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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**  
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:  
“The Department of State Redesign”  
September 26, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Today we hear from Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan on proposed reforms to the State Department and the Agency for International Development.

Few question the need to improve the operations of both agencies. A more efficient and effective State Department and USAID would better promote our national security and our many other interests abroad. So I have welcomed the Administration’s undertaking.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s focus on listening to our diplomats and all other employees throughout this process is commendable. He has sought feedback from the bottom up. Many employees have actually asked – and I think this speaks volumes – for more responsibility, and in turn, more accountability for their performance. They also want better training throughout their careers, and a modern IT infrastructure. They deserve these tools, and we would all be better off if they had them.

So I welcome Secretary Tillerson’s efforts to address the Department’s aging technology infrastructure, and strengthen the diversity of the Department’s workforce – including increased recruitment of veterans and minority candidates. This is a goal the Committee has long supported.

But as a country with global challenges and opportunities, I do have continued concerns about whether our diplomats and development specialists will have the resources they need. Yes, there is room for savings. But we should not – we cannot – lose sight of the fact that our diplomacy and assistance improves our national security and economic well-being for a relatively small amount.

Consider this Committee’s work – alongside many others – to sanction rogue regimes like Iran and North Korea; it takes skilled, properly resourced diplomacy to build international support for sanctions enforcement. The same is true when it comes to convincing nations to turn away cheap labor and materials from North Korea. Or working with us to counter Hezbollah. Or granting our health specialists access to halt an emerging pandemic in its tracks, as was done in West Africa with the Ebola virus.

Robust diplomacy is also needed in conflict zones, to defeat ISIS and other threats. That is what we hear from our generals, who understand the critical need for our country to have successful political, and not just military, strategies.

But this leadership requires being present. I am concerned about reports of closing embassies and consulates. Where we depart, we create a void for unfriendly actors to step in and promote interests hostile to ours. Where there is a diplomatic void, we have no eyes and ears to detect the next threat, or the next opportunity.

And so I want to thank the Department for starting a dialogue with Congress on these reforms, and on its policies and management more broadly. Some of the proposed reforms will require legislation, while

others can be undertaken administratively. But in both cases, the Committee has a significant oversight role to play, as we are doing today.

And after our successful work last Congress to get the first State authorities bill signed into law in well over a decade, the Committee continues to have some reform ideas of its own, which we look forward to sharing.