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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**  
Committee on Foreign Affairs Hearing:  
“The FY 2019 Foreign Assistance Budget”  
March 21, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

It's critical that the U.S. be engaged throughout the world. We have security, trade, humanitarian and many other interests worldwide. U.S. development and diplomacy activities abroad protect and advance these interests.

Today we will hear from Ambassador Mark Green, a former member of this committee, to review the administration's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request for the U.S. Agency for International Development – the premier development agency worldwide. It's your first appearance before the committee. Welcome Mark.

Regrettably, the administration has again proposed cutting USAID's funding by 33 percent – despite the fact that foreign aid accounts for less than one percent of the budget. As Secretary Mattis has said, undercutting diplomacy and development only increases the likelihood that U.S. forces will need to deploy in the first place.

Indeed, these proposed cuts would impact a number of U.S. priorities – including efforts to combat terrorists, poachers and human traffickers. U.S. leadership was key to stopping Ebola in West Africa, and continued engagement is needed to address future health threats before they hit our shores. The U.S. also has a proud legacy of supporting electoral processes and democratic institutions, providing a lifeline to people fighting for freedom and suffering under authoritarian regimes worldwide. These efforts shouldn't be shorted. And we see proposed cuts to humanitarian assistance at a time when more than 65 million people have been displaced by conflict, and famine looms in at least four countries.

Now, everyone agrees that these overseas programs can be improved. Both USAID and the Department of State need to better align U.S. assistance with our most pressing national security objectives. They also need to eliminate duplication and waste, and promote a capable and adaptable workforce. However, I worry that this budget request will hamstring USAID's efforts on these fronts.

That said, there are some bright spots in this budget request. It supports the creation of a Development Finance Institution that could unleash the power of private sector-led growth, while expanding opportunities for U.S. investment and trade – a proposal with bipartisan, bicameral support that this committee will soon consider.

The budget prioritizes funding for programs that promote greater self-reliance, including helping countries mobilize their own resources for development. It emphasizes transparency, accountability, and programming for results. The budget also gives us a glimpse into some of the much-needed organizational changes at USAID. Already, Ambassador Green has improved coordination with DoD, helping to ensure that development interests are on a level playing field with diplomacy and defense.

Just as aid can't be an entitlement for those overseas, it shouldn't be an entitlement here at home. This includes food aid, which for too long has been treated as an entitlement for a handful of shipping companies rather than as a humanitarian program meant to save lives. I look forward to working with the administrator to ensure that the Food for Peace program is fully reformed so we can stretch our aid dollars further and save more lives.

U.S. foreign aid is a needed tool to advance vital U.S. economic, humanitarian and security interests. Ambassador Green, I look forward to working with you and committee colleagues to see that USAID remains a world-class, cutting-edge development agency.