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Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee for Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
March 28, 2017

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to come and speak with you today about the food security situation in the Horn of Africa, and specifically the threat of famine in Somalia. We are grateful for your long history of support to humanitarian efforts and for drawing attention to the plight of the world's vulnerable people, such as those in the Horn of Africa.

My name is Matthew Nims, and I am the Acting Director of USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP). The United States has been the largest provider of emergency food assistance in the world. We use a mix of tools to respond to emergency food needs including U.S. commodities, locally and regionally procured food, vouchers, cash transfers and other complementary activities to reach the world's most food insecure with lifesaving aid. We also support development programs that address the root causes of hunger in areas of chronic crisis to build resilience and food security of local communities. Last year through the work of our many implementing partners, including those testifying on the next panel, our food assistance reached over 60 million people in 52 countries.

In 2017, we are confronted with major humanitarian crises around the world, which demand that the world provide an immediate, substantial, and creative response. The USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET, has warned that this year an unprecedented 70 million people across 45 countries will be in need of emergency food assistance, largely driven by persistent conflict, severe drought and economic instability. Famine was declared in parts of South Sudan in February, and three other countries—Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen—face the threat of famine, putting a combined 20 million people at risk of dire food insecurity. That's more than twice the populations of New York City and Washington, D.C. combined.

Famines are rare, and we don't use the term lightly. In most cases, people face extreme food insecurity and are in need of emergency food assistance without the situation being categorized as a "famine." The global standard for classifying acute food insecurity, the International Food Security Phase Classification requires the most extreme conditions to be present before a famine can be declared. In communities in which famine is declared, at least 1/5 of households face an extreme lack of food and/or inability to meet their other basic needs, nearly 1/3 of children are already severely acutely malnourished, and men, women and children are already dying because of an extreme lack of food.

When we think of famine we naturally think of food, but the provision of safe drinking water, emergency health care and proper sanitation and hygiene are equally critical during these crises to battle opportunistic illnesses like cholera and diarrhea. Hunger weakens people's immune systems, leaving them susceptible to these often largely preventable and treatable afflictions; in situations of extreme food insecurity and famine, they can turn deadly. When Somalia faced famine in 2011, the impacts of cholera were devastating. That's why we work closely with our sister office, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, along with the Department of State's Population, Refugees and Migration bureau, to ensure that the United States' humanitarian response to these crises is a comprehensive multi-sectoral one.

Over the past few months, I've traveled to South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia to see the situation first hand and fully understand the scope and scale of the challenges people in these countries face. Today I want to share with you more about the ongoing crisis in these countries, what we're doing to respond, and the challenges we face.

HORN OF AFRICA

The Horn of Africa is facing increasingly severe drought conditions that are quickly exceeding many households' ability to cope. The scope of these conditions is so great that relief agencies estimate that as many as 15 million people in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya are facing food and water shortages. Latest findings indicate the drought is now the worst ever recorded in some of the most vulnerable areas within the Horn.

In this region, we are most concerned about Somalia, where the effects of this latest drought are exacerbated by insecurity. In 2011, nearly 260,000 Somalis died in a famine triggered by what was at the time the Horn of Africa's worst drought in more than 60 years—half of them children under five. Recent analysis by FEWS NET indicates troubling parallels to conditions which led to the 2011 famine. In many areas, vegetation conditions are the worst on record, surpassing those observed during the 2011 crisis. The below-average rainfall of the 2016 October-to-December season has resulted in a harvest forecasted to be 50-70 percent below the five-year average, and if the rains fail again this spring, the food security situation will continue to deteriorate. In addition to these factors, the situation is further exacerbated by ongoing conflict.

Famine may again be possible in the coming months if drought conditions persist, purchasing power continues to decline, and insecurity prevents relief actors from reaching populations in need. An estimated 6.2 million Somalis—more than half the population—are currently in need of immediate humanitarian assistance as a result of the combined effects of the drought and ongoing conflict. Malnutrition rates are also rising significantly, with 71,000 children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition—a 42 percent increase from fiscal year (FY) 2016.

Severe malnutrition places children at high risk of disease and death, and last week, health partners reported there have been nearly 12,700 diarrhea or cholera cases and 268 drought-related deaths since January in Somalia.

The crisis in Somalia also has regional effects, as people leave to look for food and support in neighboring countries. This migration compounds the already tenuous situations in Ethiopia and Kenya. We support the food security needs of the refugees in these countries and are seeing highly concerning malnutrition rates among those arriving into Ethiopia from southern Somalia. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), as of January, global acute malnutrition rates for Somali children and pregnant and lactating women entering Ethiopia are at 78 percent. These countries are also facing inflows of refugees from South Sudan, making the impacts of these food security crises regional in nature.

Over the last several months, USAID has worked to rapidly scale up and redirect our efforts in Somalia, providing vital food and malnutrition treatment; and ensuring communities have safe drinking water, as well as improved sanitation and hygiene. USAID has provided more than \$151 million in emergency food assistance since FY 2016 for Somalia. USAID partners are distributing food rations to the most acutely food-insecure people, as well as food vouchers and cash transfers where markets are functioning. FFP's assistance in Somalia is typically linked to activities designed to help build the resilience of the Somali people, including vocational training or productive asset building activities, such as rehabilitating community water and sanitation infrastructure or roads. However, due to the rapidly deteriorating food security situation, many of these productive activities are on hold until households' food security improves.

This is the first time since Somalia's devastating 2011 famine that FEWS NET has explicitly warned of famine risk in the country. Lessons learned from that famine indicate that immediate action and a robust mobilization of international resources are needed to prevent a worst case scenario. At the same time, it is important to recognize the differences between the region's 2011 crisis and now. Today, host governments, and Ethiopia and Kenya in particular, are proactively responding to and managing the current drought. And even Somalia's young government formed a drought response committee focused on providing Somali support to Somalis. In fact, in February, the governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia all publicly committed to regional cooperation and cross-border collaboration to tackle both this drought and, through longer-term investments, the underlying fragility that tips vulnerable communities into crisis in recurring droughts.

We are aligning our investments in the region with country-led efforts such as the Government of Kenya's Ending Drought Emergencies initiative and Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP). The Government of Kenya's initiative provides a common investment and programming framework for government and donor investment. The Government of Kenya has

committed \$1.6 billion against the initiative, complemented by \$1.5 billion from donors, including the U.S. government.

I recently visited with members of the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth in Kenya (PREG), which works to build resilience in the vulnerable pastoralist communities of Northern Kenya which are largely arid and semi-arid lands. PREG brings together USAID's \$291 million in development programs in this region of Kenya with work by the country's national and county level governments to promote resilience and economic growth. In just two and a half years, there was a 12 percent reduction in the depth of poverty in this region due to these investments. USAID's contributions through PREG are helping more than 700,000 people to build assets to withstand chronic shocks and stresses; more than 100,000 people to have better access to water and 70,000 to have improved sanitation; and to manage more than 2 million hectares of grazing land through community-based natural resources groups, directly supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of pastoralists in these arid and semi-arid zones.

As part of my trip, I visited one of the 12 livestock markets that PREG has constructed in Marasbit and Isiolo counties. Livestock trading and veterinary services were available, but what I found of equal interest were the entrepreneurs that have seized on the dynamism these markets bring to local communities to establish their own businesses and secure a livelihood for themselves and their families. I met Jacob, who started a small business to fix the motorcycles of those traveling to and from the new markets. I also met with Mercy, a local woman who opened a restaurant, which serves local food to the traders. Not only are the investments through the PREG benefitting the pastoralists and local communities they were designed to help, they are also forming the basis for thriving commercial hubs that offer services previously unavailable in Kenya's arid lands.

The Government of Ethiopia-led PSNP annually addresses the basic food needs of approximately 8 million chronically food insecure people through the seasonal transfer of food and cash resources, as well as the creation or improvement of assets that generate economic benefit to the community as a whole. With U.S. support, the PSNP has helped lift 1.5 million people out of poverty, reduced the annual lean season for vulnerable households from over 3 months to less than 2 months, and reduced the proportion of households forced to engage in distress sales of assets from 50 percent to 25 percent.

Even in Somalia, where the federal government formed just a few years ago, investments in development and resilience helped better position some communities to endure this drought. USAID continues to help build the capacity of the fledgling Somali government to support its own population. The Federal and State governments also formed Drought Coordination Committees, work to raise funds and coordinate the delivery of assistance to communities across Somalia.

These efforts across the region are expanding economic opportunities, strengthening natural resource and drought cycle management, and improving health and human capital. A 2012 study by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in Kenya and Ethiopia estimated that, over a 10-year period with two large droughts, every \$1 invested in resilience would result in \$2.90 in economic benefits consisting of reduced humanitarian spending, avoided asset losses, and increased development benefits.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Challenges remain, however, particularly since Somalia is not the only country currently at risk of famine. As mentioned in my opening, famine has already been declared in South Sudan, and Nigeria and Yemen are facing credible risks of famine as well. It's important to stress that these crises are largely man-made with other compounding factors, like drought in Somalia, making the situations even more untenable. There has been a remarkable shift in the drivers of humanitarian crisis over the past decade. Ten years ago, conflict caused just twenty percent of emergencies. Today, that number is 80 percent according to the UN. The number of people in need of humanitarian aid has more than doubled over the past decade, and more than 65 million people are displaced. This shift towards conflict-related crises brings with it different challenges like ensuring critical and safe access to communities in need.

In South Sudan, years of intense violence has transformed the world's youngest nation into one of the most food insecure in the world. An estimated 5.5 million people—nearly half of South Sudan's population—will face life-threatening hunger this year. Civilians are targets of violence from armed actors on all sides of the conflict, local markets and harvests have been disrupted or destroyed, and families are being driven from their homes, forced to survive on whatever sustenance they can find like wild grasses and water lilies. More than 3.5 million South Sudanese are displaced, including 1.6 million South Sudanese refugees who have fled into neighboring countries. In the month of January alone, more than 90,000 South Sudanese fled their country, many to neighboring Uganda, where the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement, which did not even exist seven months ago, has rapidly swelled to become one of the largest refugee camps in the world.

For three years, the international community has employed massive efforts to stave off famine in South Sudan. Yet as conflict intensified, the food security situation continued to deteriorate. Famine was declared in two counties on February 20, 2017, and significant humanitarian need can be found throughout the country. As we have said repeatedly, this is a man-made crisis and the direct consequence of prolonged conflict. We hold all the warring parties—including the government, the opposition, and affiliated armed groups—responsible for the hostilities that upend and, even worse, target civilian lives and livelihoods.

Despite the challenges of working in South Sudan, the United States has provided more than \$2.1 billion dollars in humanitarian assistance since the start of the conflict in December 2013, including more than \$221 million in emergency food assistance just this fiscal year. Our assistance, including the distribution of more than 600,000 metric tons of urgently needed food, has reached more than 1.3 million people every month.

More than 5.1 million people are facing severe food insecurity in northeastern Nigeria, particularly those displaced in Borno State. Though insecurity limits access and information gathering, there are signs that famine likely occurred in 2016, and may be ongoing in parts of the state that humanitarian actors are unable to reach. As humanitarian agencies access areas previously held by Boko Haram, they are encountering communities with dire levels of hunger and malnutrition, particularly among children. The UN estimates that in 2017, nearly 450,000 children will experience life threatening severe acute malnutrition. The United States has provided more than \$321 million since FY 2016 for people affected by the ongoing crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region, including more than \$175 million in emergency food assistance operations. Our assistance to this area is critical for promoting stability.

Lastly I would be remiss not to mention the situation in Yemen, where the effects of the severe humanitarian crisis there are felt across the Horn. Yemen is experiencing the largest food security emergency in the world. The escalation in conflict in 2015—coupled with political instability, the resulting economic crisis, rising fuel and food prices, and high unemployment—has led to staggering levels of food insecurity. This has led to large scale outflows of refugees and returnees, when security permits, to Somalia and Djibouti, who are struggling to handle the increased caseload of populations in need.

More than seventeen million people in Yemen are food insecure, including seven million people who are unable to survive without food assistance. More than 460,000 children under 5 are acutely malnourished, a 200 percent increase since 2014. FEWS NET is reporting that famine is possible in Yemen if food imports drop or conflict further restricts markets and humanitarian access.

The U.S. government has contributed more than \$431 million in humanitarian assistance in Yemen since the beginning of FY 2016, about \$265 million of which is emergency food assistance through UN and NGO partners. U.S. food, including specialized nutritional products, has been a critical part of our response, as many local markets have severely contracted from reduced imports. Where possible we have used other interventions such as food vouchers, which have supported local vendors and stimulated local markets, crucial in crisis-affected communities.

CONCLUSION

It's important to note these broader challenges the humanitarian community faces. We are never focusing on just one country or region at a time, and the scale and nature of humanitarian crises in the world right now strain the capacities of the humanitarian system. The United States cannot do it alone—we need all our United Nations, NGO, affected government, and donor partners working together to tackle these challenges.

We call on other donors to increase their contributions, and appreciate that some are beginning to rise to the challenge: on March 17, the European Union announced an additional 100 million euros to respond to the crisis in South Sudan, and 65 million euros to respond to the serious droughts in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. In response to unprecedented support from the British public for their East Africa appeal, over the weekend of March 18-19, the UK Government matched pound for pound the 5 million pounds donated by the public. The Government of Canada just announced \$90 million for all four countries facing famine.

Every day I am grateful to be part of this global humanitarian community. But I am especially grateful for the committed staff that serves in the Office of Food for Peace and at USAID. They represent hope to those in need and bring the generosity of the American people directly to ordinary people in desperate situations. And it is because of the dedication of all our NGO partners like those on the next panel—Mercy Corps, World Vision and Samaritan's Purse—and those of our UN partners—the World Food Program and UNICEF—that aid reaches those who need it, despite how difficult getting it to them may be.

In addition, we have worked with our international partners to identify strategic opportunities to make global humanitarian assistance more effective and efficient, including prioritizing needs and reducing duplication and costs. This will make every dollar the U.S. provides work even harder and help more people.

We remain committed to providing humanitarian assistance around the world as both a moral imperative and as a direct benefit to the well-being of the United States. As provided in the President's Budget Blueprint, the FY 2018 Budget will allow for significant funding of humanitarian assistance. We do expect that we would focus resources on the highest priority areas and continue our efforts to make humanitarian assistance more efficient and effective, while also asking the rest of the world to do more.

Thank you for your attention to these issues and for the support Congress has provided to USAID and specifically our humanitarian programs over the years. We do this work not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is in the interest of the American people and promotes global stability. Please know that your support transforms and saves lives every day.