can be implanted.

One of the things that I find interesting is that just as you sometimes see modelling of certain types of bad laws like NGO-restrictive laws or modelling when it comes to the term limits issue, you

can also see positive modelling the other way where countries like Senegal, which have made great strides when it comes to solidifying and consolidating democracy are able to talk to and do exchanges with other countries and say this is how it can be done better—this is how you build political institutions and so forth.

So I agree that sometimes we do have a tendency to focus on the problems. I think that's part of the human rights community. It's part of what we tend to really concentrate on and we say where are there issues, where are there atrocities, where is there a risk of something bad happening and we throw all our resources and attention there.

But it is important to recognize that there is a lot of progress being made on the continent and that gives me hope. Coming back from this last trip to Central African Republic and Burkina Faso I saw a lot of that and it really has given me a positive more optimistic viewpoint about where things potentially can go as we continue heading into the year.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Congresswoman Bass.

Now I turn to my friend from Florida, the gentleman Mr. Clawson.

Mr. CLAWSON. Lost in thought. From a 30,000 foot level, seems to me that assistance for the continent for medical care: Ebola, malaria, all the mosquito-borne stuff—sounds like that's something America would do. Europeans step up. I like that. Anything that could protect property rights and therefore induce investment. That sounds like a long putt but good idea because if we don't get investment because everybody just makes off with the cash the average person is never going to get a lot better life. I think you all agree with that too.

American money for elections, I remember living in Europe and in France in the 1990s and looking down at the continent. I remember doing business on the continent and always saying what a mess in terms of elections. Human rights, kleptocracy.

Do we get our bang for our buck on that part of it? If I said to you all show me the money we spent in the 1990s, Ambassador—we spent a lot of money in the 1990s in places that aren't any better and sometimes worse, right? Am I right or wrong about that?

Are we really getting better, given all the American tax money? No one likes a zero return on investment. What matters to me is a net gain and I feel like we do net gain on healthcare and other direct assistance for people that really need it.

But I'm not so sure that in the dictators we've supported or elections that we've tried to help that we really get a direct return on that. Am I right or wrong? And I'm sure you're going to tell me I'm wrong and I'll accept your answer.

Ambassador WHARTON. Congressman, I would never tell you that you were wrong but I could beg——

Mr. CLAWSON. Everybody else does.

Ambassador WHARTON. I could beg to differ. No. Look, you raise a very important point. I feel the same way sometimes on a day to day basis or a weekly basis. I feel like I'm banging my head against the wall.

Mr. CLAWSON. Is Nigeria really any better than it was 20 years ago?

Ambassador WHARTON. Absolutely. Yes, sir. Absolutely.

In 1985 when I joined the Foreign Service there were two democratic governments in Africa. Today, there are, arguably, 25 or 30.

I do believe that democracies don't go to war with one another the way authoritarian states do. So that's a plus for us.

The rise of the African middle class—you've got 1 billion people today, 2 billion people by 2050. That is an enormous market for American goods and services.

We need to be there now to help establish clear rule of law court systems, legal systems that will protect American investors and American businesses when we're able to more fully take advantage of the rising middle class in Africa.

You rightly point out the work that we do on public health—we should be extremely proud of that. We have saved literally millions of lives at, you know, tremendous expense to us as taxpayers but also tremendous benefit to the United States in terms of helping to keep our own country healthy—helping keep disease away from our door.

Mr. CLAWSON. Like everything you're telling me, how often do we support people that end up being crooks?

Ambassador WHARTON. I could not give you an exact percentage. It does happen.

Mr. STAAL. If I could add also, a recent study done by Mercy Corps on violent extremism in several countries showed that the primary drivers of violent extremism were injustice and a sense of unfairness, corruption and police or military brutality—all issues of democracy and good governance.

And it's in those countries where either there's poor governance and bad practice—undemocratic practices or maybe a lack of ability to control certain parts of their country that these violent extremists come from.

And so it's in our own personal interest as the United States to promote good solid democracy that's transparent, that's fair, that's reducing corruption and that's why it's so important that we have a good election in a place like Nigeria and so that they can then spread their good governance into the parts of the country where we're seeing violent extremists up in the Boko Haram area.

Mr. FELDSTEIN. I would just add to what my colleagues said in particular that I believe there's a nexus between good governance and a lack of humanitarian crises in places that are able to feed their own people and withstand and be resilient to disaster.

And I think if you look at the many of the places that have suffered crises, whether it's Ethiopia several decades ago, whether it's looking at South Sudan more recently, the amount of money that ultimately entails the international community putting forth to protect lives, to deal with refugee flows, to help people avoid starvation, malnourishment and so forth, runs into the billions—the amount of money that peacekeeping forces cost once civil war breaks out runs into the billions.

And so the idea, I think, for us is that if we can use an ounce of prevention in terms of good elections and helping to provide for better governance that will help forestall some of the larger crises at which point then there's little choice but to act.

Mr. CLAWSON. Agree with all that. Just hope we get it right. Because if we support the bad guys it's the big men or the strong men, they make off with the cash then you got a whole bunch of people that aren't getting food and blame it on the U.S. because we're propping up crooks and I don't think that helps us either.

So, you know, this is a tough task you all got. Humanitarian, private property, investment—I'm all for that. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. DONOVAN. The gentleman yields.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for your attendance, your testimony and certainly for your honest answers.

I invite the second panel. I thank you, gentlemen. I invite the second panel to take their positions.

I welcome our second panel. Mr. Rushdi Nackerdien is the regional director for Africa at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

With more than 20 years of experience in democracy and elections, he has led and pioneered complex international and national programs.

Mr. Nackerdien has focused on electoral reform, capacity development, strategic planning, project and program evaluation, and expert advice in elections and development of e-learning materials with a special focus on Africa.

He has advised the African Union in revising their election observation approach to incorporate a more comprehensive long-term framework and worked in a wide range of African countries. Welcome, sir.

Mr. Patrick Merloe is a senior associate and director of election programs at the National Democratic Institute. He has more than 30 years of experience in promoting citizen empowerment, governmental accountability and public policy advocacy and oversees many of the institute's programs.

Mr. Merloe has participated in more than 150 international missions for NDI to more than 65 countries, concentrating on conflict-sensitive states and countries that are vulnerable to authoritarian tendencies and has produced a dozen publications on comprehensive law, human rights, and elections.

John Tomaszewski—and I am Polish, sir, I don't know if you are, but you have to be a landsman—currently serves as an acting regional director for Africa. Prior to assuming his current post in May 2016 he served as IRI's deputy regional director for Africa in Washington, DC.

Before returning to headquarters, Mr. Tomaszewski spent several years living on the African continent and managing various projects for IRI, focussing on political party strengthening, local governance, and civil society development, youth and gender initiatives and civic education in many African countries. He has also worked for two Members of Congress including on their campaigns.

Mr. Nii Akuetteh serves as the founding executive director of the African Immigrant Caucus. He has lived in Nigeria and contributed to the strengthening of democracy across West Africa.

He has also founded the Democracy and Conflict Research Institute, an NGO that focuses on fighting dictatorship and repression in Africa. Mr. Akuetteh worked on a anti-apartheid movement in

the U.S., which led to the sanctions imposed against apartheid South Africa.

He has taught at Georgetown University and served as the editor of a quarterly journal on U.S. relations with Africa and the Caribbean. Gentlemen, thank you.

I now invite our first witness, Mr. Nackerdien, to give his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. RUSHDI NACKERDIEN, REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA, INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS**

Mr. NACKERDIEN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, I deeply appreciate this opportunity to discuss U.S. electoral support in sub-Saharan Africa.

Since 1997, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries worldwide to support inclusive citizen participation and credible elections. In many parts of the world, IFES works with its partners, IRI, and NDI, and the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, commonly known as CEPPS, on democracy, human rights, and governance programming.

With support from USAID and several international partners, IFES has supported electoral processes across the subregion with 11 active programs in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Chairman, in the last decade policy makers worldwide have come to understand that elections are much more than just election day and this has resulted in an important shift in the policy process.

I draw your attention to one of the poster boards that I've brought along, particularly the colored wheel. It's commonly referred to as the electoral process and today we understand the process to break down into three broad phases—namely, the pre-electoral, the electoral, and the post-electoral period.

Typically, this process often runs 3 to 5 years and is a lengthy endeavor. Mr. Chairman, elections have been described as the biggest logistical exercise a country can undertake during peacetime.

In most African countries, this exercise is done by a single election management body operating independently from party influence.

If one takes the example of Nigeria, which is the poster board just being turned right now. For the 2015 polls the Independent National Election Commission employed more than 12,000 permanent members of staff and more than 700,000 temporary staff.

All of these helped serve more than 6 to 8 million citizens that had to be registered, that had to be verified and they had to cast a vote on election day.

This huge logistical and political exercise cannot be executed overnight. INEC was preparing for this since 2011, 4 years in the making across the electoral cycle.

This work was done in close partnership with organizations like IFES and all this occurred under the threat of attacks by Boko Haram.

Mr. Chairman, IFES believes the following four areas are pivotal when it comes to election assistance. Number one, due to the complexity of organizing an election, targeted resource support must take place early in the electoral cycle—several years before election day.

Number two, just as we combat extremism on a regional basis, so we should invest regionally in capacity building and building in particular election networks among election professionals.

Number three, working with civil society is equally essential. Civil society plays an important role in the electoral cycle not only for carrying out civic and voter education activities but also for holding governments and electoral institutions accountable.

Number four, in recent years DRC funding has either been redirected toward other priorities or has been increasingly divided across smaller sub parts, leaving decreasing investments for election and political process programming.

IFES believes that the U.S. Government should reverse this trend, amplifying investments in election assistance as a cost effective way to pursue additional development objectives.

Mr. Chairman, the electoral cycle approach can make election international assistance seem never ending. However, three critical points of exit or graduation from support do exist.

Technical sustainability is considered the easiest to achieve. It describes a time when a country requires no further external assistance for the conduct of elections.

Financial sustainability is the second component and the second hardest to achieve. This is achieved only when the funds for elections are derived from in-country sources. And lastly, political sustainability is the most difficult to achieve.

It is based on the legitimacy of the entire process as well as the institution when both the outcome and the process are viewed as credible by all stakeholders both foreign and domestic.

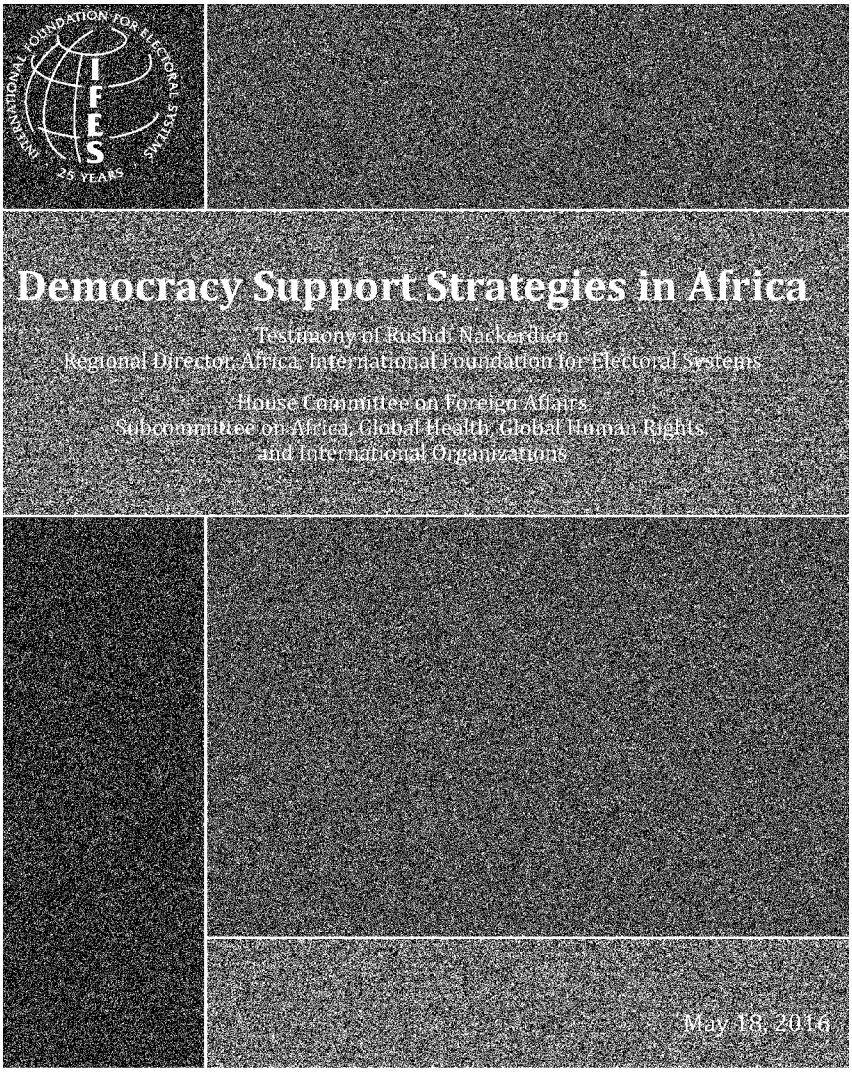
Mr. Chairman, a number of critical upcoming elections in Cote D'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia will help shape democracy on the continent.

We respectfully recommend that the U.S. Government prioritize electoral assistance that is locally contextualized, is inclusive of women, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities and other underrepresented groups, develops local expertise and consistently invests early and throughout the electoral cycle.

Such assistance will not only facilitate Africa's navigation of very difficult times but might prove foundational to improve development outcomes in women's empowerment, health, economic growth, and food security.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, thank you for this opportunity to testify. On behalf of IFES we are honored to partner with the U.S. Government and Congress, international aid organizations, our CEPPS partners, and of course the people of Africa in support of a more democratic and prosperous continent. I'm happy to answer any questions stemming from my testimony. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nackerdien follows:]




# Democracy Support Strategies in Africa

Testimony of Rushdi Nackerdien
Regional Director, Africa, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights
and International Organizations

May 18, 2016

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: on behalf of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), I deeply appreciate this opportunity to discuss U.S. electoral support in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since 1987, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries to support inclusive citizen participation in legitimate, transparent and accountable political processes. IFES empowers the individuals and institutions that consolidate democratic norms and channel citizen desires into effective, representative, and resilient governance. With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and numerous international partners – including the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, Global Affairs Canada, the United Nations Development Programme, and the European Union – IFES currently supports credible, free, and fair electoral processes in 11 Sub-Saharan African countries, and has experience in 21 countries across the sub-region. In many parts of the world, IFES also works with its Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) partners – the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) – under USAID's Elections and Political Transitions mechanism (EPT) on comprehensive democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programming. IFES programs deliver expert technical assistance to help all electoral stakeholders participate in, plan for and administer inclusive political processes across the electoral cycle, from legal framework reforms, to voter registration, to civic education, and ultimately the elections themselves.

Our active Sub-Saharan African programs in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe all utilize the generous support of our donors to strengthen both sides of the democracy scale: 1) Supply – in the form of credible political processes, administered by professional and independent institutions; and 2) Demand – in the form of an activated citizenry with protected rights and full access to the systems that impact their lives.

IFES positions itself at the center of this equation, partnering with all electoral stakeholders to strengthen participation, transparency, responsiveness, and ultimately democratic performance. As a rule, the dynamism of all societies produces social and political changes that often outpace the ability of governments to respond in a timely and comprehensive manner. This is perhaps more true in Sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else on earth. As countries

across the sub-continent confront seismic changes in demography (a youth bulge), economics (rapid growth paired with widening inequality), and access to information (mobile phones and other technologies), emerging challenges in other areas like climate change and violent extremism are compounding the stress on many political systems, putting even democratic governments at risk of a crisis of legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens. For example, recent surveys provide evidence that belief in democratic norms is slipping in some pockets of the sub-continent, particularly among youth.[1]

It is for this reason, among many others, that DRG assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa is more important today than ever. With upcoming elections in more than 30 regional countries in the next three years – including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – it is critical that international donors invest resources now to ensure that citizens have an opportunity to participate freely in a credible electoral process. IFES firmly believes that strengthening the institutions that serve as the stewards of democratic governance – election management bodies (EMBs), judiciaries, regulatory agencies, and parliaments, among others – is a valuable and cost-effective method to support inclusive, resilient and democratic societies. IFES also believes that societies with a marriage of widespread citizen engagement and effective, efficient institutions can produce stronger development outcomes across sectors. IFES therefore respectfully recommends that the U.S. Congress maintain and even increase American engagement with democracy and governance programming, with a particular focus on election assistance across the entire electoral cycle.[2]

**Why is Election Assistance Important?**

The formation or consolidation of state institutions coincides with electoral processes, with elections often serving as a national platform to innovate technological solutions, determine power-sharing, initiate constitutional reform, test new methods of campaigning and participation, and enhance popular political awareness and democratic culture. As the best tool we have for translating political expression into representative, responsive governance, elections are a uniquely important feature of public life. For countries in transition or emerging from periods of instability, they hold the potential to mediate political conflict and promote the consolidation of democratic norms. In other countries, where political institutions are more stable, elections can be a powerful method to distill public opinion into a discrete policy agenda for governing. On a fundamental level, whenever an election occurs, citizens possess the opportunity to initiate a powerful public conversation with their neighbors, community, and broader society that results in a collective choice for the direction of their country. Those choices often have a profound impact on social and economic progress for millions, the extent

[1] Examples include an IFES-conducted survey in Kenya and data from other researchers, such as the Democracy in Africa Research Unit at the University of Cape Town, http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2016/04/15/sa-youth-less-supportive-of-democracy-than-their-parents.

[2] "Effective Electoral Assistance," ACE Electoral Project, http://aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/focus-on-effective-electoral-assistance/the-electoral-cycle-approach.

to which human rights are preserved and expanded, and, in some places, the prospects for mitigating violent conflict and extremism – all of which are also priorities for the United States and our allies.

Yet, elections, on their own, are neither guarantors of democracy nor inoculators against illiberal autocracy. To facilitate credible outcomes – the first step toward an accountable form of government – the full political environment preceding and following the election must provide for free and fair participation, with transparent and enforceable rules of the game and widespread access for all groups within a society. This requires, among other things, professional and independent EMBs, strong regulatory frameworks, a nonpartisan judiciary, active civil society and media networks with protected freedoms of assembly and expression, and – perhaps most importantly – an informed and engaged citizenry to ensure that electoral contestants and EMBs respond to the genuine concerns of citizens.

Elections are therefore not singular events, but rather a cycle of political processes on a massive scale, all of which must build upon and reinforce each other to produce democratic outcomes. In Nigeria, the largest country on the continent by population, the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) employs more than 12,000 permanent staff to manage the many responsibilities between and during elections. Before the recent 2015 poll, they were responsible for registering and verifying more than 68 million citizens, procuring and preparing equipment for 120,000 polling stations, designing and distributing localized ballots for the more than 7,000 candidates that contested various offices, and recruiting and training more than 700,000 temporary staff to work on Election Day. Along the way, election officials also had to consistently engage with citizens across the country – through voter education, various technological platforms, and citizen hotlines – to ensure high levels of transparency and access.

Despite progress in many Sub-Saharan African countries, elections across the continent continue to encounter challenges at numerous points along the electoral cycle. Wherever these challenges occur, timely assistance from regional or international partners can provide tremendous value, helping national actors both meet the urgent demands of the current cycle and strengthen their institutions in preparation for cycles down the road. Investing resources for electoral assistance in a proactive fashion, tailored for a country's specific challenges along the electoral cycle, accelerates progress toward moving democratic norms from paper to practice; enhancing political stability; and building sustainable expertise to enhance institutional resilience and regional peer-to-peer learning.

*Activating Democratic Norms: From Paper to Practice*

Countries across Sub-Saharan Africa have adopted, in principle, a rich and progressive collection of democratic values and aspirations, beginning with the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) at the start of the post-colonial era. In replacing the OAU in 2002, the modern-day African Union carries forward these ideals in its own founding charter, as well as in a comprehensive set of treaties that include a continent-wide Charter on Democracy, Elections,

and Governance. Many countries in the sub-region have also ratified constitutions that include human rights and democratic provisions on par with, or even exceeding, international norms.

However, principles on paper sometimes struggle to consolidate into applied practice. Smart, timely and sustained election assistance helps institutionalize these democratic values and counter democratic backsliding. USAID and the broader U.S. foreign policy community acknowledge the importance of election assistance for promoting citizen participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability – each of which contributes to the consolidation of international and regional democratic norms. USAID's Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, released in 2013, also explicitly links election assistance to the establishment and consolidation of inclusive, accountable democracies that advance freedom, dignity, and development.[3] However, the foundation for democracy and election assistance as a fundamental part of development reaches back even further, to the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which asserts the right of all citizens, everywhere, to take part in government and participate in genuine elections.[4]

Moreover, partnering with national electoral actors to improve participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability can help solidify the system of checks and balances that limits the excessive accumulation or exploitation of power. Empowering judiciaries, for example, to play a constructive and unbiased role in election dispute resolution not only increases the legitimacy of a particular political process, but also affirms the independence of separate government branches.

*Enhancing Political Stability*

More than any other region, Sub-Saharan Africa is confronting a confluence of political, demographic, and economic changes that generate opportunities and challenges – but above all, potential instability. The continent's youth bulge is creating a new generation of active, urban, yet underemployed and often marginalized citizens, many of who may be at risk to anti-democratic influences, extremist ideologies and radicalization. In Kenya and South Africa, for example, recent surveys demonstrate that younger people are often less committed to democratic principles than their elders.[5] Elsewhere, violent extremism in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region is challenging the normative value of democratic government, and ethnic tensions across the continent can disrupt otherwise stable political systems. Newer developments such as environmental degradation – or innovations such as mobile phone

[3] USAID Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20DRG_%20final%20final%205-24%203%20(1).pdf.
[4] United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21, http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html.
[5] Examples include an IFES-conducted survey in Kenya and data from other researchers, such as the Democracy in Africa Research Unit at the University of Cape Town, http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2016/04/15/sa-youth-less-supportive-of-democracy-than-their-parents.

technology – likewise generate complex forces that activate intense citizen demands for change, raising expectations that are ripe for manipulation.

Strong, inclusive electoral institutions can help a society navigate these potentially destabilizing forces. They channel citizen demands into peaceful political processes, which are the most constructive avenue to promote stability and broader development. Elections – and the actions and policies that govern them – are therefore a process through which a country can either enhance such stability or degrade it to the point of fracture. When managed in a professional, independent, and inclusive manner, electoral processes are valuable outlets for all citizens to express their desires, mediate differences, and select leaders. When managed poorly or in a politically biased manner, however, elections can also exacerbate societal conflict, sow distrust in the political system, and potentially destabilize a nation – even those that had shown democratic progress in other areas, such as Kenya before its 2007 electoral crisis, and Nigeria throughout the 2000s. Election assistance can help reinforce a stable and healthy trajectory.

*Building Sustainable Regional Expertise*

DRG assistance – and election support in particular – is a cost-effective investment that amplifies the impact of foreign assistance across the development arena. The reason is simple, by strengthening institutions to consolidate democratic norms (participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability, among others) and enhance political stability, DRG and election support accomplishes two mutually reinforcing objectives: translating citizen needs into public policy; and developing local expertise to provide peer-to-peer (and thus sustainable) learning and growth.

The latter point holds the potential to set the sub-continent on a sustainable path toward the adoption and consistent administration of democratic processes, free of reliance on international donors. In Kenya, for example, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) received consistent and comprehensive assistance from USAID and other donors following its formation in 2011, and it is now a leading institution within the East Africa region, as well as in the Association of World Election Bodies. Sub-Saharan Africa currently has numerous regional forums and communities that establish democratic principles, integrate standards, and at times deliver assistance; these include the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the East African Community (EAC), among others. Many of these also house their own regional EMB networks to share best practices. These regional bodies are well positioned to normalize democratic standards and practices among their member states. They wield a tremendous amount of influence and, importantly, are permanent fixtures of the political landscape in Africa. Electoral assistance that seeks to strengthen them – focusing on internal governance, technical expertise, integration strategies, and peer-to-peer assistance programs – will produce tremendous returns on investment.

**How (and where) Does Election Assistance Work?**

*Evolving Assistance Techniques and Emerging Innovations*

For almost 30 years, IFES has been at the forefront of developments in the field of election assistance and election observation. IFES has moved from the process whereby the partisan-controlled executive branch of government traditionally ran elections in Sub-Saharan Africa, to a model where the independence of EMBs is enshrined constitutionally in many countries. We have moved from the treatment of election management as simply an extension of public administration, to the establishment of norms associated with election management used by observers – whether domestic or international – to measure the credibility of not only the process but also the electoral institution.

In fact, the growth of election observation as a professional endeavor has kept pace with the professional development of election management as a career. No longer do we see election observation being an anecdotal exercise, but rather we see a process driven by references to international human rights and elections instruments, as well as compliance with a country's own laws and policies. We have moved from election authorities operating in a national-only context to regional communities of practice, where regional networks of election practitioners regularly discuss the complexity of managing elections and how to overcome the challenges thereof. The ability to draw on international expertise and lessons learned to tackle new and unforeseen problems is testimony to this growth.

*Electoral Cycle Approach*

However, as with all institution-building endeavors, these are long-term processes of continuous and consistent investment. One such critical aspect of investment is the adoption of the electoral cycle (see Figure 1) approach, which focuses attention not only on Election Day, but also on the pre-electoral and post-electoral phases. These phases often run longer than the electoral event itself. However, the shift to the electoral cycle approach, though commonplace among the international community today, has only been accepted in the last decade. This shift has seen advocacy from the highest levels for the consistent and early investment in election processes to ensure that they result in credible, free and fair elections. We have seen this language feature in almost all donor documents and approaches, as well as the way in which EMBs themselves advocate for longer-term financial and resource investment in the electoral process.

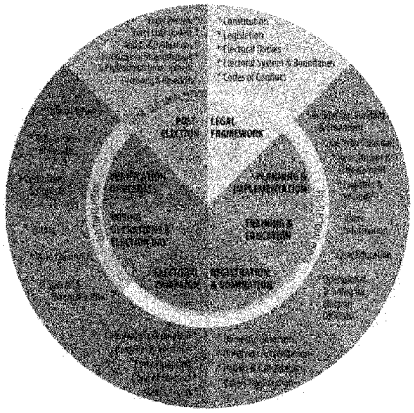



*Figure 1: The Electoral Cycle*

This electoral cycle approach moves away from event-based, periodic support to more strategic ongoing support that spans several years in advance of the election date and continues in the period between elections. This approach moves electoral assistance toward the development of the institutional capacity of the EMB and the long-term needs of civil society – including attention to election observation. Such support in between elections can also assist in targeting and promoting the involvement of women, ethnic and religious minorities, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups that have often been neglected in the implementation of past electoral assistance programs. Consistent, long-term support throughout the electoral cycle also enhances stability during uncertain democracy building processes.

Furthermore, long-term capacity building of electoral processes, EMBs and ancillary stakeholders provides key entry-points for broader governance efforts such as human rights interventions, gender-responsive programming, judicial independence and inclusive representation, and critical non-state accountability mechanisms such as civil society and free media.

*Matching Tools and Approaches to Specific Country Context*

An electoral cycle approach recognizes elections as an ongoing process, rather than as a single, discrete event. This approach also reflects the reality that various interconnected electoral components and stakeholders exist at different points in the cycle and at different stages of an EMB's development. As such, corresponding technical assistance and other electoral support varies according to a country's political context, the electoral period, and an EMB's needs.

To be effective and sustainable, electoral assistance should occur throughout the electoral cycle, with different strategies for addressing short-term needs and achieving long-term results. International work on electoral assistance recognizes that "electoral assistance has to take stock in all steps of the electoral cycle; on this post elections and inter-election periods are as crucial as the build up to the elections themselves, thus requiring regular inter-institutional contact and support activities before, during, and after election periods for the sake of lessons learned and inter-institutional memory aimed at improved electoral processes in beneficiary

countries."[6] Support for accountable, professional EMBs and other electoral institutions is necessary for ensuring free, fair, and credible elections. Long-term assistance can include institutional strengthening and capacity development: institutional strengthening focuses on establishing structures for electoral bodies, and capacity development strengthens organizational and human capacity over time. While the two are linked, institutional strengthening should begin at the start of a new electoral cycle, and capacity development should continue throughout all electoral periods. Importantly, regular, sustained support to EMBs provides stability throughout an inherently dynamic, and often times unpredictable, democratization process. Foreign assistance in the form of capacity building and institutional strengthening for EMBs can continue even during unstable political transitions to result in enduring democratic institutions. Although short-term, targeted assistance may be appropriate to respond to emerging immediate needs or threats, such as unexpected electoral violence, such support alone is not effective for establishing the credibility or independence of an EMB or sustainable democratic processes.

*Democracy as Development*

Electoral assistance reinforces democratic resilience and lays the foundation for improved outcomes in other development sectors. Indeed, the USAID DRG Strategy prioritizes integration of DRG into other sectors, including health, economic growth, climate change, and food security.[7] This strategy recognizes that poor governance and weak citizen participation contribute to low human and economic development. Elections, then, are a key entry point for wider democracy assistance projects, including support to civil society and civic participation; access to justice for women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations; reinforcement of the rule of law; and opportunities for political dialogue and political party development. A successful election, for example, will be supported by legitimate institutional frameworks, as well as provide wide political participation and representation of all members of society. Credible elections can also give legitimacy to elected leaders, and transparent mechanisms and processes for holding those leaders accountable contribute to public confidence and citizen engagement. However, while increased accountability between citizens and their leaders has the potential to shift government investment toward local development and reduce corruption, such impact also requires the development of an organized civil society to coordinate interests and mobilize citizens to advocate for improved service delivery and more inclusive government policies. On the other hand, a breakdown at any point in the electoral process, especially in an EMB's transparency, can damage not only the credibility of an election but also the social, economic and political development of country.

Inclusivity should underpin technical assistance to EMBs throughout the electoral cycle, from strategic planning to electoral integrity management and monitoring and evaluation. Africa

[6] European Commission Methodological Guide on Electoral Assistance, http://eeas.europa.eu/cueom/pdf/ec-methodological-guide-on-electoral-assistance_en.pdf.
[7] USAID Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20DRG_%20final%20final%206-24%203%20(1).pdf.

has strong legal frameworks guaranteeing equal rights for women, youth, and other vulnerable populations, including the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). Following these frameworks, EMBs should receive support to ensure inclusive voter registration; safety and security of voters; representation of women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in EMBs and in political parties; and access to civic and voter education for vulnerable populations, among other things. Key to this work is encouraging EMBs to engage more with civil society organizations (CSOs).

For example, in 2013, IFES supported the Women's Network in Côte d'Ivoire to build links with the Independent Elections Commission and Truth and Reconciliation Commission to promote women's leadership and gender issues in decision-making. After identifying shared issues of concern related to women's participation in political and electoral processes, the Women's Network made recommendations on access to information, mechanisms for meaningful participation of women, and gender parity and quotas. IFES then provided training on advocacy techniques for all three bodies to develop skills in negotiation and networking to facilitate implementation of the recommendations.

**Case Studies: Effective Electoral Assistance**

The following case studies highlight three countries in which sustained technical assistance provided by IFES has led to enhanced results and promoted the long-term sustainability of partner institutions and program initiatives. In each of these country contexts, IFES' longstanding presence has allowed IFES to build deep relationships with local stakeholders, and positioned IFES as a trusted partner, able to not only efficiently support electoral processes in the heat of the electoral period, but also lead lessons-learned initiatives in post-electoral periods, and pilot innovative, country-specific approaches to resolving age-old challenges in the early stages of the pre-electoral period.

*Kenya*

The 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya traumatized the country and shocked members of the international community who had viewed the country as a model of stability in the Great Lakes region. The resulting crisis left over 1,500 people dead, between 300,000 and 600,000 people internally displaced, and hindered economic progress that was achieved during the preceding years. The post-election violence exposed significant weaknesses in governance, political parties, civil society and the media, as well as shortcomings in election management. The incremental gains made in the electoral process, which had supported acceptable elections in 2002 and the 2005 referendum, dissipated and spawned a lack of confidence in the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK), with 68 percent of Kenyans blaming the ECK for the post-election violence.

In the aftermath of that election violence, the Kenyan government initiated many reforms to address the disputed 2007 poll and the deep divisions within Kenyan society. This reform

process began with the enactment of a new constitution that was supported by nearly 67 percent of participating Kenyans in the peaceful 2010 referendum, followed by the creation of an entirely new legal framework that saw the creation of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) after the ECK was disbanded.

IFES supported this process in 2010 by providing technical support to the Interim Independent Election Commission (IIEC) with the implementation of an electronic results transmission system, which led to the timely, transparent release of by-election and constitutional referendum results.

Subsequently, in May 2011, IFES received a grant from USAID to provide technical assistance to build the capacity and sustainability of the IEBC. This included support for voter registration, voter education and results transmission; oversight of political parties; and development of a dispute resolution mechanism to facilitate the IEBC's role in conducting transparent, credible and violence-free elections.

Through these initiatives, IFES also enhanced the integrity of political party registration procedures by assisting the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) to transition into an autonomous body, developing and deploying the political parties' membership registration system, and providing technical support to institutionalize ORPP internal processes. Furthermore, IFES enhanced the accuracy and credibility of the voter registration process by providing technical assistance in the procurement and deployment of the Biometric Voter Registration system and conducting audits of the voter register before and after the registration exercise. Indeed, IFES assistance strengthened a number of key electoral processes, including the final publication and acceptance of electoral districts, the development and implementation of a national voter education strategy reaching approximately 1.6 million people, the deployment and development of an electronic results transmission and display system and an IEBC dispute resolution rules and case management system.

Together, these initiatives enhanced the credibility and transparency of Kenya's electoral process during a critical period following the 2007 crisis. The IEBC successfully registered more than 14 million Kenyan citizens, participating parties and candidates chose to address complaints through formal electoral dispute resolution mechanisms in the courts, and the process remained largely peaceful throughout the electoral cycle. While IFES was present in Kenya through the failed 2007 elections, and provided technical assistance to the now disbanded ECK, IFES' highly effective support to the IIEC, the IEBC and the 2010 elections benefited immensely from the credibly and trust IFES had built with varied electoral stakeholders over years of sustained activity. Furthermore, such varied, long-term gains would not have been possible without sustained presence in country after the 2007 violence. Indeed, our uninterrupted presence for so many years has also allowed IFES to look beyond individual electoral cycles to pursue innovative approaches, such as developing primary and secondary school civics curricula, aiming for long-term, sustainable impact.

*Nigeria*

Nigeria has held six national level elections and numerous local elections since transitioning to civilian rule in 1999. While the quality of election management in Nigeria has generally improved over the past 15 years, deficiencies remain in the institutional preparedness and performance of EMBs. Working with Nigeria's Independent National Election Commission (INEC), 36 State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs), and other key stakeholders since 1999, IFES has supported the improvement of Nigeria's electoral management capacity while also extending support to other areas, including electoral reform, strategic planning, campaign finance monitoring, election dispute resolution, election violence monitoring and mitigation, and increasing inclusivity of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and persons with disabilities.

The long-term partnerships developed and trust built over the course of more than 15 years of uninterrupted presence in Nigeria put IFES in a strong position to pursue its current program aimed at strengthening the capacity of the INEC and SIECs in order to improve public confidence in elections and their outcomes, and provide key support to Nigeria's watershed 2015 elections. In the context of this program, IFES has played an instrumental role in institutional capacity-building and decentralization at the INEC. IFES supported the establishment of a training and research institute under the INEC in 2007, known as The Electoral Institute (TEI), which IFES continues to support in its mandate of certifying trainers and training over 700,000 poll workers around the country ahead of elections as well as with its own strategic planning efforts. IFES also supported the INEC to implement operational reforms and reorganization, which resulted in a shift in organizational culture toward decentralization of responsibilities and decision making, and an increase in collaboration between headquarters and state level officials.

Besides TEI, other IFES-suggested innovations adopted by the INEC include Election Operation Support Centers, which during the 2015 general election tracked and monitored electoral operations on a national scale for the first time in the history of elections in Nigeria. IFES also supported the INEC in establishing an in-house graphic design center (which allowed the INEC for the first time to design ballot papers in-house, an important milestone for maintaining the security of the ballot) and a Geographic Information System (GIS) lab that integrated GIS into electoral operations and planning. Moreover, specifically for the 2015 election, IFES conducted a voter education campaign with the INEC that reached over 67 million people, contributed to the inclusiveness of the elections by collaborating with INEC to identify strategies that ensure that IDPs were not disenfranchised in the elections, and supported the INEC in the development of a comprehensive communication timeline with key operational dates and activities.

Despite challenges, including politically motivated violence in parts of the country, the general openness and fairness of the last two general elections have demonstrated INEC's new sense of professionalism and integrity, and the country has made a significant step toward consolidating its democratic gains. The 2015 elections were widely praised as the country's best since returning to civilian rule in 1999 due to the work of the INEC and the candidates' respect of the

election results, and clearly demonstrate the value of long-term and sustained institution building.

*Guinea*

Following decades of authoritarian rule, Guinea held its first democratic presidential elections in 2010, resulting in the election of Alpha Condé to the presidency. Despite delays, the country ultimately held legislative elections, which marked another step in its democratic transitions. However, not long after the legislative elections concluded, the Ebola crisis paralyzed all administrative and political processes in the country as a result of the high risk of infection. As Guinea recovered from the Ebola epidemic, it also faced the tests of a young democracy as it prepared to hold its second democratic presidential election and its first local elections since 2005.

In the context of this instability and mounting tensions between the ruling and opposition parties, the Independent National Election Commission (*Commission electorale nationale indépendante* [CENI]), as a relatively young institution, continues to lack the capacity and institutional experience, despite marked progress, to manage large-scale elections, and is often criticized by the opposition for its perceived lack of neutrality. Furthermore, Guinean civil society remains hampered in its capacity to effectively engage the citizenry; it lacks both the resources and the political space to function and promote effective political engagement at the grassroots level.

Active in Guinea since well before the turmoil following Lansana Conté's death in 2008, IFES leveraged the credibility it had built over years of in-country presence to provide wide-ranging support to Guinea's EMBs throughout that period. Once established, the CENI continued to benefit from institutional strengthening and in-house capacity building from IFES in an effort to construct a robust and professional EMB. IFES has worked closely with CSOs throughout the country, to develop and implement civic and voter education awareness messaging and programs that operated in line with the electoral process. In its current programming, IFES provides technical assistance to the CENI through targeted, in-person support to several key processes, including training of polling station workers and results transmission agents. Meanwhile, IFES is supporting civic and voter education through its long-time civil society partners that helped the country prepare for its 2015 presidential elections and its upcoming local elections.

Through its programming, IFES has successfully implemented many activities and assisted in reforms that have strengthened the electoral process in Guinea. In its assistance to the CENI, IFES has strengthened various departments by streamlining databases and building the training skills and elections operation knowledge of the staff, which has improved the capacities of the CENI in order to contribute to effectively administering elections. Furthermore, IFES assisted in the implementation of a new department within the CENI to lead the civic and voter outreach component.

The programs' impact is also evident in its support to civil society's work in civic and voter education and citizen engagement. In addition to its work with long-standing civil society partners targeting marginalized populations, IFES worked with the Regional Councils of Civil Society Organizations (*Conseils régionaux des organisations de la société civile*) in order to establish Civic and Voter Education Centers (*Centres d'education civique et électorale* [CECEs]). These serve as community locales where citizens can access documents relating to the electoral process, and as a community gathering space to discuss issues of democratic governance and exchange with local leaders. Over 100,000 Guineans have been reached through the civic education activities conducted by the CECEs during the past year alone.

In addition, during the Ebola crisis, IFES leveraged the CECEs to strengthen public education initiatives around the disease, and provided critical infrastructure to coordinate government and NGO responses. This initiative, and indeed the CECEs' sustained existence, would not have been possible without long-term support from IFES, and demonstrates how sustained intervention can enhance the benefits of DRG programming across sectors.

**Moving Forward: Recommendations for Future Electoral Assistance**

The above case studies demonstrate that consistent, proactive and sustained donor investment, tailored to a country's needs and applied at every stage of the electoral cycle, can produce measurable progress toward free and fair political processes and the consolidation of democratic norms. With further investment from international partners, countries across Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to strengthen their political institutions in a manner that expands access, enhances transparency and deepens credibility.

USAID's Elections and Political Transitions (EPT) Leader with Associates award, held by IFES, IRI, and NDI, is a vehicle through which the U.S. government supports elections and political transitions throughout a period of social and political changes, as discussed above, including the youth bulge, high unemployment, increased access to information and community technology, and violent extremism. A pre-competed mechanism, EPT allows USAID Missions to respond rapidly to urgent needs across the globe. With vehicles such as EPT, the U.S. government can be more proactive when developing democracy assistance programs to provide consistent, long-term support for elections earlier in an electoral cycle. As strong democratic institutions also improve a government's ability to respond to citizen needs, increased support for DRG initiatives, especially across sectors, is necessary for achieving the U.S. government's foreign policy objectives related to peace, security, and global development. On the African continent, both regional economic communities and EMB networks, as well as CSOs, will continue to play major roles in democracy building. As such, U.S. government support to these entities will enable election professionals to share best practices throughout the sub-region and with CSOs to more effectively mobilize citizens around emerging priorities. IFES therefore recommends that the U.S. Congress, USAID, and other international donors commit to supporting the following areas, each of which strengthen free, fair and credible political processes:

*DRG Amplification, Not DRG Dissolution*

International donors, and USAID in particular, have smartly refined their development strategies to recognize the intersection of DRG work and broader development, and to recommend ways to integrate fields in a mutually reinforcing way. However, in recent years, DRG funding has either been redirected toward other priorities, or has been increasingly divided into smaller sub-parts, leaving decreasing investments for election and political process programming. IFES believes that the U.S. government should reverse this trend, amplifying investments in election assistance as a cost-effective way to pursue additional development objectives, as we have described above.

*Full Electoral Cycle Support*

Election day is not an isolated event. The political processes and operational demands that both precede and follow an election are interdependent, and a failure or shortcoming at a single point may have significant repercussions at multiple stages of the cycle. Moreover, if electoral shortcomings accumulate and cause citizens to lose faith in the credibility of the election results, broader development objectives may also suffer. It is paramount for international donors to recognize the value of full electoral cycle support in order to proactively invest resources in advance of elections and at sufficient levels to engage local partners in a consistent fashion – and with sufficient time to help them with their urgent *and* longer-term needs. This does not imply huge investments in many stable countries, but rather sustained capacity building and technical assistance

*Regional Integration and Institution Strengthening*

The regional and global networking among election professionals is one of the major ways in which elections transcend national borders in the post-cold war context, the other being the role of foreign technical assistance from donor governments and international organizations. The regionalization of economic and development communities lends to regional networks among election professionals. The development of networks such as the Association of Election Authorities (AAEA) has stemmed from the work of organizations like IFES that brought together election professionals in the early 1990s in places like Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. Since the establishment of the AAEA, we have seen further EMB networks grow, such as the:

- Southern Africa Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC (covering southern Africa)
- ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (covering West Africa)
- EAC Forum of National Election Commissions (covering East Africa)
- Network of Election Commissions of Central Africa (*Réseau des Commissions et. Administrations électorales de l'Afrique Centrale*) (covering Central Africa)
- A new EMB network is currently being established to cover North Africa and the Middle East under the auspices of the League of Arab States

These associations or communities of practice place a high level of importance on (1) the development of professional electoral officials with high integrity; (2) a strong sense of public service, knowledge, and experience of electoral processes; and (3) a commitment to democratic elections. Such communities of practice must be energized to give impetus to the activities associated with democratic elections. The challenge of elections requires the pooling of all the skills and the development of a real synergy at both the regional and continental scale. These networks, however, continue to remain weak in the absence of funding that is regionally focused and a strict country-based approach to technical assistance by donors. With instruments such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance that speak strongly to cooperation on matters regarding elections, democracy and governance, a renewed vibrancy and investment is required to craft a higher standard of professional election management on the African continent.

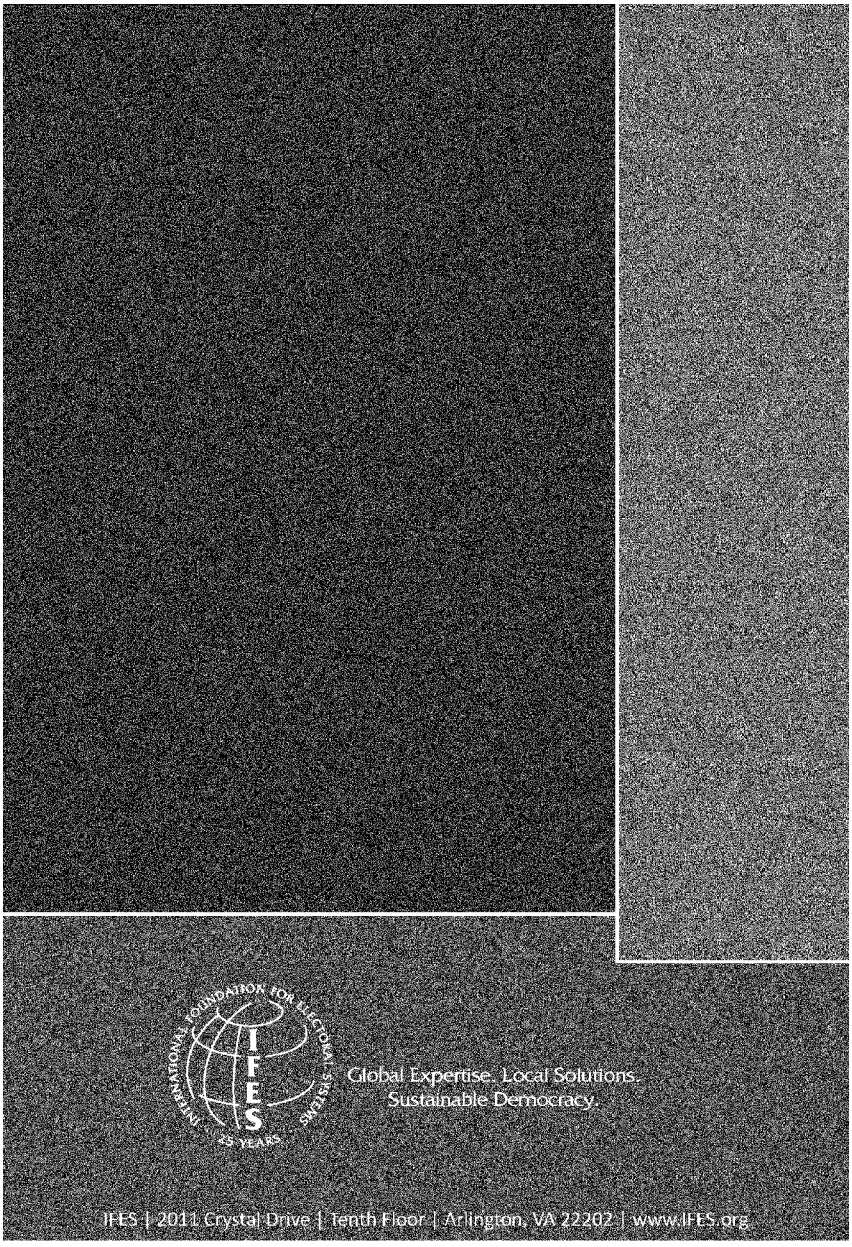
*Empowering Civil Society to Play a More Active Role*

Civil society plays an important role in the electoral cycle not only for carrying out civic and voter education activities but also for holding governments and electoral institutions accountable. Through our work with CSOs, IFES empowers citizens to drive democratic change and socioeconomic development. Part of this process includes educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, as well as the role of the government in service delivery across sectors, such as health and education. Elections in particular are an opportunity for citizens to engage in their political systems. Through civic and voter education, CSOs can reach women, youth, and other vulnerable populations to encourage informed participation in elections. To ensure that elected leaders are responsive to constituent needs, CSOs can work with citizens to make connections between political party platforms and their own priorities and create space for more constructive multi-stakeholder dialogues. With a stronger understanding of government planning and spending, citizens will also be better prepared to consolidate their priorities, mobilize around them, and advocate for greater government accountability to public interests.

**Conclusion: Renewing Our Commitment to a Democratic Africa**

In 2016 and 2017, critical elections are tentatively planned in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya and Zambia. While IFES recognizes the constraints of today's budget environment, we again respectfully recommend that the United States government prioritize electoral assistance that is locally contextualized; is inclusive of women, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, and other underrepresented groups; develops local expertise for sustainable learning and growth; and consistently invests early and throughout the electoral cycle. Such assistance will not only facilitate Sub-Saharan Africa's navigation of potentially destabilizing political, demographic and economic forces, but may prove foundational to improved development outcomes in women's empowerment, health, economic growth, climate change and food security.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for this opportunity to testify. On behalf of IFES, we are honored to partner with the U.S. government and Congress, international aid organizations, our CEPPS partners, and, of course, the people of Africa in support of a more democratic and prosperous Africa.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Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Merloe for a 5-minute opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. PATRICK MERLOE, SENIOR ASSOCIATE AND DIRECTOR OF ELECTION PROGRAMS, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE**

Mr. MERLOE. Thank you, Chairman Donovan and Ranking Member Bass. I'd like to also thank Chairman Smith for his opening remarks which demonstrate the leadership of this subcommittee in expressing the concerns of the American people for the development of democracy and honest elections in Africa.

Our time is short so I'd like to start with one thing that illustrates the points that I would like to make today. Two weeks ago I was the fortunate party to an exchange between former President Obasanjo of Nigeria and Mr. Kofi Annan, and I could summarize it more or less as follows.

It's not so much that poor elections give a bad name to democracy as it is that political violence and undemocratic practices give elections a bad name.

That quip encapsulates two of the most fundamental things about elections as far as I can see. The first is it captures the essence of elections—the two purposes that are interrelated—that they should resolve peacefully the competition for governmental office and political power. And, they should provide the citizens with the avenue, the vehicle, through which they express their will about who is going to have the authority to legitimately occupy governmental offices.

These are not easy things, particularly in countries that have less than a longstanding democratic history and that have a proclivity among the political competitors toward using political violence to achieve their goals.

We see that too often in Africa and around the world. Elections that are democratic really establish public confidence, and they also reduce and mitigate the potentials for political conflict. In that respect they help the realization of political rights of sovereign people.

They also are important for international peace and security, and both of these are vital to the interests of the American people and people around the world, which is why today's hearing I think is so important to public concern.

The second point that that quip illustrates is that elections are all about context. As you know, elections really are a barometer of the political climate in a given country as is illustrated even in our own circumstance.

Elections are multi-dimensional reflections of social and political dynamics within a country, and in that sense electoral assistance should help to infuse democratic political culture.

Three principals in electoral assistance are very important then to encapsulate. The first is inclusiveness. Political systems and electoral processes should help to guarantee universal and equal suffrage. They also should move political systems beyond winner take all politics and give the opposition, the losers, a stake in sustaining and building effective governance.

The second principle is transparency. People have a right to general elections. They also have a right to know that their elections are genuine, and that requires that there be access to key political processes, key electoral processes and the data which are generated by them, so that they can independently verify for themselves the integrity of elections.

And the third principal is accountability. There has to be, to be credible, accountability in election administration, in political competition and also in the electoral justice system so that the competitors who have a grievance have a reason to turn to peaceful redress rather than to actions that might lead to violence.

These principles reinforce the potentials for sustained and positive democratic progress. They should be signposts for our engagements. Strengthening them should be a means of evaluating our success.

In my written statement I mention three countries that illustrate how these principles have been integrated into electoral assistance in recent years.

In particular, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, and Nigeria stand out. There are many others but they are worthy of consideration. I won't mention details here, but I will be happy to go into during questions.

They each give positive examples of where U.S. support was complemented by assistance from other nations from the EU, the U.N. and others, and as my colleague from IFES mentioned, they each illustrate early targeted engagement, and they each illustrate that follow-up made a big difference.

Mr. Chairman, not all countries receive adequate funding to address the needed and pressing causes around elections. Democracy and governance funding has faced several years of cutbacks, as you well know—particularly in Africa which was reduced by more than 40 percent last year.

Those cuts have impacted the ability to respond to requests to monitor elections, to help develop civil society and political parties and to strengthen the fragile parliaments in those countries.

Hopefully, these cuts can be restored in Fiscal Year 2016 and beyond as Congress has sought to do through the omnibus appropriations bill.

Citizens across the world have been putting themselves on the line, demanding honest elections and responsible and responsive governance. They have been asking for our assistance which demonstrates that democracy is coming—the demand for it is coming—from within. It's not being imposed.

A number of cost-effective means of engagements have proven to be effective in promoting credible peaceful elections in Africa. In my written statement I identify 10 of those, and let me please highlight three this afternoon.

The first is supporting indigenous efforts to remove barriers to political participation of women, including young women, young men and disabled people and other populations.

Second is building cohorts of citizen election monitoring experts who can move across borders and through the regions, helping each other, building the impartiality and the systematic nature of election monitoring.

As was mentioned by our colleagues from USAID, parallel vote tabulations—that is, an independent verification using statistical methods of election day processes and the vote count—have been critical in reducing tensions around elections—the potential for violence, and in building public confidence in elections. That's one illustration.

But, of course, the voter registry in other areas are growingly important to verify as well.

The third is to advance principles and standards through networks of the EMBs, election monitoring organizations, political parties and others, including through open electoral data and other principles that reinforce the integrity of elections.

Constitutional issues that have been mentioned concerning the term limits, the dispersing of powers among branches of government also are important to give people stakes and to be inclusive in governance.

All of these issues are related to circumstances where power is abused, where decks are stacked, where corruption subverts government's ability to improve citizens' lives, and these turn citizens away from government toward apathy, toward authoritarianism and toward extremism.

It's therefore, in conclusion, in our common interest, to help homegrown efforts to address electoral integrity.

Mr. Chairman, among the numerous elections in Africa that are on the horizon, I would highlight five that merit further consideration perhaps in questions.

Zambia and Ghana, which have been mentioned. I'm departing on Friday for Zambia. I'm going later in the month with Mr. Kofi Annan to Ghana because of his concerns around developments in that country. Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya, where we have invested so much, where electoral violence has cost the people so much, and where these investments really can be threatened—particularly in Kenya with the crisis that's been developing.

And of course, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where in a sense a perfect political storm has been brewing, as been mentioned by my colleagues earlier.

In all of these countries, developing democratic political processes is key to achieving credible peaceful elections, and engagements that promote inclusiveness, transparency and accountability must be tailored to their context. Those principles are central for successful democracy support strategies in Africa.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Merloe follows:]

**Statement of Patrick Merloe**
**Senior Associate and Director of Electoral Programs**
**National Democratic Institute (NDI)**

**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs**
**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and International Organizations**
**"Democracy Support Strategies In Africa"**
**May 18, 2016**

Mr. Chairman, ranking member Bass, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to address pressing questions concerning effective preparations for and engagements in elections in Africa and their importance for effective democracy and governance support on the Continent. Please allow me to begin by acknowledging your leadership and the critical contributions of this Subcommittee in expressing the concerns and support of the United States on these issues.

Mr. Chairman: Democratic elections in any country are to serve two essential, inter-related functions, to:

- Resolve peacefully the competition for government office and their associated powers; and
- Provide the vehicle through which citizens express their will as to who is to have the authority to occupy those offices.

Each of those functions presents complex and difficult undertakings. This is particularly true where traditions for democratic political processes are not long-established and where there are high risks of competitors employing violence to obtain political goals. Both of these factors are frequently present in African elections and elsewhere around the globe.

When the electorate makes a free and informed choice among those given a fair chance to compete for votes, citizens not only have the opportunity to choose those whom they believe will best improve living conditions – to "make democracy deliver" – they also establish public confidence in government, which stabilizes political conflict. Support for democratic elections therefore is both a matter of respect for the political rights of sovereign people and a matter of international peace and stability. Both are vital to the interests of the American people and everyone around the world. This highlights the importance of today's hearing.

An additional overarching point is important when looking at Africa or any region. Elections are a barometer of the general political climate. We often hear that elections are essential but an insufficient condition of democracy, which is unquestionably true. The converse is also important; elections must be viewed as an essential part of broader political dynamics, not isolated from them.

To paraphrase a recent verbal exchange between former Nigerian President Obasanjo and former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan: It is not so much that poor elections give democracy a bad name as it is that political violence and undemocratic processes give elections a bad name. Put simply, the context is crucial. To be effective, assistance must address contextual factors that subvert peaceful, credible elections.

My colleagues and I have frequently spoken to you of the advantages of taking an "electoral cycle approach" when looking at democracy support. This is an important perspective. It takes us beyond seeing elections as a one-day "event" and highlights the multiple, long-term processes that begin far before election day, continue after it, and even connect up to subsequent elections. Indeed, the pre- and post-elections are critical and merit increased attention.

Democratic elections, however, cannot be adequately considered in two-dimensional representations with arrows moving around a circle. Elections are part of multi-dimensional political dynamics, drawing from them and contributing to them. All election processes therefore need to be infused with essential elements of democratic political culture.

To ensure that elections can resolve peacefully the competition for governmental office and ensure that the will of the people provides the authority and legitimacy for government, at least three principles need to be reinforced in all electoral assistance.

- Inclusiveness: To be democratic, political systems and electoral processes must be inclusive - guaranteeing universal and equal suffrage - and political systems must be moved beyond winner-take-all affairs so the opposition gets a meaningful stake in building effective governance.
- Transparency: People have a right to genuine elections and a right to know that they are genuine, and citizens and electoral contestants therefore must be allowed to see for themselves that elections are credible – which requires access to both relevant electoral processes and data for independent verification, and the political space necessary to freely disseminate the findings of such verifications without fear of persecution.
- Accountability: For elections to be credible, accountability must be established in electoral administration, political competition and electoral justice systems so that those with electoral grievances see the advantages of seeking peaceful redress over potentially violent action.

No electoral or political process can be perfect, but the degree that these principles are present and strengthened reinforces potentials for sustained and positive democratic progress. These principles should be our signposts for engagement, and strengthening them should be a means of evaluating success.

Kenya provides an example where these principles were applied in assisting a broad array of programs in the reform efforts from the 2008 electoral calamity through the 2010 constitutional referendum, reconstitution of the electoral commission, reconfiguration of the courts, building an

anti-political violence environment, and systematic citizen election monitoring around the largely peaceful and credible 2013 elections.

Longer-term electoral related assistance was woven into strengthening the broader democratic political fabric leading to Cote d'Ivoire's positive 2015 presidential electoral process, which followed its tragic 2011 electoral conflict. Longer-term, multi-dimensional assistance was also central to engagement in Nigeria's successful 2015 elections, which built from the discredited 2007 elections and advanced from the post-election violence of 2011. In each of these examples United States government assistance was complemented by assistance efforts of other countries and other electoral-related actors.

Not all countries receive adequate funding for needed preparations or support for engagement on pressing electoral issues. Democracy and governance funding has faced several years of cutbacks, particularly in Africa, which was reduced by more than 40 percent last year. Those cuts have impacted the ability to respond to requests to monitor elections, develop civil society, and strengthen fragile parliaments. Hopefully, these cuts can be restored for fiscal year 2016 and beyond as Congress has sought to do through the Omnibus appropriations bill.

African countries and their elections merit greater attention due to medium and longer term economic and security interests as well as established commitments to democracy and human rights. Moreover, citizens across the continent are putting themselves on the line by demanding honest elections and responsive governance, and they are requesting assistance. Experience in Africa confirms the urgent need for electoral support, while a number of cost-effective means of engagement have proven effective in promoting credible, peaceful elections.

Following are 10 such forms of engagement based on NDI's programs in over 40 Sub-Saharan countries and scores of African elections:

- Supporting the efforts of citizen groups, electoral authorities and legislatures to remove barriers to electoral participation of women, young women and men, people with disabilities, and other population groups.
- Helping nonpartisan civil society organizations develop sustained efforts in systematically monitoring the broad range of electoral and related political processes. Independent statistically-based monitoring of election-day processes and election results verification – commonly referred to as "parallel vote tabulations or PVTs" – decrease political volatility and potentials for violence, while they increase public confidence in elections. Credible independent audits of voter registries and other processes are of growing importance.
- Building cohorts of citizen election monitoring experts and networks of monitoring organizations across borders, regions and globally for solidarity and mutual assistance.
- Advancing norms and standards through networks of citizen election monitors, election administrators, and international observers and assistance providers, as well as through

intergovernmental organizations (including the UN, AU, regional organizations, and Open Government Partnership).

- Developing principles for election observation and credible election administration and specific tools and campaigns, such as the Open Electoral Data Initiative (OEDI), and building capacities for citizen observers, parties, election administrators and tech activists to analyze and advocate based on electoral data.
- Facilitating dialogue among electoral contestants and assisting them in developing means to curtail politically motivated violence, including its specific impact on women's participation as candidates, voters, election officials and election monitors.
- Helping political parties develop capacities to analyze legal frameworks for elections, build networks to monitor their implementation, gather fact-based information and use complaint mechanisms to redress grievances, as well as engage constructively in political party liaison committees with election commissions.
- Facilitating youth engagement programs, including young women, with political parties, civil society groups, the African Union and other entities – aimed at bringing young people and their leaders into political and electoral processes to promote citizen-centered governance and peaceful political competition.
- Developing bridges between organizations focused on peace-building, citizen election monitoring and enhancing the roles of women, election commissions, and public safety sectors to better cooperate in preventing or mitigating potentials for electoral-related violence.
- Safeguarding the free flow of electoral-related information, including accurate information about contestants' issue positions and matters concerning electoral integrity, via traditional and social media, and internet access for election monitors, contestants and media, and organizing debates and other forums that focus on quality of life issues and violence/intimidation-free elections. .

Constitutional issues relating to how many terms one person may remain in office – particularly as head of state – and issues relating to disbursing powers among branches and levels of government also merit support, as does establishing fairness and transparency in political finance and other rules of the game. All of these issues are related to circumstances where power is abused, decks are staked and corruption subverts the ability of government to improve the lives of citizens. That dynamic turns citizens away from government, while international assistance – when properly targeted – can help homegrown reformers to address those problems. It is in our common interests to take on that challenge.

While there are numerous elections on the African horizon, several where Unites States electoral assistance is a factor deserve particular mention at this juncture.

- Zambia: With the August 11 elections and constitutional referendum quickly approaching, political tensions are sharply rising from last year's closely decided snap presidential election. Incidents of ethnic related violence and ritualistic murders are

adding to concerns of electoral violence as the economy is stressed and electoral contestants expect the outcome to be very close.

- Cote d'Ivoire: November's legislative elections will test the political environment after 2015's largely positive presidential electoral process. Considerable political polarization remains following the country's 2011 conflict and long-standing ethnic and political divisions.
- Ghana: Political tensions have endured since the razor-thin 2012 presidential election and protracted court challenge. The Election Commission and courts have lost their traditional high levels of public confidence, particularly among some sectors of the population. Controversy over the voter registry is raising tensions, causing concerns that electoral crisis and violence could mar the November 7 elections.
- Kenya: Though the 2013 elections were largely peaceful and credible, the election commission's presidential result and Supreme Court's decision to uphold it remain a subject of controversy. There is an active campaign to remove the commission in advance of the March 9, 2017 elections, and political tensions are high. Many observers express concern that the 2017 elections face a higher risk of violence than the 2013 polls.
- Democratic Republic of Congo: The announcement that a voter registry cannot be produced and therefore elections cannot be organized before the incumbent president's term of office expires in November, and the Constitutional Court's ruling that he may remain in power until elections are held and a successor put in place, escalates political crisis and the potentials for violence.

Engagement with electoral authorities, political contestants and civil society in Zambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Kenya contributed significantly to the positive nature of the immediate past elections in each of those countries. Ongoing relationships that span nearly three decades in those places provide foundations for effective engagement as the next elections approach.

Ghana provides an example where international attention to help promote credible, peaceful elections should be increased. The country is rightly held out as a positive political development example, but actors across the electoral spectrum there are calling for international engagement. It is an example where focused attention can help maintain a stable anchor in an important region. That opportunity was missed in the lead-up to Kenya's 2007 elections.

A similar case can be made for attention needed for the upcoming elections in Zambia, Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya. The DRC presents a particularly difficult set of circumstances in light of its lack of positive electoral precedent, its risk of political violence and the complexities of its situation. In all of these countries, developing a democratic political process is the key to achieving credible, peaceful elections. Engagements that promote inclusiveness, transparency and accountability must be tailored to their contexts, though the principles are central for successful democracy support strategies in Africa.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Merloe.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Tomaszewski for a 5-minute opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. JOHN TOMASZEWSKI, ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA, INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE**

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Bass, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today on effective democracy assistance on the African continent.

IRI currently works in 14 sub-Saharan African countries with grants from USAID, State Department, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

IRI is also a partner of the CEPPS consortium, which you've heard about today. As a former country director for IRI's Kenya office and a deputy country director in South Sudan and Egypt, I've seen firsthand the impact of democracy assistance. Direct impact.

Mr. Chairman, Africans today are largely committed to democracy over other forms of government. According to a 2014 analysis, Biafra barometer, 7 in 10 Africans prefer democracy and a proportion of those rejecting alternatives rose steadily over the past decade.

African nations that remain undemocratic grappled with protracted conflict, transnational migration, corruption and leaders who, despite the outward appearance of being democratic, maintain their hold on power to the detriment of their population.

We must fully appreciate the link between failures of governance, refugee flows and the draw of extremist groups like ISIS, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram across the continent. A secure and stable Africa is of paramount national security to the United States.

The development of functional and institutionalized democratic systems is the only way to ensure that in the long term African countries will be equipped to meet the needs and expectations of their rapidly growing populations.

Nigeria, for example—and it's an example we've talked a lot about today—is of great strategic importance to the United States. The country's 2015 elections are a good case study indeed for effective U.S. democracy assistance.

Since Nigeria's 1999 return to citizen rule, IRI and its CEPPS partners have implemented DRG programs to strengthen capacity of the ruling and opposition parties, election management bodies, civil society, the media and, most importantly, the voters.

In the end, and despite some of its shortcomings, the election resulted in the peaceful handover of power from the incumbent President Jonathan to the now-President Buhari.

Mr. Chairman, the importance of this outcome for Africa's most populous country cannot be overstated. This peaceful transfer of power was not the result of a single election but a series of regular and sustained electoral contests for President that enabled the system to mature and become more democratic over time.

U.S. assistance through IRI, NDI, IFES, and our local partners has made a significant contribution to this successful outcome.

Mr. Chairman, in spite of these successful programs, however, the environment in which we operate—our organizations—includ-

ing the political and operating context, funding levels and administrative landscape presents substantial challenges.

Our experience shows that DRG funding for Africa ramps up in advance of elections. Of IRI's current USAID and State Department funded programs in Africa, 80 percent focus substantially on support to electoral processes.

In each case, funding for the inner electoral period is uncertain. Elections are seminal events indeed in democratic societies, and we must recognize that fundamental democratic deficits in political systems lie in the day-to-day business of governments and their relationships with citizens between elections.

Where democracy assistance is limited to electoral processes, the funding often becomes available to implementers late in the pre-election period. For instance, in Tanzania the CEPPS partnership received funding in June 2015, only 5 months prior to the October 2015 elections.

Similarly, in Uganda, where we've just had a very interesting election, the CEPPS partners received funding in late May 2015 for February 2016 elections. In both cases, DRG support in the post-election period has not yet been determined, though it is critically needed for both countries, I think we would all agree.

Furthermore, over the last few years, IRI has experienced first-hand the realities of a challenging funding landscape. DRG programs account for only 4.7 percent of overall foreign assistance.

Total U.S. Government support for DRG programs has been on the decline, falling by 38 percent between 2009 and 2015, with Africa receiving a 44 percent cut during that period, according to an analysis by InterAction.

At this important juncture in Africa's development, now is the time to reinforce our commitment to resilient democracies by funding DRG programs at robust levels.

Finally, and this is something that's been commented on already, selecting the appropriate procurement mechanism for DRG awards is an essential component to achieving impactful sustainable results.

USAID has released a revised ADS Chapter 304 and we understand we'll be providing USAID employees with amplifying guidance on the applicability of ADS 304 to DRG awards.

We commend USAID for taking this action and urge that USAID Missions implement the new regulations as intended and that both USAID and Congress conduct applicable oversight.

Mr. Chairman, in his historic 1982 Westminster speech—and I have to talk about President Reagan—and at the height of the Cold War, President Ronald Reagan said of democracies, "Day by day, democracy is proving itself to be a not at all fragile flower."

I share President Reagan's optimism that with effective U.S. assistance, IRI and its partners, can have a large impact in consolidating democracy in Africa.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tomaszewski follows:]

Congressional Testimony

# Democracy Support Strategies in Africa

Testimony by John Tomaszewski
Acting Regional Director for Africa
International Republican Institute

U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
May 18, 2016

**Introduction**

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the most effective preparations for and interventions in African elections, and how the US government can be more effective in supporting democracy and governance on the continent.

Established in April 1983, IRI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to advancing freedom and democracy worldwide by helping political parties to become more issue-based and responsive, assisting citizens to participate in government planning, and working to increase the role of marginalized groups in the political process – including women and youth. IRI has conducted programs in more than 100 countries and, along with our Women's Democracy Network (WDN) and Arab Women's Leadership Institute (AWLI), is currently active in more than 85 countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, IRI works in the Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Principe, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Several initiatives complement IRI's work in Africa, including Generation Democracy and WDN, our global programs to increase youth and women political participation, and IRI's newly established centers of excellence – the Center for Applied Learning and Global Initiatives and the Center for Insights in Survey Research. IRI's work in Africa also benefits from its diverse International Advisory Council (IAC), which includes African luminaries Mo Ibrahim, founder of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, and John Kufuor, president of Ghana (2001-2009), and renowned US development professionals such as Paula J. Dobriansky, former undersecretary of state for Democracy and Global Affairs (2001-2009).

Additionally, IRI is a member of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS). Established in 1995, CEPPS pools the expertise of the three organizations represented here today – IRI, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The Consortium also includes the American Bar Association's Rule of Law Initiative, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Internews, and Search for Common Ground among others. CEPPS differs from many development actors by maintaining long-term relationships with political parties, election management bodies, parliaments, civil society organizations and democracy activists.

**Democracy and Elections in Africa**

Africa is a continent on the move. It has posted impressive economic growth numbers in recent years with the GDP of the 11 largest sub-Saharan countries, according to Bloomberg data, growing by 51 percent over the last decade. This is more than twice the expansion rate of the global economy at 23 percent and almost four times the US economy at 13 percent. Many of Africa's economies are striving to diversify and thus become less dependent on foreign aid and single commodity exports. Technological innovation has connected Africans

like never before, improved agriculture and energy production, and enhanced government service delivery. Reduced infant mortality rates, stronger health care systems, successful vaccination campaigns, and sustained fertility rates have contributed to Africa boasting the youngest population on the planet. According to UNFPA, the UN's population division, half of its residents are under the age of 19 and Africa's population will continue to grow for some time, accounting for half the world's population and a workforce of one billion people by 2050. Sub-Saharan Africa's economy stands to benefit from a potential demographic dividend of $500 billion per year (equal to one-third of the continent's GDP) for up to 30 years.

On balance with this positive news are some worrying trends. In several sub-Saharan African countries, we have recently seen presidents and their ruling parties benefit from either their overwhelming majorities in parliament or tight control of the political system and security apparatus to ensure that elections result in an extension of presidential terms well beyond their original mandate. While there have been recent historic and peaceful transfers of power in countries like Nigeria, current trends are worrying. They point to an uptick in cases of so called "third-termers" exceeding their original two-term mandate, like in Burundi and Congo-Brazzaville, and longer-term (or "lifetime presidents") in countries like Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea. Matters of insecurity are also a persistent threat to the democratic space in several countries. Terrorist attacks in countries like Kenya and Mali, the rise of foreign and homegrown extremist groups in places like Nigeria and Somalia, and internal conflicts on the continent like in South Sudan, create serious challenges to often fragile democratic institutions. African governments increasingly respond to these security challenges by imposing strong and often anti-democratic laws that undermine the very freedoms of the people the laws intend to protect. One major consequence is a closing of space for critical elements of a healthy democracy, like civil society, opposition political parties, and independent news media. In fact, in recent years Freedom House's annual rankings of political rights and civil liberties, *Freedom in the World*, has shown a downward trend in the number of sub-Saharan African countries rated as "Free" or "Partly Free." In 1990, 40 percent of countries met this designation, which peaked at 67 percent in 2000. As of 2014, sub-Saharan African countries considered "Free" or "Partly Free" contracted to 59 percent.

Despite these challenges and negative trends, Africans remain committed to democracy over other forms of government. According to a 2014 analysis of citizen attitude surveys conducted by Afrobarometer in 34 countries, seven in ten Africans prefer democracy, and the proportion of those rejecting alternatives rose steadily over the past decade. A significant development in recent decades is that elections, not coups, have become the standard way in which African leaders take power. While the quality and integrity of some elections are questionable, many countries' regular elections are largely free, fair, and considered democratic by international standards. Africans think so as well. According to Afrobarometer, seven in 10 African citizens across 28 countries view their elections as "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems." Also of note is the rate by which Africans, particularly young Africans, participate in elections, which is often much higher than in the West – at least 25 sub-Saharan African countries recorded voter turnouts of over 50 percent in their last election.

On March 20, of this year, Africans experienced their own version of Super Tuesday. Dubbed "Super Sunday," millions of voters across the sub-continent headed to the polls in six countries - Benin, Cape Verde, Congo-Brazzaville, Niger, Zanzibar, and Senegal - for key elections. Notable was Benin, where incumbent president Thomas Boni Yayi did not attempt to serve beyond his original mandate resulting in a new president for the country. This was not the case, however, in Congo-Brazzaville, where two-term President Denis Sassou Nguesso ran and won a third term following a controversial constitutional referendum. Also on Super Sunday was a divisive presidential vote in Niger, where incumbent President Mahamadou Issoufou won a second term under a boycott by the leading opposition candidate who made it to the second round of elections despite spending most of the campaign period in jail. A similar opposition boycott occurred in Zanzibar, where the main opposition party refused to participate in a re-run of the October 2015 elections that the Zanzibar Election Commission canceled to avoid what many believe would have been an opposition victory.

Recent elections also returned to power two long-serving African presidents, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Mbasogo – who have served as their nation's president since 1986 and 1979 respectively. Currently five African heads of state have been ruling their countries for 20 years or more. Looking ahead to the rest of 2016 and 2017, we expect important presidential elections in Ghana, the Gambia, and Kenya. Africa watchers are also keenly monitoring developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo where delays of presidential elections, last occurring in 2011, continue despite the fact that President Joseph Kabila will reach his presidential term limit in December 2016. Increasing protests regarding the timing and conduct of presidential elections, suppression of opposition figures, and closing civic space are concerning developments over the last twelve months. The situation in DRC affects the rest of the continent by virtue of its landmass and economic and political importance to the Great Lakes region.

The recent relative progress of regular, credible elections in important countries should not distract us from the immense work that remains to support the maturation and institutionalization of Africa's democracies. The West too often generalizes the success of democracy in Africa by the way in which countries conduct elections and transfer power. These are flawed and incomplete metrics. Democracies require much more than simply elections, and in fact, what happens between election years is arguably the most important indicator of democratic success.

**The Importance of Electoral Support**

While citizen understanding of democracy and the degree to which they apply democratic principles may differ from country to country, elections are a consistent feature in democracies and are the most tangible democratic act. When conducted regularly in a multiparty system, elections serve to institutionalize democratic norms by rewarding responsive and accountable governance by re-electing incumbents and sending poor performers home. There are several countries on the African continent where regular presidential and parliamentary elections occur, but their outcomes do not reflect the

democratic nature of the process. This often raises a question as to why the US government should provide assistance to an election process or system that is potentially unfair, less than free, and certainly not transparent, In other words, why do we support undemocratic elections?

The metrics of success for elections and election assistance unfortunately too often focus on the election outcome rather than on the impact that the practice has on the people within the political system. The regular practice of elections further inculcates democratic values by systematically activating ordinary people to participate in the democratic process. This collective effort to participate in the democratic exercise of elections ensures that the pursuit of democracy, no matter how messy or abhorrent, occurs uninterrupted. The role of international organizations like IRI in partnership with its donors, therefore, is to support and strengthen as best we can all actors in the democratic space. The desired change from elections assistance is not regime change as some of our detractors may claim, but rather helping our partners achieve governments elected through a free, fair, and transparent process. In many cases, the road to democracy is a marathon, not a sprint. Credible elections may not happen on the first, second or even the fifth attempt; but, as citizens become familiar with the act of voting, scrutinize the qualifications of candidates, connect the dots between government performance and elected leaders, and take ownership of and protect their right to vote, progress toward the institutionalization and maturation of democracy is undeniable.

The absence of regular and democratic elections provides an opening for increased political repression, citizen discontent, politically motivated violence and the pursuit of alternative means for selecting leaders – including regime change through coup d'états. In its *Freedom in the World 2015* report, Freedom House concludes, "antidemocratic practices lead to civil war and humanitarian crisis. They encourage the growth of terrorist movements, whose effects inevitably spread beyond national borders." The instability bred by politically repressive regimes in a region of strategic importance to the United States reinforces the interconnectedness of democracy assistance and US national security priorities.

Nigeria's 2015 elections are a good case study for effective U.S. democracy assistance. Since Nigeria's 1999 return to citizen rule, IRI and its CEPPS partners have implemented DRG programs, strengthening numerous actors in political and electoral processes, including the ruling and opposition parties, election management bodies, civil society, the media and, most importantly, voters. While presidential elections had been held three times prior, the selection of Nigeria's head of state was typically a negotiated settlement by elites within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) more than a competitive process arbitrated by the ballot box on Election Day. As the 2015 elections approached, and after 16 years in power, PDP faced a real challenge from the opposition alliance, the All Progressives Congress (APC). Speculation was rampant as to the lengths incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and PDP would take to hold on to power. In the end, Nigeria's March 2015 election, despite its shortcomings, resulted in the peaceful handover of power from incumbent President Jonathan to APC's Muhammadu Buhari. The importance of this outcome for Africa's most populous country cannot be overstated. Importantly, this peaceful transfer of power was not the result of a single election, but a series of regular and sustained electoral contests for president that enabled the system to mature and become more democratic over time. US

assistance and the CEPPS partners had an important role to play. One can ask, what would have been the outcome had IRI not provided APC, PDP, and other Nigerian political parties with years of political party strengthening support? What if the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC) had not received critical technical assistance from IFES, or if domestic observers and civil society had not received capacity building and support from NDI? Though we can never know the counter-factual, we can say with some certainty that the level, quality, and peaceful nature of the participation of various stakeholders would have been different.

**Our Approach to DRG Programming Works**

As a former country director for IRI's Kenya and East Africa programs, and former deputy country director for our programs in Egypt and South Sudan, I have personally worked in several of IRI's current and former program countries on the sub-continent, including Burundi, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somaliland, Tanzania, and Uganda. I can speak firsthand about the impact IRI programs have made with the generous support of the American taxpayer through, among others, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy and the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL). This assistance has helped fellow champions of democracy in these countries – whether from civil society, political parties or government – to hone their skills and ensure that the democratic system of government in their respective countries continues to progress. Furthermore, this work has assisted US foreign policy interests by making sure that vulnerable populations are aware of and exercise the democratic process as a viable alternative to violence, conflict, or authoritarianism.

At its core, DRG programming deals with political processes and political actors who have political motivations. As such, at the center of our approach is the development and maintenance of long-term relationships with government, political party and civil society stakeholders from the grassroots to the national level. We also invest in staff members who are both well-versed in the history and culture of the countries they work in and have extensive personal political experience to draw on in their assistance to our partners. Organizations like IRI, NDI and the other CEPPS partners have decades of experience thinking and working politically in dynamic and complex environments that require flexibility and the ability to provide our partners with advice and guidance that is adaptive to changing daily realities. With this long-term and comprehensive view toward DRG programming, we do not view our programs as simply a definitive set of deliverables, and we do not see the democratic processes as the collection of isolated components.

Where our entree into a country is often through elections, as was recently the case in the Central African Republic (CAR), IRI takes a proactive approach to rapidly starting operations and meeting emerging needs in coordination with our USG partners. For example, CAR's December 30, 2015, first round of national elections experienced significant logistical and administrative shortcomings that required immediate attention ahead of the second round of presidential elections and repeat legislative elections on February 14, 2016. At the request of the US Embassy, IRI identified critical needs of the National Elections Agency (ANE) to address through high-impact, short-term, and low-dollar interventions. This included

updating and launching the ANE's website so that election results could be posted and accessible to the public – enabling a level of transparency not available in the first round. In the days following the February 14 elections, more than 40,000 users visited the ANE website, an impressive feat considering CAR's limited internet penetration. IRI's local partners in Bangui further disseminated electoral information to their grassroots networks via SMS and other low-tech means.

Programming for the ANE complemented IRI's ongoing voter education efforts, which included live voter education events, broadcast nationwide by local radio partners, for Central African communities in most need of voter information, including in IDP camps and Bangui's PK5 – the predominantly Muslim neighborhood that has been at the center of the sectarian violence committed in CAR over the last year. The voter education and conflict mitigation programming provided by the CAR Elections Consortium, led by IRI with partners Internews and Mercy Corps funded by the U.S. Department of State, was among the limited financial and technical support for elections provided to CAR by the international community. We supported conflict-weary Central Africans to vote in five generally peaceful electoral processes in five months (the last occurring this past weekend) that ushered in a post-transition government for their country.

In Uganda, IRI has supported political party strengthening programs for more than a decade. External evaluations of IRI's work around the 2011 Ugandan elections conveyed the impact of IRI's assistance, citing evidence that IRI's program strengthened the environment for peaceful political competition, increased the organizational capacity of parties, improved constituent relations by parties, and increased Ugandans' confidence in their electoral system. IRI continued this work ahead of the 2016 elections by conducting coalition building and candidate training initiatives and providing technical assistance to the Free and Fair Election Campaign, a launching point for opposition party leaders to collaborate. While many challenges to Uganda's democratic development persist, opposition parties were the most unified they have ever been, uniting under The Democratic Alliance, to contest Uganda's February elections earlier this year.

As discussed previously, elections are only one piece of the democratic process. In the inter-election period, IRI often focuses its attention to working with elected officials to fulfill their roles in national legislatures and local governments and with civil society to advocate for citizen priorities and conduct government oversight. Effective local representation, vibrant civil society and accountable local leaders ensure that citizens remain connected to their government and do not seek out alternative, and possibly destructive, means to have their voices heard. IRI employs a hands-on, learn-by-doing approach that provides elected officials with replicable models for citizen engagement, service delivery, and policy development. For example, in Mali IRI worked with mayors in all eight regions of the country to systematically assess their five-year terms in office and help them communicate their efforts and results to their constituents. Citizens attended IRI-sponsored Restitution Days, where mayors presented the results of their end-of-term assessments and citizens asked questions and raised issues with their local elected officials. For many Malian citizens, this was their first ever interaction with their local government officials. Because of IRI's support, mayors reported an increase in citizen willingness to pay taxes, with one mayor reporting a

10 percent increase in tax revenue after Restitution Day. Furthermore, this engagement between citizens and their local leaders will better prepare them for when long-awaited local government elections finally occur.

In Somaliland, the self-declared independent but not internationally recognized territory in north-west Somalia, IRI supported the development of two issue-based caucuses in the House of Representatives from 2010-2014. Prior to the work of these caucuses, Somaliland's parliament could have been characterized as a "rubber stamp" for legislation drafted and promoted by the Executive. The lower house had little capacity for legislative research, drafting or debate, and lacked the ability to coalesce members around policy issues. Through a systematic program, IRI supported caucus members to conduct field visits to identify policy issues and ideas for addressing them, to gather feedback from citizens, and work in coordination with civil society to draft legislation. The House of Representatives passed the first of six bills drafted by IRI-supported caucuses – the Wildlife and Forestry Act - on January 5, 2015. Just last week, almost two years since the close of our program, we received word that the Health Caucus IRI helped initiate is preparing to officially submit an HIV/AIDS bill for parliamentary debate and passage after holding 45 working group meetings to discuss and prepare the legislation. As Somaliland moves toward elections next year, legislative committees and caucuses will be prepared to engage in review and debate of the existing electoral law. Americans are keenly aware of the need for stability and democracy in Somalia, the world's most notorious failed state. In other parts of the world, we see extremist groups taking advantage of power vacuums, and this has been the case with *al Shabaab* in Somalia for some time. As we have seen with Somaliland, which can be characterized as one of the most stable places in the Horn of Africa, citizens do not feel the need to join extremist groups or engage in violent confrontation when their needs are met and priorities addressed through democratic governance systems.

**Challenging Environment for DRG Programming in Africa**

Despite the good work that organizations like IRI and our CEPPS partners conduct around the world year after year, the environment we work in – concerning the political and operating context, funding levels and administrative landscape – continues to present substantial challenges.

Across the continent, citizens are more aware of their rights and the actions of their governments, newly adopted constitutions – including Kenya's 2010 constitution – are among the most progressive in the world, and women are serving in the highest offices of their countries and at impressive rates relative to advanced democracies. Rwanda boasts the highest level of women's representation in parliament in the world, at 68 percent, and seven African women have served as elected and appointed heads of state – notably including Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the Central African Republic's Catherine Samba-Panza. While there have been significant gains for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa since the independence movements of the 20th century, those that remain undemocratic are among the toughest and most fragile nations in the world. They grapple with protracted conflict, transnational migration, corruption, and leaders who, despite the outward appearance of being democratic, maintain their hold on power to the detriment of their people. It is in these high-risk and rapidly evolving environments that the flexibility, expertise and political

acumen of the democracy and governance practitioners at organizations like IRI are imperative.

*Inconsistent Funding Across Electoral Cycle*

IRI understands that elections are significant events in democratic societies. We also recognize that the fundamental democratic deficits in political systems lie in the day-to-day business of governments and their relationships with citizens and civil society. Authoritarian regimes rarely steal elections on Election Day; instead, they find more success manipulating the process in their favor in the years and months leading up to elections. Institutional weaknesses, an uninformed and disengaged citizenry, an uneven playing field for competition and repression of opposition groups contribute to this phenomenon.

Our experience shows that DRG funding for Africa ramps up in advance of elections. Of IRI's current USAID and State Department-funded programs in Africa, 80 percent focus substantially on support to electoral processes. In each case, funding for the inter-election period is uncertain. This is natural in a funding environment that is reactionary and event-focused. However, the democratic processes that occur between elections provide citizens with the benefits of democracy – equitable and responsive service delivery, the ability to pursue and advocate for individual interests and ideas, and engage in a two-way relationship with their government. When citizens understand the value of democracy to their daily lives, they are more inclined to defend their democracies against electoral and constitutional manipulation, corruption, extremist groups, and external threats. Long-term and consistent support for the development of strong institutions broadly bolsters government capacity to administer all democratic processes, including elections, and enables civil society and citizens to conduct effective oversight of government performance.

Where democracy assistance is limited to electoral processes, the funding often becomes available to implementers late in the pre-election period, and is rarely sufficient in scale. Just this year, the CEPPS partners mobilized elections programs with only a few months to work ahead of elections. For example, in Tanzania, CEPPS received funding in June 2015, only five months prior to the October elections, to provide support to traditional and new media coverage of elections, conduct voter education, and coordinate domestic observation. Similarly in Uganda, a country with historically controversial elections, the CEPPS partners received funding to minimize voter disenfranchisement in elections, improve electoral oversight and conduct civic education in late May 2015 for February 2016 elections. In both cases, DRG support in the post-election period has not yet been determined, though it is critically needed. Recent history in Uganda and Tanzania highlight this need. Last week Uganda's President Museveni was inaugurated to his fifth term. US, European Union and Canadian representatives walked out during the inauguration festivities also attended by Sudan's Omar al-Bashir and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe. One day later, Ugandan opposition leader Kizza Besigye, who the government has detained regularly in recent months, was charged with treason. In Tanzania, growing democratic deficits – highlighted by the annulment of the October 2015 election results in Zanzibar and the March 2016 re-run – led the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to suspend development of its $472 million compact with the government. The occurrence of elections does not solely make democratic

societies, and the deep-seeded challenges to democracy in Africa must be addressed through sustained, long-term investment in DRG programs.

*Overall Decline in DRG Funding for Africa*

Over the last few years, IRI has experienced firsthand the realities of a challenging funding landscape. Support for DRG programs is a relatively small piece of the overall State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs budget; in FY16, DRG budget allocations accounted for only 4.7 percent ($2.48 billion) of the total foreign assistance ($52.68 billion) budget. Further, US government support for DRG programs fell by 38 percent between 2009 and 2015. Devex reports that approximately 20 percent of the reduction in DRG funding "has simply been lost to other priorities." In Africa, the reduction is even starker, with actual DRG funding cut by 44 percent between 2010 and 2015, according to an analysis by InterAction. During this important juncture in Africa's development, now is the time to reinforce our commitment to resilient democracies in Africa by funding democracy assistance programs at robust levels.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend you and the honorable members of this Committee for holding this hearing today and for giving me the opportunity to discuss the importance of DRG programming in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is as critical a time as ever to ensure that democracy takes root so that African nations remain important economic and security partners to the United States. As we look to the future of DRG support, I would like to take the opportunity to make the following recommendations:

- While support for elections is an important element of US government assistance to Africa, this assistance must be part of a broader DRG strategy characterized by a sustained funding commitment. Where the US provides elections support, funding must be allocated and dispersed in a timely manner to provide implementers and their programs sufficient time to achieve intended results.
- DRG support must be given with the understanding that the institutionalization of democracy is a long-term objective. There will be setbacks and missteps. It is during these times that agile, consistent, and even amplified support is most critical. We must be prepared to invest in democracy in Africa and in those practitioners who have the relationships, experience, and expertise to navigate dynamic political and operating environments.
- For DRG programs to ultimately have their intended impact, USAID must recognize that these programs are inherently different from other forms of assistance in other sectors, including health, education, and economic development. Support to political processes and actors must account for changing contexts, individual motivations and incentives, varying capacity levels and embrace their *political* nature.
- Selecting the appropriate procurement mechanism for DRG awards is an essential component to achieve impactful, sustainable results. Congress weighed in on this in the FY16 Consolidated Appropriations Act when it legislated that USAID shall implement civil society and political competition and consensus building programs abroad in a manner that recognizes the unique benefits of grants and cooperative agreements. USAID has

released a revised ADS Chapter 304 and we understand will be providing USAID employees with Amplifying Guidance on the applicability of ADS 304 to DRG awards. These documents provide needed clarification as to the criteria and process for choice of instrument decisions to ensure that USAID Missions choose the most appropriate mechanism for DRG programs. We commend USAID for taking action on this, and urge that USAID Missions implement the new regulations as intended, and that both USAID and Congress conduct strict oversight.

- Relatedly, we are concerned with an apparent trend in Africa for USAID to fund select traditional DRG projects through large pre-competed – primarily acquisition – mechanisms that are primarily focused on other development sectors such as infrastructure and food safety/poverty reduction initiatives. The effect appears to be fewer stand-alone traditional DRG projects, as well as limited opportunities for mission-driven NGO implementers, who have long-lasting relationships in challenging operating environments and are experts in adapting to dynamic political environments, from competitively applying for such funding opportunities.
- We must fully appreciate the link between failures of governance, refugee flows, and the draw of extremist groups like ISIS, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram across the continent. A secure and stable Africa is of paramount importance to the United States and our European allies. The development of functional and institutionalized democratic systems is the only way to ensure that, in the long term, African countries will be equipped to meet the needs and expectations of their rapidly growing citizenry, particularly as Africa's youth, born in the post-independence era, come of age and seek the economic opportunities, political freedoms and human rights offered in other parts of the world.

Democracy and governance programs are essential, and have never been more important in sub-Saharan Africa. Now is not the time to relent in our support to those on the continent who seek democracy over authoritarian rule. In his historic Westminster Speech to Members of the British Parliament on June 8, 1982, President Reagan said of democracies at the time: "Optimism comes less easily today, not because democracy is less vigorous, but because democracy's enemies have refined their instruments of repression. Yet optimism is in order, because day by day democracy is proving itself to be a not-at-all-fragile flower." President Reagan's words are still relevant today, especially in the case of many young African democracies, which continue to work toward transparent, accountable, and democratic political systems.

Thank you.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Tomaszewski.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Akuetteh for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. NII AKUETTEH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE AFRICAN IMMIGRANT CAUCUS**

Mr. AKUETTEH. Thank you very much, Chairman Donovan and Ranking Member Bass. I really appreciate not just being included in this panel but as always for all the work that this committee and subcommittee does.

This time, particularly, I'm extremely happy for two reasons—because of the focus on democracy and U.S. democracy assistance programs in Africa it's very dear to my heart and, of course, I have been included to talk a little bit more about the country where I was born—Ghana.

Now, Ghana has enjoyed a lot of kudos and praise, particularly when it comes to elections and turning over power peacefully to parties that are out of power who win elections and I think those kudos are well earned.

The question that has been raised, especially when it's been mentioned that DRG programs have been cut, is that there have been times when the thinking is that Ghana does a good job and therefore U.S. assistance should focus on more challenged countries on the continent.

It is true there are countries that are not doing as good a job. But I am here to make the case why attention should not be shifted from Ghana and where it has been shifted it should be refocused back particularly for the upcoming elections which happen a day before the U.S. elections in November. Ghana votes on November 7.

And there are a couple of reasons that I want to cite. In my own lifetime, I have seen political violence in Ghana in the early 1960s and 1970s and therefore nobody should think that electoral political violence Ghana is immune to those. They are not.

What will make them immune is good processes and transparency. Now, when it comes to what are the actual reasons for focusing and looking at Ghana now, which is what I was asked to address, I focus on five reasons.

President Clinton visited Ghana. So did President Bush and then, of course, President Obama visited Ghana. All of these point to the fact that Ghana and the U.S. now are friendly countries and therefore I think supporting elections in Ghana I would cite as something that friends with capacity help other friends do.

Secondly, Ghana does enjoy sort of immortal status in Africa on a few issues, from independence but also on holding elections and therefore it seems to me that whatever gains Ghana has made when it is assisted to maintain those gains the news spreads in Africa.

Other African countries do look at Ghana and therefore supporting Ghana's electoral processes will be a way for the U.S. to spread the word for democracy across the continent.

But there is another reason why. The previous elections in Ghana and what has been called the Fourth Republic, which started in 1992, 24 years ago, there have been six elections.

The one in November will be number seven. All six have been peaceful pretty much and power has been turned over to the party out of power on two occasions.

However, those have been very close elections and they have been disputed. Now, at the time they were called free and fair elections. We have had some instances where American experts have gone back, looked at some of the things and said well, maybe we missed this or that and therefore there is a strong case for making sure that now we look at the elections closely and don't miss any weaknesses that might be there.

A further reason is that 6 months away from Ghana's election if you look at what is happening on the ground now, there is heated campaigning. There are even people who have already said and have even complained to units like USAID offices and the Embassy that look, if things don't go well there might be violence.

Given that that has been said and given that Ghana has known political violence in its history this adds to the argument for saying that despite the reduction of looking at Ghana because of good elections this particular election needs assistance and attention from the United States. And the final argument that I make is this. The shifting resources and attention from Ghana to other African countries can be justified when they have greater needs. But another way of looking at it is that it is important to stay with Ghana and provide assistance in order to protect the investment and the gains that have already been made. So that is a final argument for that.

Now, I also took the liberty of suggesting a few ways for improving electoral assistance in Ghana. My colleague mentioned how late sometimes the funding comes. In my work in west Africa in promoting democracy we actually made the point that watching elections and balloting is important. But Ghana, for instance, has a 4-year cycle.

A lot of things happen before and after the balloting and therefore a key recommendation is projects have to be designed and have to be included in budgets to make sure that there are things being done both before and after elections, sometimes years before.

If you look at how elections are compromised in different countries including African ones, those who compromise elections are getting smarter by the day. So they don't steal the elections. They don't stuff the ballots so much. They can do things before we arrive at the elections. So it means that electoral programs should also be done during periods and looking at the processes before we actually vote.

And the final recommendation I will make, when you look at Ghana there are a number of competent NGOs and many of them are run by people who are friends of mine.

But I do think that the assistance to NGOs in Ghana needs to be diversified so that only a few favorite NGOs do not get all the assistance. Earlier, when the first panel discussed their submissions I noticed they talk about both IRI and NDI doing democracy work. I think that kind of ideological balance is also needed in countries including Ghana.

And I thank you again for doing this hearing on democracy including Ghana and inviting my views. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Akuetteh follows:]

# "SAFEGUARDING A FRIENDLY AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC BEACON: WHY & HOW THE US MUST ASSIST GHANA'S 2016 ELECTION"

Written Testimony of Mr. Nii Akuetteh
(Executive Director of AIC, the African Immigrant Caucus)

Prepared For A Hearing Entitled

**"DEMOCRACY SUPPORT STRATEGIES IN AFRICA"**

Before
The Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

In

2172 Rayburn House Office Building

WASHINGTON DC

On

WEDNESDAY May 18, 2016

*I: Introduction*

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, other members of the Africa SubCommittee: As always I am deeply grateful. Please know that it is not just me. Every time I express appreciation for the moral and material help that you--assisted by brilliant, hard-working and gracious staff—continue to give to Africa, I am plugged into the sentiments of speak for hundreds of millions.

Today, there is more. The personal gratitude is special. The focus of this hearing is the reason. Yes, every single Africa-impacted issue that you have ever worked on, every single hearing that you hold, is vitally important, a matter of life and death. Still, I believe that democracy in Africa is simply foundational and instrumental. It has its own innate value because it guarantees that Africans are governed only with their consent and only in a dignified, respectful manner. In addition, democracy is also the best system for responding to Africa's many other challenges effectively and sustainably. Put another way, I believe strongly and deeply that Africa will significant and sustainable progress only when it embraces, deepens and prioritizes democracy.

I am acutely aware that this is a controversial, even contrarian, viewpoint. A handful of current strongmen in Africa, for example, would beg to differ. But it is not just Africa. As African voters and citizens have demonstrated time after time, they want to hire and fire those who govern them. Most of the strongmen are supported by powerful outside entities and groups who should—and do--know better. It is in this environment that I am very happy that this hearing is examining how to improve US democracy efforts in Africa.

Naturally, I am even happier that you are examining why and how Ghana, my birth-place, might be assisted to protect its democratic gains in the up-coming elections. Of course I am both flattered and humbled that you have solicited my thoughts. Thank you

*II: Political rivalry and violence in Ghana: a truncated short history*

Mr. Chairman, in this Hearing, my core message is simple: The US will serve its interest by boosting its support and closely monitoring Ghana's current electioneering campaign which will culminate in the November 7 ballot for president and parliamentarians.

I will make my case in two main segments. One will lay out the reasons this must be done; the other will be recommendations of how.

Before either though, brief comments about some past elections and political violence in Ghana may be illuminating. The November 7 2016 elections will be general election number 7 under Ghana's Fourth Republic. That Republic kicked off in 1992 when military ruler J. J. Rawlings got a new constitution written and adopted and elections held. Two rival political parties—NPP and NDC—have dominated in the ensuing 14 years, even though countless small, vanity parties keep springing up and withering. The NDC is the party that resulted when Mr. Rawlings transformed the PNDC (the body through which he had governed militarily since he seized power at the end of

1981). To a great extent the NPP too is the light transformation and renaming of a preexisting political party and movement. An earlier incarnation had been UP, the right-of-center United Party, which had fiercely battled Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his socialist CPP in the early 1960s. The UP had been led by Dr. Kofi A. Busia, the great rival of Nkrumah. The Nkrumah-Busia rivalry saw a continuation of serious political violence in Ghana. That violence had first erupted not long after Ghana's independence in 1957, after Nkrumah had convincingly won all *three* back-to-back elections which the British colonial rulers insisted on before accepting him as the people's choice. In the violence of the early 1960's, several assassination attempts were made on Nkrumah's life. At least one seriously wounded Nkrumah after killing the little school girl about to hand flowers to Nkrumah. On its part, the Nkrumah government jailed large numbers of critics and opponents—small as well as big, including former close aides--without trial under the special law, the Preventive Detention Act. Many Nkrumah opponents fled Ghana into exile. This included Dr. Busia. The Ghana military overthrew Nkrumah in 1966. In the first elections thereafter, a returned Dr. Busia recreated his his party, naming it the Progress Party, and led it to victory, becoming Prime Minister. The military overthrew Busia too, triggering a series of short lived military coups. The second successful Rawlings coup of December 31, 1981against Dr. Hilla Limann was the last. However, it is credibly reported that about a dozen unsuccessful attempts were made to overthrow Rawlings himself.

Mr. Chairman this history of political violence in Ghana could serve as a valuable cautionary tale. For example, it could spur Ghana and friends to be extra vigilant and guard against violence during this seventh election under the Fourth Republic.

The commendable truth, however, is that all 6 previous presidential elections in Ghana since 1992 have been largely peaceful—even if closely fought and even if most had ended in the electoral equivalent of photo finishes that had often been disputed. Those results had another characteristic which has won major African and international praise and esteem for Ghana—including from US President Barack Obama himself. That admired feature is the gracious acceptance of bitter loss and the peaceful transfer of government power to the rival political party. Specifically: As a twice-elected elected civilian president, Jerry Rawlings served 8 years at the head of the NDC administration. However, in 2000, he peacefully handed national power over to John Kufuor the NPP candidate who had defeated the NDC contestant, John Atta-Mills. In 2008, power again changed hands peacefully in Ghana. President Kufuor of the NPP passed power to the NDC's Atta-Mills who had defeated the NPP's Nana Akufo-Addo.

*III: Rationale for assisting and monitoring Ghana's 2016 elections*

Some might be tempted by this sterling picture to ask: Given this recent admirable electoral performance in Ghana, especially when compared to its peers, why allocate limited American and other donor resources and attention to Ghana? Why not allocate these to more challenged African countries?

In response, I offer the following 5 reasons. They are of uneven importance and weight. Taken together, they constitute my case for external donor assistance and attention to Ghana's 2016 elections.

Today, Ghana is again a close friend of the US. This has not always been the case. This link *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OzMa79TXTM* connects to an arresting Youtube video. It shows President John F. Kennedy, on March 8, 1961--only 7 short weeks in the White House—going to the airport to meet and welcome President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana to Washington DC. This indicated warm US-Ghana relationship did not last. Today, many in the US and in Ghana still believe that the CIA had a hand in the 1966 overthrow of Nkrumah. Consequently, American assistance to and presence at Ghana's elections would simply be "what reconciled friends do."

Ghana is still an influential African trend-setter: Good examples set by Ghana in a few fields have been praised and even emulated by its African peers. Liberation from colonial rule is the pre-eminent example. But even the bloody second Rawlings coup which publicly executed many senior generals--allegedly for corruption--has been praised by countless Nigerians to my face. Ex-President Rawlings remains surprisingly popular in Nigeria. More to the point, many African countries and democracy activists have expressed strong admiration for Ghana's embrace of democratic governance. Burkina Faso and Nigeria are examples here. Thus the US would be indirectly helping advance democracy across Africa when it assists Ghana to continue the trend of peaceful well-run elections.

Previous highly-regarded Ghanaian elections may have been less pristine than initially assessed: To repeat an earlier point, recent Ghanaian elections have been declared free and fair, and Ghana has received significant praise and even material benefits. And yet later assessment have suggested that significant flaws and problems had been over-looked. And these suggestions have not come from credible international experts and researchers, not just from the losing Ghanaian contestants. A clear implication here is that the 2016 elections and subsequent ones must be more closely monitored and scrutinized than past ones. In turn, this calls for more electoral assistance for Ghana's up-coming elections.

Tension and threats of violence are rising in the campaign now underway in Ghana and the aroused passions could be a good omen--or a bad one: The November 7, 2016 Ghana elections are 6 short months away. And there is evidence everywhere that the campaigning is fierce and heated with rising tensions and threats of violence. The two main parties have been trading allegations and accusations. Recently, the government detained South African experts invited in by the NPP, ostensibly to help protect Nana Akufo-Addo. Supporters of the ruling NDC accused the detainees of entering Ghana to foster electoral violence. Arguably the fiercest argument is over the registration of voters. An in-depth report and recommendation by respected elders has not persuaded opposition parties to drop demands for a brand new register from scratch. Neither has a recent ruling by the Ghanaian Supreme Court. Also partisans have reportedly warned (threatened?) that large scale violence will ensue, if the results do not meet their expectations. Are these suspicions and allegations good omen or bad for the 2016 polls? They would be good if they are sounding alarms about real emerging problems that must be nipped in the bud. Conversely, they could constitute bad omen. This would be the case if they reflect an entrenched sore-losers' attitude. Assistance and attention from the US and other donors would help Ghanaians deal more effectively with this situation.

Attitude of US (& other donors) must shift from "our democratic work in Ghana is done" to "let's re-engage in Ghana to protect our investment:" It is undeniable that donor agencies reduced electoral assistance to Ghana as the country had seemed to have made a habit of good peaceful elections. The excellent DC-based NED is but one example. As officials there told me recently, *"The NED Africa program did not submit a budget for Ghana in FY 2016. For many years, our assessment has been that the country is stable and democratic, so that we have focused our limited resources on more difficult countries, although NED has maintained contact with several partners in Ghana."* This is clearly reflects an attitude of "Ghana is in a safe electoral zone; our job is done." But prudence could suggest that a different attitude may be more appropriate. That could be phrased thus, "We should return to Ghana in 2016 to protect our prior investment and minimize the chance of backsliding." That would be my fifth and final reason for why the 2016 Ghana election must garner increased assistance and attention from the US.

*IV: Suggested steps for improving electoral programs in Ghana*

Through what new suggested ways and approaches, if any, should increased electoral assistance and attention be channeled to Ghana's 2016 elections? I can think of only a couple of suggestions here. This should be taken as an acknowledgement that donor agencies and officials are already deploying the best methodologies and approaches in Ghana.

Diversify local recipients and partner NGOs: In Ghana, an effort should be made to improve the competence and capacity of smaller NGOs, especially newer organizations led by women, as a way of diversifying recipients and grantees from the current narrow base.

Design responsive and effective electoral projects that are implemented during lull periods in the election cycle, when no campaigning is taking place and no votes are being cast. We should avoid running projects only during the hectic brief voting period.

The US and other donors should encourage and then Ghanaian elections stake holders to search for innovative local solutions

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir.

I'm going to allow myself 5 minutes. I promised the witnesses and I promised my friend from California we'd be out of here by 5 o'clock. So allow me 5 minutes.

Mr. Nackerdien, you answered both of my questions that I had for you during your testimony. Either you read my notes or you were incredibly well prepared. So please don't be excited that I don't ask you a question. I had two questions for you. You answered both of them. Thank you.

No reflection on you, Mr. Merloe. I do have a question for you. It means that you didn't address it in your testimony. You talked about inclusiveness and I was concerned about women and minority ethnic groups that are being marginalized in many elections on the continent today.

Is progress being made in the area, particularly for women?

Mr. MERLOE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The answer is both no and yes. In one sense, there's not enough progress being made. There's no question about that, and that would be the answer practically in 95 percent of the countries around the world where we were discussing this topic.

The answer is yes in this sense. There is a mobilization and the waking of people around the world including women, including young women when we talk about youth, to step forward and take their place in public affairs. That's happening in every country around the world. And donors and people like ourselves who are not donors but who are activists who choose to leave our own countries and go across borders and join hands in association with our friends or reformers have recognized this as well.

So there are places. There are many places. The African Union, for example—Ranking Member Bass, you asked about the AU—the African Union's political division is headed by a group of people including women who recognize the importance of expanding the franchise of women and youth both as participants in the process and as candidates and as political leaders.

NDI, just speaking for my own organization, has a memorandum of understanding with the AU to work on youth participation across the continent. We have money from USAID in certain countries to work in training women political candidates. Kenya was mentioned by the USAID representative.

We have civil society activities where we do this. Certainly, with the millions of citizens who have come forward to monitor the integrity of their own elections, something that we don't see so much in the United States but elsewhere in the world, it takes place. These are young people and women who are represented in proportion to the population.

So there are things that are happening that are very encouraging. I think the awareness among organizations on the ground—homegrown organizations and international organizations—is also increasing. Donors and others are getting with it.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Tomaszewski, I don't know if it was in your written testimony or your oral testimony. You were talking about 7 in 10 Africans in about 28 different countries view the elections as either completely fair, fair, or fair with only minor problems.

Is their perception correct and if it is that's great. If it's not, why do you think their perception is that way?

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. Well, I think that the very important aspect here is that there are more elections and they're happening more frequently, and when you have that happen you have more and more of an opportunity to get it right.

Additionally, when we talk about 7 in 10 Africans, we're talking about people who are participating in a process and learning how to become more involved in their government. I think this goes back to part of the testimony that I was talking about where elections are something, when done over and over again, more people feel a part of the process.

We often talk about one activity we're doing in one country for one election like civic and voter education. That education process is certainly something that has to be done, but much more deeply than just how to vote. In a lot of these countries—I know in Kenya—people know how to vote. They know how to do it. But it's all the things around the election that really concern them.

And, of course, Kenya is one example where perhaps it's a little more polarized about the opinion of whether or not those elections are free and fair or not, and it's often tied to the outcome more than just the operation and the process.

So it's a little bit of a mix of everything. But I think the trend is that it's a sign that more elections are happening and there's more opportunities for people to participate, so they feel more engaged.

When you feel more engaged, you have a stake to play, and you certainly have a more enlightened view about the election itself, and you look at it as something—well, it happened—I participated. It may not be perfect but I feel like I was a part of it.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Akuetteh, your country has a special place in my heart. My mother passed away last month and for the last 4 years of her life she was cared for in her home by a woman from Ghana who treated my mother as if she were her own.

So I just wanted to ask you, you spoke about the peaceful transfer of power in many of your elections. I believe you said the last two elections. Ghana seems unique in that sense.

There's others, I think, that you all mentioned. I'm hanging around with the people from Mississippi too much. I just said you all. But it seems that Ghana is unique in that facet of the elections. Why do you think that is?

Mr. AKUETTEH. Well, first of all, I'm sorry for your loss. But I'm also glad that somebody born in the same country—a sister of mine contributed.

It is hard for me to say because I look at Africa and the countries. They are artificial creations by the Europeans and therefore in many cases I don't think that one African country is that different from another.

It may be the experiences both during colonialism and then since. In the case of Ghana in particular, when I look at, you know, that there is less polarization politically and ethnically than other African countries I think one of the credits I give is the first President of Ghana, who made dampening ethnic identity a special im-

portance of his and building a country where people see themselves as Ghanaian first. So that has to do with—I mean, that is one explanation.

In terms of turning power over peacefully, Ghana did have a lot of coups. In fact, that President was overthrown in 1966. We had lots and lots and lots of coups and attempted coups, and when I talk to Ghanaians and in my own thinking Ghanaians tried everything else. You know, colonialism was imposed on us. Then we had one-party system. Then we had coups, and Ghanaians came to the realization that the best form of government that will work for us is a leader that we choose and if we don't like them we throw them out.

By the way, in Ghana these days when people stick out their thumb it's not the American way of saying "okay." It's just warning politicians that we will be voting. Because in Ghana when you vote your thumb is stuck in ink and so when they hold it up it's like well, we see what you are doing—don't forget elections are coming.

But whatever it is, I'm saying that I think those are in other African countries too and it would be good to find out how to bring it to the fore.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, sir.

American voters hold up a finger too but it's not their thumb. The Chair recognizes the ranking member from California, Congresswoman Bass.

Ms. BASS. Well, first of all, let me thank all of you for your patience, first of all, and your testimony.

I just have a couple of questions.

Mr. Tomaszewski. You mentioned about how funding ramps up right before an election and I wanted you to talk a little bit more about that because I was under the assumption that funding is given out in a calendar year or fiscal year.

So are RFPs put out or something? Explain what you meant by that.

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. Well, the procurement process depending on the mission, depending on the funder, certainly has a role to play in that. Also, you have situations like you have in DRC right now where funders are waiting to see what's happening, right?

You don't want to go down a road of funding a certain set of priorities in an election program when you may need to go in another way. So I think that plays a role in it.

More concerning for us, though, is that when we treat elections as an episode——

Ms. BASS. Right. Right.

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI [continuing]. As a thing that happens once we don't realize—and we asked some questions about historically marginalized groups, women and youth—how do you impact them and empower them if 6 months before an election you're just touching them—you're just starting to engage them.

You're just starting to talk to a woman and help her to prepare herself to run for a competitive election in a landscape that's tilted against her from the beginning. You can't do that 6 months out.

Ms. BASS. So and I'm asking and speaking about the U.S. funding—our side—especially since, as I understand it, the democracy

rights and governance funding has been decreased 44 percent, which is huge.

So in terms of our funding, though, is that the way it's distributed? DRC, for example, I would think there would be a whole rush of funding to try to prevent something as opposed to holding back and waiting to see whether it's going to collapse or not.

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. Well, I can cite the example I used in my testimony regarding Tanzania. To have an elections program or elections assistance, which we received from USAID funding through our CEPPS partnership just 5 months to the election.

And when we were asked to submit a proposal for this project, we were given a very short time line to come up with the projects, to put them down in time, to bring the partners together, to engage about what was our strategy, what was our entry point.

And to do that with such a close time to elections it's very hard. You've got to really stretch yourself very thin just to make the impact that you need to get the right assistance that's needed on the ground.

Ms. BASS. So I guess your point is that—because I just totally assumed that the funding was ongoing and——

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. It may be ongoing. It may be available. But, certainly, it has to go through that process of putting the RFP out there, of putting the—coming up with the funding mechanism and the timing for it. These are things, of course, we would like to see happen a lot earlier in the process.

Ms. BASS. Okay. So the next election in Tanzania is in 4 or 5 years?

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. Yes.

Ms. BASS. 4 years? So is there an RFP now for that election?

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. No.

Ms. BASS. There should be an RFP now for that election.

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. Let's look at Tanzania. For the first time we saw a really strong competitive election from the opposition through Ukawa.

We saw many, many youth who were never involved in elections get inspired and be involved in elections. We have many, many youth and women who have been elected to Parliament and other positions in government, and they need our help now so, one, they can get elected.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. Two, so the youth—the civil society youth networks that were built pre-election can be continued and strengthened. I think we go back to our question of Ghana. We do our victory dance. They have peaceful transfers of power, successful elections and then all of a sudden we think well, we're good—let's go home.

Ms. BASS. Right

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. And now what we're seeing in a place like Ghana today, we've kind of left our foot off the gas and now we're moving into a possible crisis.

Ms. BASS. So you would say then it's just the general procurement process?

Mr. TOMASZEWSKI. And planning on the part of U.S. assistance providers.

Ms. BASS. Really not a good use of money to do that that way, and that you two were exchanging glances so it looked like you wanted to comment about that, Mr. Merloe and Mr. Nackerdien.

Mr. MERLOE. Thank you, Representative Bass. Yes, the first I think it comes from a question of understanding. As Rushdi pointed out, elections are not an event. We all agree.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. MERLOE. When you look at elections as a cycle and you start with the pre-elections and all the things that happen post-elections—they connect up.

But what I think we're really saying is that elections are not even two-dimensional. They really go into the political fabric and culture of a country.

So if you want to help people who have been marginalized become part of a process it's an ongoing activity that has a lot of dimensions and takes a lot of time.

Two things that I would just re-emphasize. One is funding is scarce, and so when USAID or State Department's DRL are looking at these things, they're husbanding their resources and trying to decide what to do. They hedge their bets in part because of that.

But they also, I think, see this problem of understanding elections as being something that really is a political dynamic; it's part of building democracy—it's not just part of casting ballots.

Limiting that understanding takes away from the opportunities, and that diminishes the effectiveness of the kinds of programming that are done, which need to be around the calendar and need to be over a large arc of time.

The second thing is elections are volatile—so attention tends to be directed when volatility goes up. We're talking about Ghana today. We weren't talking about Ghana in November or in October of last year, except the insiders, and that's because volatility has gone up.

But it was very clear at the end of the last election that, first, it was a razor-thin decision. Second, the election commission itself was under attack. Its credibility had been diminished somewhat because of the controversy.

Third, the Supreme Court—and the commission and the court are the two interlocutors in the circumstance—the decision of the court took a very long time, which stretched out the volatility and the tensions in the country.

As a consequence, there's a new commission. The new commission doesn't have the history of the last commission. Public confidence has been shown in all of the opinion polls in that body and in the courts, which were very high, now to have diminished a lot.

The resources are up and the stakes are higher because of the age of the people who are contesting and a number of other factors. It's not hard to figure out that Ghana needed attention 6 months ago. There's 6 months to go.

We now are talking about doing this, and a lot of people are reacting. I mean, I do want to give credit where credit is due. A lot of people are reacting but it's late in the game. We need to——

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Mr. MERLOE [continuing]. Look at these things from a much more strategic and a much more holistic and fulsome view.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Mr. NACKERDIEN. Thank you. We talk about the electoral cycle and getting involved early. I think one of the great benefits of having more democracies on the African continent is the fact that it's actually quite predictable.

We know in Tanzania there will be an election in 4 years' time.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. NACKERDIEN. We know in Ghana the election is happening now but it will happen in another cycle and we can plan accordingly. In many of the countries where we've had tremendous impact it's where we've maybe been 10, 15 years and it's not with a huge amounts of funding that might be required in places like the DRC where the infrastructure is low.

But it's in places where we're able to sustain through innovative programming and working at the core with different groups whether it is with election commissions and helping them develop their process and building trust or with political parties or with civil society organizations, systematically building capacity and ramping up over a period of time, not just 6 months before the election. We talk about the electoral cycle but there's a predictability about elections often crafted constitutions and that's what we must work with.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. And Mr. Akuetteh, why don't you close us out?

Mr. AKUETTEH. I do want to thank you again for holding this.

I share everything that has been said. In fact, I think because the level of English is better here it's been said more elegantly.

But I do support that when we—because elections are cycles the funding and the planning should be adjusted so that there is attention to various things that need to be done before balloting arrives and even following the balloting that there will be things to do.

And I will cite the example that Kofi Annan and I share a country of birth and if he thinks that Ghana needs attention and he's turning his attention to it again I think it is good that this hearing is being held and that the agencies that fund elections will look at Ghana again not from a negative point of view but to consolidate the real progress that has been made so that this passage of elections, clean elections, and peaceful handover.

If it is necessitated—if the opposition does win, and I'm not saying they will win, we don't know yet, but if they do win that will continue the pattern of peaceful transfer. Thank you again.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Ranking Member Bass. I'd like to thank our panelists for your presence today, for your testimony and for your honest answers to our questions. I'd ask all our visitors at the conclusion of the hearing to clear the room. They need the room for another event that's coming, following right behind us.

This subcommittee having no further business, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:06 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

# APPENDIX

## Material Submitted for the Record

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations**
**Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), Chairman**

May 18, 2016

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov):

**DATE:** Wednesday, May 18, 2016

**TIME:** 2:30 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** Democracy Support Strategies in Africa

**WITNESSES:** Panel I
Mr. D. Bruce Wharton
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Thomas H. Staal
Acting Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
U.S. Agency for International Development

Mr. Steven Feldstein
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
U.S. Department of State

Panel II
Mr. Rushdi Nackerdien
Regional Director for Africa
International Foundation for Electoral Systems

Mr. Patrick Merloe
Senior Associate and Director of Election Programs
National Democratic Institute

Mr. John Tomaszewski
Acting Regional Director for Africa
International Republican Institute

Mr. Nii Akuetteh
Executive Director
The African Immigrant Caucus

**By Direction of the Chairman**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.*

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* Date *May 18, 2016* Room *2172 Rayburn HOB*

Starting Time *2:35 p.m.* Ending Time *5:06 p.m.*

Recesses [ *1* ] (*2:41* to *3:31*) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

*Rep. Chris Smith, Rep. Dan Donovan*

*Check all of the following that apply:*

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

*Democracy Support Strategies in Africa*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*Rep. Curt Clawson, Rep. Karen Bass*

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] No [ ]
*(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)*

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

***Questions for the record from Rep. Eliot Engel for Amb. Wharton, Mr. Staal, and Mr. Feldstein***

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *5:06 p.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Associate

**Democracy Support Strategies in Africa**
**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations**
**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**
**May 18, 2016**

**Questions for the Record from Representative Eliot Engel**
**for Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Bruce Wharton,**
**Deputy Assistant Secretary Steven Feldstein, and**
**Acting Assistant Administrator Thomas H. Staal**

**Question:**

What is the Administration's plan for ensuring that the Congolese Constitution is respected, that President Kabila steps down in December 2016 at the end of his mandate, and that the country and the wider region are not enveloped by political instability? Given the declining possibility that elections can be held before the end of the year, what events might lead the Administration to increase the level of pressure on the regime?

**Answer:**

We expect President Kabila to comply with the term limits set by the constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to hold elections, and to transfer power to a democratically elected successor. Both Secretary Kerry and Under Secretary Sarah Sewall have met with President Kabila in recent months to directly express our view that, in the interest of long-term stability in the DRC and the region, he should publicly declare that he will hold elections and leave office at the end of his term in accordance with the DRC constitution. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield, United States Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Thomas Perriello, and Ambassador James Swan continue to engage with the DRC government at the highest levels. They have stressed the need for the government to enter into a dialogue with opposition parties in order to reach agreement on an electoral calendar and a peaceful transition, and to undertake a set of confidence building measures such as releasing political detainees, ending repressive tactics against political opponents, and having Kabila publicly declare his intention to step down.

Given the challenge of holding credible elections in November, it is critically important that the government and opposition reach agreement on a timetable for elections, and on transitional arrangements following the end of President Kabila's term. We coordinate our diplomatic pressure on the DRC government with the United Nations, the European Union, individual European allies, and with our partners in Africa. We support the African Union-led dialogue process so that it provides a credible, neutral forum for genuine negotiation among Congolese stakeholders.

In addition to diplomatic pressure, we continue to examine how to best use all the tools at our disposal to help steer the government of the DRC and the opposition away from violence, and toward a peaceful transition. We are closely watching how the situation unfolds, and have stated that there will be consequences if the government of the DRC increases violent and/or repressive tactics, and/or if the opposition undertakes violent actions.

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The United States has the legal authority, under Executive Order 13671, to impose sanctions against those who threaten the peace and security – and undermine the democratic processes and institutions – of the DRC. This legal authority was recently used to impose sanctions against the commander of the National Police in Kinshasa Province, who was responsible for committing serious human rights abuses.

**Question:**

In recent months, there has been an alarming escalation in human rights abuses and repression in Uganda, connected to the recent elections and President Museveni's efforts to stay in power. On February 20, the State Department pointed out that there were "numerous reports of irregularities" during the elections, and that official conduct was "deeply inconsistent with international standards and expectations for any democratic process." Then on March 11, with regard to the post-election environment, the State Department again voiced concerns that the "security forces persistently have violated the rights and freedoms of Ugandan citizens and the media." What steps is the United States taking to ensure that our support to Uganda's police and military is not furthering the regime's abuse and repression? What concrete measures does the Administration plan to take to signal to President Museveni that this crackdown is inconsistent with respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy?

**Answer:**

Through the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the U.S. Embassy in Kampala is working in partnership with a robust network of stakeholders to support young Ugandan leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security.

We have consistently and repeatedly engaged Ugandan military and civilian authorities on human rights questions, both in conjunction with the provision of military assistance and in other contexts. There are components on human rights and the law of warfare in most of the U.S.-funded military training efforts provided to the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF), such as the pre-deployment training provided to peacekeepers deploying to Somalia. Moreover, all UPDF units that U.S. personnel advise and assist are subject to Leahy human rights vetting. Our assistance is helping to build the UPDF into a more professional force that can continue to promote stability throughout the region. When abuses occur, we urge the government to investigate allegations and hold perpetrators accountable. This is consistent with our view that respect and fair treatment for all citizens is important for the vibrancy and stability of a democracy.

We are committed to supporting Uganda's constructive role as a force for regional peace and security, while at the same time urging Uganda to improve its internal governance and human rights record. We continue to encourage Uganda to take tangible steps to improve that record, particularly with regard to the protection of civil liberties and the rights of women and of minority populations. As you noted, on multiple occasions we have publicly called on

authorities to respect freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and all other constitutionally-guaranteed rights of Ugandans. We will continue to do so as circumstances warrant.

**Question:**

After three years of conflict, the Central African Republic has the opportunity to turn the page on years of communal violence with the recent inauguration of President Touadéra. Both President Touadéra and Interim President Samba-Panza had articulated their support for justice and accountability, which may be a means by which to consolidate democratic gains and break the cycle of violence. PDAS Wharton's testimony mentioned that the State Department is helping build the country's judicial sector, including the development of its Special Criminal Court. Can you please specify what FY16 and FY17 funds from the State Department and USAID have been set aside specifically to support the Court?

**Answer:**

The United States remains deeply committed to supporting Central Africans as they work to break the cycles of conflict, address root causes of the current violence and instability, and build sustainable peace. Our current support to the Central African Republic (CAR) follows President Touadéra's priorities outlined in his March 30 inaugural address to improve security through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration and security sector reform, address reconciliation and social cohesion, expand economic opportunity, and improve governance.

At the present time, the Department of State (the Department) has no plans to use FY 2016 resources to support the Special Criminal Court (SCC) and it has not requested any funds in FY 2017 to support the SCC. However, the Department is pursuing several other related activities, including preparing for the November CAR donors conference hosted by the European Union, to re-establish and build the capacity of the CAR justice sector. The Department and the United Nations Development Programme are collaborating on multiple efforts that benefit the CAR judicial system, including the SCC, by providing training, equipment, and facility refurbishment for investigators, judges, court staff, and prosecutors, some of whom may serve in the SCC when the CAR government makes appointments.

In addition, while USAID funding does not support the establishment of the SCC, USAID is undertaking programs to promote civil society engagement and help link community-level needs and voices with national processes related to transitional justice and reconciliation in CAR.

**Question:**

The United States has invested substantial time and energy to stem the expansion of al-Shabaab and supporting the establishment of a permanent government in Somalia. With critical timelines to approve a constitution and organize elections later this year, what steps are the State Department and USAID taking to minimize backsliding on good governance in the run-up to, and directly after the elections?

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**Answer:**

Holding an electoral process in 2016 that is more inclusive and transparent than the 2012 clan elders selection process will be a key step toward building democratic governance in Somalia. The United States is working closely with the United Nations (UN), African Union, and other key partners to encourage the Somalis to address as soon as possible the remaining issues necessary to implement such a process, including to improve transparency and minimize susceptibility to bribery or manipulation. It will be particularly important for the government of Somalia to deliver on its commitment to conduct a process in which the electoral college is larger and more inclusive than in 2012, and with improved voter education and ballot procedures. USAID is supporting the delivery of a credible electoral process in 2016 through a contribution to the UN Joint Program for Support to the Somali Electoral Process.

At the same time, the United States and our international partners are urging Somali leaders to complete the constitutional review process and conduct a public awareness campaign to enable a referendum in 2017 and to uphold their commitment to develop a roadmap for universal suffrage elections to be held by 2020. USAID has a new elections program called Bringing Unity, Integrity and Legitimacy to Democracy that will support processes leading up to 2020 elections.

More broadly, USAID continues to invest in programming to improve government functional capacity, increase citizen participation, and expand women's empowerment and leadership. USAID's Strengthening Somalia Governance program builds the capacity of the executive, the parliament, and civil society through targeted technical assistance and training on good governance issues. Through this program and others, USAID is investing in public financial management and financial governance efforts to assist the government of Somalia in reducing corruption, establishing macroeconomic institutions and policies, and developing revenue management systems. These programs reinforce local good governance efforts implemented by USAID through community driven development that encourages inclusivity and community participation with local government actors in the identification of small-scale development projects for areas newly liberated from al-Shabaab.

**Question:**

In PDAS Wharton's testimony, he mentioned that the appropriated FY17 funding for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) programs has been "constrained within the global context of other priorities." These constraints come at a critical point for democracy on the continent, where civil society organizations and the media are increasingly under threat, and some African leaders have been changing their constitutions to eliminate term limits. In light of these budgetary constraints, how does the Administration plan to sustain democratic gains that have been made in some African countries and counter backsliding on democracy in others? In addition, what do the State Department and USAID assess will be the medium- to long-term impact of continuing to constrain DRG funding for Africa?

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**Answer:**
We agree that democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programs are an important component of our efforts to support resilient, open, and democratic societies in Africa and around the globe. The FY 2017 Request includes $343 million for DRG programs in Africa. Funding at the FY 2017 request level would provide a significant boost, 96 percent above the FY 2015 level, to DRG programming in many countries in Africa where critical programs could focus on supporting peaceful transitions of power, reform efforts, and civil society engagement. The Administration's FY 2016 653(a) allocations fulfill the overall directive level of $2.3 billion for democracy programs worldwide; however, due to global constraints in the foreign assistance budget, including a lower foreign assistance topline than the Administration request for key funding accounts that support DRG programs, funding for DRG programs in Africa fell short. The Department of State and USAID have worked to ensure that DRG resources globally reflect the most strategic allocation possible within funding constraints, including by looking to address priority DRG funding shortfalls in Africa through shifting prior year funds to meet the most critical gaps.

As part of long-term strategic engagement, DRG support serves to build ownership, increase accountability and reinforce democratic norms. Democratic backsliding and recent efforts to extend or eliminate term limits reflect deep democratic deficiencies such as excessive concentration of power in the executive, weak rule of law, and lack of political space. U.S. programming aims to counter these issues by promoting credible and peaceful elections in more than a dozen countries over the next two years; expanding space for citizen voice and participation; and promoting responsive local governance and greater accountability.

However, progress in the area of democracy, human rights, and governance requires a sustained investment over time. Without appropriate funding for critical DRG programs, it is possible we will see a decrease in political will among our partners, which will, in turn, generate even more pressure on our diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance programs to ensure positive outcomes in the DRG sector, including: good governance; free and fair elections; expanded rights for ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBTI individuals; adherence to the rule of law; and increased space for civil society.

**Question:**

One of the critiques that has been made against the United States' support for democracy in Africa is that we tend to have a narrow interpretation of success; once an election is held, we downsize our programs in-country and focus elsewhere. What programs or lines of effort does the Administration plan to implement that would focus on critical issues such as electoral reforms, political party strengthening, and civic education that need to occur between elections? And what plans does the Administration have to build upon relatively successful elections (i.e., Nigeria in 2015) and improve upon deeply flawed electoral processes (i.e, Uganda and Republic of the Congo)?

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**Answer:**

USAID is taking the lead on this response.

**[No further response received at time of printing]**

**Question:**

In PDAS Wharton's and DAS Feldstein's testimonies, they praised the role of Burkinabé civil society in pressuring the presidential guard to relinquish power in Burkina Faso and ensuring a transition to elected civilian rule. What investments did the Administration make to strengthen Burkinabé civil society prior to the ouster of former President Blaise Compaoré? Are there any lessons learned or best practices that can be drawn from the experience of Burkina Faso for future programming in other countries on the continent?

**Answer:**

The U.S. government's support for civil society in Burkina Faso leading up to former president Compaore's ouster in October 2014 was robust, multifaceted, and included both Washington-based programs and U.S. embassy support. The major component of this support were two USAID projects, one titled Peace through Development II (PDEV II), the other Providing Youth with Opportunities for Peaceful Political Engagement implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI). PDEV II, which began November 2011 and will continue through the end of this fiscal year, was intended to help reduce the risk of instability and increase resilience to violent extremism in the Sahel. One of the objectives of the $14 million PDEV II program was to help strengthen civil society through capacity building activities focused on advocacy skills, citizen-led accountability initiatives and issue-based campaigns integrated with radio and social media.

Originally planned to support parliamentary elections in December 2012, the $500,000 NDI program started late and most of its activities took place in 2013-2014. The focus was on youth, both those in political parties and leaders of civil society organizations. The program worked directly with more than 190 youth leaders in the four major cities of Burkina Faso, convening them to identify their social and political priorities and setting plans on how to achieve them. They were then supported to hold numerous meetings with their colleagues in their various cities to continue the same process.

Embassy Ouagadougou also consistently worked with civil society groups throughout Burkina Faso in the years leading up to Compaore's exit. For example, Ambassador Mushingi met with the respected civil society watchdog group Balai Citoyen just weeks after their launch, providing them both visibility and validation. The Embassy, through a Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) sponsored United States Institute of Peace (USIP) program,

has worked with Balai Citoyen and another key civil society group, Agence Topaz, since April 2015 on a community driven policing program that helps civil society and police work together to improve security and build trust.

Balia Citoyen members, including current Minister of Justice Rene Bagoro, were also selected for Department of Justice sponsored training. The Embassy met with other civil society groups as well, including the Front de Résistance Citoyenne and the Collectif Anti Referendum and provided Democracy and Human Rights Fund funding to the Société Burkinabè de Droit Constitutionnel. Additionally, the Embassy broadcasted a consistent message about the importance of respecting constitutional term limits both in private and in public, effectively echoing civil society.

U.S. government support continued throughout the transition period. In addition to the ongoing PDEV II program, USAID launched a new $3,000,000 program with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Federation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to foster greater participation of youth and women in the election process and support the National Independent Election Commission (CENI) to put in place a modern electoral results transmission system whereby preliminary voting results were available within 25 hours of the closing of the polls.

Although the circumstances, events, and participants in Burkina Faso's navigation of the crises of the past few years are all unique, programs which identify and support civil society groups and provide a consistent message on U.S. values – including respect for presidential term limits – are important elements of U.S. efforts in support of democracy and rule of law.

Through the Embassy's engagement, one key best practice is to let civil society groups drive the agenda. Flexible programs that follow pre-existing interest and ideas developed by local groups are more likely to be sustainable and create real change. Programs that involve iterative consultation and joint-decision making throughout the program are much more effective that those that solicit feedback during an initial assessment.

Moreover, U.S. assistance should explicitly seek to build the capability of local organizations and put them in the lead of projects whenever possible, rather than simply using U.S. staff. For example, the INL/USIP program has explicitly focused on training and coaching local organizations to facilitate and manage workshops rather than relying on U.S.-based staff. It has also empowered them to work directly with government ministries rather than using the United States as the go-between. These types of partnership are more time and staff intensive but the results are better tailored to the local needs and create more durable capabilities that make it worth the investment.

**Question:**

In recent years, there have been democratic setbacks in countries that are key U.S. partners for counterterrorism or peacekeeping operations: In Ethiopia, the ruling party won 100% of the seats in the country's last parliamentary elections, and has been violently cracking down on protesters

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in the Oromia region since last November. In Burundi, which contributes 25% of the troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), President Nkurunziza has plunged his country into low-intensity conflict by violating the Arusha Accords, resulting in the deaths of over 400 people in the past year. In Uganda, President Museveni has restricted social media and Internet communications, and blatantly prevented the opposition from appealing the election results, which was well within their Constitutional rights. In Cameroon, the spread of Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria has led to the deployment of 300 U.S, troops at a time when President Paul Biya, in power since 1982, has asked his ruling party to pressure the population to voice their support for him to change the Constitution and organize early elections to the detriment of the opposition. In light of these developments, how has the Administration improved its focus on strengthening democracy in key counterterrorism partners to ensure that U.S. focus on countering terrorism does not contribute to the increasingly threatened civic and political space on the continent? Is the Administration concerned that support of counterterrorism partners that are increasingly cracking down on dissent could foment a more violent backlash from the population and ultimately trigger broader regional instability?

**Answer:**

There is a critical link between democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) and peace and security within Africa. Without a sustained diplomatic effort and programs emphasizing critical human rights norms, democratic processes, and good governance, peace and security in the region will remain unattainable. The Department of State and USAID continue to support core democracy and governance programming in the region. Democracy, human rights, and good governance are fundamental objectives in and of themselves; a lack of democratic governance helps in creating an enabling environment for instability, violent extremism, and humanitarian crises, which can be a result of corruption, poor governance, and weak or nonexistent democratic institutions.

While we continue to engage our partners regularly through both diplomacy and foreign assistance programs to ensure an improved environment for DRG in the region, the Administration has also made DRG objectives core to our peace and security strategy for sub-Saharan Africa. The Departments of State and Defense recognize that human rights-sensitive security assistance contributes to efforts to strengthen democracy and governance in Africa. As such, the President's FY 2017 Request includes funds for the Sahel Development Initiative (SDI) and the Security Governance Initiative (SGI). SDI seeks to better link development and security efforts to effectively counter the increasing threat of violent extremism in the Sahel. SGI is a partner nation-driven initiative that aims to build sustainable, systemic change within institutions with the goal of improved and sustainable security legitimacy in the eyes of citizens.

The Administration believes continued engagement with our security partners is critical not only to regional security, but also to democratic gains throughout the region. We believe strong partnerships enhance our ability to mitigate human rights abuses and security force overreach. Our partnerships emphasize security forces that are professional and respect human rights and civil control of the security sector.