

Written Statement of Administrator Samantha Power
House Foreign Affairs Committee
May 17, 2022

Thank you Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and distinguished members of the committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 President's Budget Request for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

It is no overstatement to say we gather at a profound juncture in history.

For 16 straight years, we've seen the number of people living under democratic rule decline—the world is now less free and less peaceful than at any point since the Cold War. And for several years, autocracies have grown increasingly brazen on the world stage, claiming that they can get things done for the people with a speed and effectiveness that democracies cannot match.

Today, we see just how empty that rhetoric is, and just how dark the road to autocracy can be. Vladimir Putin's brutal war on a peaceful neighbor in Ukraine has shown a callous disregard for human life, global stability, and the very idea of truth itself. The courage of the people of Ukraine and the stalwart support of the United States and our allies and partners has unified and inspired people around the world striving for peace, democracy, human rights and freedom. Meanwhile, the People's Republic of China continues its campaign of genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, forcibly detaining more than one million Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups.

If the world's free nations, with the United States in the lead, are able to unite the efforts of our allies, the private sector, and our multilateral institutions, and marshal the resources necessary to help partner nations stand up to autocracies, manage the aftershocks of Putin's war against Ukraine, end the pandemic, fight climate change, prevent conflict and promote stability, and safeguard democratic reforms, we have a chance extend the reach of peace, prosperity, and human dignity to billions.

This has been USAID's mission since its inception six decades ago, and I am immensely grateful to you for your continued bipartisan support of our efforts to save lives, strengthen economies, prevent fragility, promote resilience, and bolster freedom around the world. USAID's work is a demonstration to the world that America cares about the plight of others, and that we can competently accomplish mammoth goals that no other country can. But the work we do abroad also matters to Americans here at home—it makes us safer, more prosperous, engenders goodwill that strengthens alliances and global cooperation, and creates a better future for the generations to come.

The Biden-Harris Administration's FY 2023 Request of \$29.4 billion fully funding foreign assistance that is partially implemented by USAID is a reflection of the critical importance of development and humanitarian assistance in advancing U.S. interests around the world. The FY 2023 request also includes vital assistance to respond to the growing number of development priorities and global humanitarian crises. The Request additionally includes \$6.5 billion in mandatory funding for the State Department and USAID to make transformative investments in pandemic and other biological threat preparedness globally, including financing for the new pandemic preparedness and global health security fund being established this summer, with leadership by the Indonesian G20 presidency and other partners around the world.

We know, though, that the mammoth needs around the world—from the COVID-19 pandemic's continued effects to multi-billion dollar climate shocks to a spike in global food, energy, and fertilizer prices due to the Russian Federation's belligerence—are far larger than any single nation's ability to meet them. The request will allow the United States to lead, and in leading, allow us to mobilize allies, organizations, and private sector partners to contribute more to the causes critical to our nation's interests.

Thanks to your past support, the United States has helped get more than half a billion COVID-19 vaccines to people in 115 countries; led life-saving humanitarian and disaster responses in 68 countries, including Haiti, Ethiopia, and Ukraine; helped enhance pathways for legal migration to the U.S. while working to strengthen worker protections; and assisted the relocation and resettlement of Afghan colleagues and refugees under the most dire of circumstances, while pivoting our programming in Afghanistan to address ongoing food insecurity and public health needs, and continuing to push to keep women and girls in school.

We are also making strides to become a much more nimble Agency at a time of immense demands, shoring up a depleted Agency by welcoming new recruits, and operating with greater flexibility. The FY 2023 Request will build on these steps forward, giving us the ability to invest in the people and systems to meet the world's most significant challenges so the United States can seize this moment in history.

Supporting the people of Ukraine and managing the global food crisis stemming from the Kremlin's war of aggression

As we enter the third month of the Russian Federation's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, the humanitarian situation has grown dire, especially in the country's east, even as Ukraine continues to put up stiff resistance on the battlefield. We are actively programming resources passed in the March 15th Ukraine Supplemental Act and seeking additional supplemental resources to continue supporting the people of Ukraine and address rising global food insecurity as they continue to defend their sovereignty and their country. These resources

are critical to making sure that Russia's war against Ukraine is a strategic failure for the Kremlin, while easing the global suffering their actions have caused.

Since the war began, more than 13 million people have been displaced—over a quarter of Ukraine's population including two-thirds of the country's children. That includes 5.7 million refugees, 90 percent of whom are women and children. An estimated 7.7 million more people are internally displaced inside Ukraine. An estimated 15.7 million people inside Ukraine will need humanitarian assistance over the next four months.

These supplemental resources that Congress provided have been instrumental in surging critically-needed assistance to those in need in the country, and to mobilizing the humanitarian systems required to coordinate a significant response. To date, our implementing partner, the World Food Program—which was not present on the ground in Ukraine when the conflict broke out—has scaled up its presence, and has now provided nearly 3.5 million people with rapid response rations, bread distributions, and cash-based transfers, with plans to increase distribution to reach 6 million people by June. With support from the United States and other donors, UNICEF and its local partners have provided critical health supplies to support access to primary health care for over 1.5 million children and women and ensured access to safe water for nearly 1.3 million people in affected areas as of May 3. While much has been accomplished, we recognize that more must be done, particularly in securing humanitarian access to reach those in active conflict zones with the assistance they urgently need.

To support the Ukrainian government's ability to administer services and manage its budgetary needs, USAID has contributed \$500 million to the World Bank's Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Ukraine (MDTF), and as President Biden announced recently, we plan to transfer an additional \$500 million from the FY 2022 Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, for a total of \$1 billion. The supplemental funding will also enable us to provide assistance to Ukraine and neighboring frontline states like Moldova. This plan focuses on economic stabilization, countering disinformation, and promoting energy independence.

Of course, Putin's war has effects beyond Ukraine's borders. The Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine has led to serious disruptions to global food, fuel, and fertilizer supplies, while also denting crop production and household incomes, and causing already high food prices to rise further, thereby taxing the international humanitarian system. USAID is coordinating with other U.S.

Departments and Agencies to respond to immediate, medium-, and long-term impacts on global food security and nutrition. Estimates suggest that up to 40 million additional people could be pushed into poverty and food insecurity over the coming year—in addition to the over 800 million people around the world who already face hunger. These populations are mostly focused in the Middle East, and West and East Africa, where higher fertilizer prices today threaten crop yields and harvests tomorrow. With the main planting season about to begin, countries like Ethiopia and South Sudan face the possibility of significant reductions to projected crop yields, food accessibility, and household incomes.

Putin's attack and its devastating effects on global food security comes on top of two years of record food insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. In FY 2022, nearly two thirds of our Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's programming was to address food insecurity and prevent famine through emergency food assistance and related programming. This year, a similar proportion of funding will go to address growing food insecurity, however, due to the skyrocketing costs of food and fuel, the same amount of funding will reach 10 million fewer people.

In light of the food crisis, USAID, together with our partners at USDA, have made the exceptional decision to draw down the full balance of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust—\$282 million—which will be used to procure U.S. food commodities to bolster existing emergency food operations in six countries facing severe food insecurity: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Yemen. We are immensely grateful to USDA, which will provide \$388 million in additional funding through the Commodity Credit Corporation to cover transportation and other associated costs so that food can get to places around the globe where it is needed most.

Yet even as we meet short-term food assistance needs, we must continue to invest in long-term food security and build resilient food systems so that countries have the ability to feed themselves, lower their dependence on Russian wheat and agriculture, and manage future food shocks.

The United States Government has long been a global leader in addressing global food insecurity. In the first seven years since the launch of the U.S. Feed the Future Initiative, the program is estimated to have lifted 23.4 million people out of poverty, 5.2 million households out of hunger, and 3.4 million children from risk of stunting. That's in addition to the program's measurable benefits for farmers and agribusinesses here in the U.S. and around the world, due to increased agricultural productivity, trade, jobs and income, and U.S. exports.

And yet, new disruptions to food security around the world indicate that our need for funding will continue to be significant. That's why the FY 2023 Request includes over \$1 billion in State and USAID economic and development funding for global food security. This money will go towards bolstering Feed the Future initiatives around the world, strengthening food systems, supporting farmers, and building community resilience.

Controlling COVID-19 and Strengthening Global Health Leadership

Much has changed from the haunting early days in March 2020. Thanks to funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and additional supplemental appropriations, the United States has

been the clear leader in the international response to COVID-19, and our Agency has already invested over 95 percent of the funding Congress has generously provided to us, and we expect to obligate virtually all of the remaining funds by July.

We have expanded testing, treatment, and surveillance in countries around the world. In hotspots in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, we have provided rapid responses for urgent healthcare needs, critical commodities, and technical assistance. And we have helped support developing countries in mitigating the transmission and morbidity of COVID-19, while also helping those countries prevent and mitigate food insecurity, gender-based violence, and other secondary effects of COVID-19.

Our Agency has also helped lead the effort to vaccinate the world. In partnership with the Department of Defense, we have procured 1 billion Pfizer vaccine doses for up to 100 countries around the world, free of charge and with no strings attached. We are addressing the most urgent vaccine delivery and country readiness needs in more than 100 countries, including surge support to 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, under the U.S. government's Global VAX initiative. We are leading Global VAX as a whole-of-government effort in close partnership with the Centers for Disease Control—and we are already seeing significant vaccination progress in these countries such as Uganda, where vaccination coverage increased fivefold between January and May, and Nigeria, where vaccination rates increased nearly threefold during that same time period.

And yet, our job remains unfinished. Many countries are still off track to hit their vaccination coverage targets this year. Global testing, treatment, and health services still lag. Without additional resources, many of our programs will begin wrapping up activities and closing down this fall. And we risk a significant loss of progress in our other global health programs if we cannot secure needed emergency funds. That's why President Biden requested \$22.5 billion in supplemental funding to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, \$5 billion of which would be dedicated to global efforts.

Additional supplemental funding would enable a significant expansion of our international vaccination drive, provide surge support to an additional 20-to-25 undervaccinated countries in significant need, countries like Liberia, where 24 percent of the population is vaccinated, and Haiti, where less than two percent of the population is fully vaccinated. It would also support other international COVID-19 response priorities like providing boosters and pediatric vaccinations, testing, treatments—including the newest, high-impact antivirals—as well as additional health services that would reach an additional 100 million people.

Such funding is essential if we are ever to turn COVID-19 from a damaging global pandemic into a manageable respiratory disease.

Barring additional funding, the United States will have to turn its back on the countries that need urgent help to boost their vaccination rates and access lifesaving treatments. Failing to help these countries get shots into arms and reduce severe disease means we will leave their populations unprotected and allow the virus to continue mutating into new, potentially more dangerous variants. Scientific research has established that new variants are more likely to emerge from a long-term infection in immuno-compromised individuals who lack access to vaccination or treatment. These variants will inevitably make their way onto American soil, close down American cities, and infect and cost American lives.

Last week, the United States, Belize, Germany, Indonesia, and Senegal co-hosted the second Global COVID-19 Summit. Summit participants made major new policy and financial commitments to make vaccines available to those at highest risk, to expand access to tests and treatments, and to prevent future health crises. Specifically, leaders from governments and other key partners, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and philanthropies committed to provide \$3.2 billion in new funding, in addition to previous 2022 pledges. This includes nearly \$2.5 billion for COVID-19 and related response activities and \$712 million in new commitments toward a new pandemic preparedness and global health security fund at the World Bank. This funding will be complemented by significant policy commitments from lower-income countries to accelerate their domestic responses to COVID-19 and enhance their global health security capabilities. These commitments are critical, and show that others have been inspired to step up to fund this response and future pandemic preparedness. However, significant financing gaps remain, and they are no substitute for sustained leadership and significant investment from the United States to control what continues to be a deadly pandemic and prevent the emergence of new variants.

As we race to end the pandemic, USAID continues to push ahead on our broader global health efforts. The FY 2023 Request for USAID includes \$3.96 billion to advance American leadership in Global Health and Global Health Security. These funds will help to prevent child and maternal deaths, bolster nutrition, control the HIV/AIDS epidemic, expand the global health workforce, and combat infectious diseases. Funding in USAID-managed assistance will respond to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on global health programs including tuberculosis and malaria, as well as strengthening health systems and global health security to better prevent, detect, and respond to future infectious disease outbreaks.

In addition, the FY 2023 Request includes \$6.5 billion in mandatory funding for the Department of State and USAID for critical pandemic preparedness activities. These funds will make transformative investments in pandemic and other biological threat preparedness globally by strengthening the global health workforce, advancing pandemic vaccine development,

replenishing emergency response capacity, and providing health security financing to prevent, detect, and respond to future infectious disease outbreaks.

Bolstering Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance and fighting corruption

As the pandemic stretched into a second year, pro-democracy movements in many countries faltered, while governments, under guise of ending the pandemic, enacted new restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Disinformation ran rampant and sowed division within and between free nations. And the Chinese and Russian governments have worsened these trends by supporting authoritarian actors all over the world.

At the same time, corruption has increased in scale and scope. Today's corrupt actors are highly networked, agile, and resourced—and for the most part, they outmatch those who stand against them. USAID's Anti-Corruption Task Force found that USAID Missions have extremely limited—and in some cases, no—resources to defend against corruption. While this is incredibly concerning, it's also a historic window of opportunity for reform.

This opportunity, combined with the increased threats of corruption and democratic backsliding, is why the FY 2023 Request includes over \$2.94 billion to revitalize global democracy. These funds will empower local partners, provide transparency in political systems, and address authoritarianism and disinformation. Of this foreign assistance request for democracy, roughly \$2.6 billion is in accounts that USAID will fully or partially manage. The request will advance the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal introduced at the Summit for Democracy, a landmark set of policy and foreign assistance initiatives that support free and independent media, empower historically marginalized groups and democratic reformers, and help develop open, secure, and inclusive digital ecosystems.

Traditionally, our democracy assistance has emphasized media training, election monitoring, and human rights advocacy. But as we've seen, countries in the midst of a civilian transition or with a newly elected leader who rose to power on the back of a campaign to fight corruption or expand the rule of law, need not only traditional democracy assistance and investments in civil society to hold governments accountable, but resources that can immediately deliver a democratic dividend that demonstrate the value of good governance and strong institutions and services for citizens. That might include support to acquire vaccines, establish a social safety net, or invest in a power utility to keep the lights on. This funding will give us the flexibility to support countries in the event of a democratic opening—so-called democratic “bright spots”—with the resources they need to demonstrate that democracies can deliver for their people. This amount also includes \$100 million to fight transnational corruption by empowering anti-corruption champions, strengthening partner countries' ability to detect and prevent corruption, and exposing and disrupting the flow of illicit money, goods, and natural resources.

The President’s FY 2023 request includes \$2.6 billion for USAID and the Department of State to promote gender equality and the political, economic, and social empowerment of women and girls; prevent and respond to gender-based violence; expand access to child, elder, and home care services and address gender discrimination and systemic inequities blocking the full participation of women and girls, men and boys, and individuals of other gender identities—all by integrating gender equality across a range of development, humanitarian and security assistance. This historic request would more than double our commitment to women’s empowerment and gender equality.

Advancing gender equality reduces poverty, promotes economic growth, increases access to education, improves health outcomes, advances political stability, and fosters democracy. The full participation of all people is essential to economic well-being, health, and security.

Restoring U.S. Climate Leadership

Recently, USAID launched a new Climate Strategy that will guide our efforts to tackle the existential threat of climate change over this decade in a way that is truly transformational.

Our Climate Strategy lays out six ambitious targets to be achieved between 2022-2030, which together would represent a dramatic increase in our Agency’s efforts to stem the climate crisis. These targets include preventing six billion metric tons of global greenhouse gas emissions—the equivalent of taking 100 million cars off the road for a decade—and conserving 100 million hectares of critical landscapes, an area more than twice the size of California. We would also support 500 million people to better prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change that are already wreaking havoc on marginalized communities.

The President’s FY 2023 Request includes \$2.3 billion in international climate financing, and given the substantial gap in climate financing globally, USAID’s Climate Strategy places a special emphasis on catalyzing substantial new private investment for climate mitigation and adaptation; our goal is to kickstart \$150 billion in new public and private climate finance by 2030. We are also focused on the conservation, restoration and management of 100 million hectares of carbon critical landscapes by 2039—land that captures and stores carbon while preserving biodiversity and helping to prevent zoonotic transfer of diseases driven by habitat destruction.

We also continue to work closely with the Government of India through the support of their global climate initiative, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. The United States is a founding member of the coalition, and we have invested in supporting its technical leadership and formalization, with a goal of creating a global body that will advocate for the creation of infrastructure that can withstand climate and disaster risks and disseminate best practices. Since

its founding in 2019, the Coalition now has 35 global members and over 400 companies, all working to share expertise and strengthen resilient infrastructure development across the globe.

Addressing Irregular Migration from Central America

In the past six months alone, USAID programming in Central America has created more than 40,000 jobs, provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to 1.8 million people, supported distribution of more than 10 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, and helped mobilize \$1.2 billion in private investment. Because one of the most effective ways to counter irregular migration is to provide legal means for securing seasonal or temporary migration, we have helped expand labor migration pathways from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras through the H-2B seasonal visa program. And we have used policy, development, and diplomatic tools to pressure leaders in the region to govern democratically and transparently.

But as demonstrated by the continued arrival of migrants at American borders, much more work is needed. Individual migration decisions are complex, but they are rarely made on a whim, and we use data from multiple sources to understand their root causes and target our programs accordingly. As documented by the Government Accountability Office, the decision to suspend most assistance to Northern Central America in 2019 adversely impacted over 80 percent of USAID projects, and we continue to work aggressively to restart, optimize and scale our programs. For FY 2023, USAID and the Department of State are requesting \$986.8 million to support the second year of implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration in Central America.

Using this money, we will continue working with partners in civil society, government, and the private sector to address the drivers of migration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—drivers like lack of economic opportunity, corruption, violence, human rights abuses, absence of quality public services, and declining trust in government. We will continue building and implementing a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan designed to track progress under the Strategy. And we will defend democracy, human rights, and civic space throughout Central America so that citizens believe they have a voice and a future in their countries of origin. Nicaragua is a case in point. The Ortega regime's gravely concerning wide-scale crackdown on civil society and rejection of democratic norms and processes in Nicaragua has coincided with a major rise in out migration of Nicaraguans fleeing political repression and economic stagnation under Ortega.

Responding to humanitarian crises in places like Ethiopia and Afghanistan

Stopping the threat of famine and addressing atrocities in Ethiopia is a top priority for the Biden Administration and for USAID. Fighting has left as many as 9 million people in northern Ethiopia in desperate need of food and forced more than 2 million people to flee their homes. Food insecurity projections from February 2022 to May 2022 show that up to a million people will face famine-like conditions in northern Ethiopia by June—700,000 of those in the Tigray Region. In the Tigray Region alone, more than 90 percent of people depend on assistance.

At the same time, there have been multiple, credible reports of gross violations of human rights related to the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Since last appearing before this committee, I visited the Um Rakuba refugee camp in Sudan, where I met with victims of the conflict in Tigray and heard their heartbreaking stories of abuse and violence.

Recently, the Government of Ethiopia and Tigray regional authorities reached a truce in their fighting—the source of so much of this human misery. And since the truce on March 24, over 200 trucks have arrived in Tigray in April alone, with the number of trucks slowly increasing. But to meet the immense humanitarian needs in Tigray, more than 500 trucks carrying tons of food and life-saving supplies need to arrive each week. The current flow is woefully insufficient.

We will continue to push for significant, sustained, unconditional, and unhindered delivery of much-needed aid to all those in need. We will also continue working with interagency partners to address and mitigate ongoing human rights violations and credible reports of atrocities by countering hate speech and mis- and disinformation, strengthening protection of freedom of expression and peaceful protest, supporting independent media outlets and watchdog organizations, strengthening local conflict mitigation, supporting the rule of law, building an enabling environment for national dialogue, and monitoring and documenting human rights abuses.

In Afghanistan, an estimated 22.8 million Afghans face food insecurity following the Taliban's seized power in August 2021. Currently, the United Nations estimates that 95 percent of the Afghan population is in need of assistance. And to truly end the humanitarian crisis, we must also address the roots of Afghanistan's economic and development crises as well as advocate for the promotion of human rights for all Afghans. On March 23, the Taliban abruptly reversed its decision to allow girls to attend school past the sixth grade. On May 7, the Taliban imposed additional restrictions on Afghan women and girls freedom of movement, employment, and access to society, all of which jeopardize the human rights and agency of Afghan women. The Taliban have also threatened civil society organizations through media crackdowns, intimidation, unjust detentions, and assaults of journalists.

While we continue to work through diplomatic channels and likeminded donors to press the Taliban to reverse course and allow all girls to go to school, women to work and participate in

the economy and protect the rights of minorities and civil society; we remain committed to supporting the people of Afghanistan. The United States has been the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance since the fall of Kabul in August 2021. Since then, the U.S. Government has contributed \$719 million. Alongside us, the humanitarian community provided another \$1.82 billion towards the humanitarian response in 2021. And we are working with our partners to support basic needs like health, livelihoods, agriculture, and education.

We will continue programs to enable the direct delivery of humanitarian assistance. Our aid helps support rural livelihoods, improve food security and develop resilience in food systems in Afghanistan, enable women and girls to access quality healthcare, education, support for gender-based violence, civil society organizations, and training and livelihood programs. And we support journalists and media organizations, while also working to counter human trafficking.

Supporting community-led development

Across all our efforts, it is crucial that we engage more frequently and more intensely and sustainably with a broader range of partners. That's especially true of the community-led organizations and companies based in the countries in which we work. When we partner with these local NGOs and businesses, we have an opportunity to double our impact—to not just manage a project and deliver results, but to grow the local capacity of that business or organization so its impact will be sustained long after its relationship with USAID ends.

Our current approach to community-led development draws upon more than a decade of the Agency's prior experience. It aims to devolve more power and leadership to local actors, elevate diversity and equity in our partnerships, and address some of the systemic and operational constraints at USAID. We have to approach localization as a shift in not just with whom we work, but also in how we work: creating intentional shifts in the way we design and implement our programs so that we are putting local communities and stakeholders in the lead. This is about deeper, more systemic change.

Our efforts to advance community-led development have been warmly embraced by more than 1,000 local development organizations, as well as by many of our implementing partners and some of the largest international non-governmental organizations. Thanks to your support, the FY 2022 appropriations bill provided an initial \$100 million in the FY 2022 appropriations bill to support our Centroamérica Local initiative, along with the authority, flexibility, and staff resources to prioritize working with local organizations in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

With more support from Congress, we can deepen this approach across our Agency and our Missions. The FY 2023 Request includes \$47.6 million for the Centroamérica Local

initiative—\$40 million for direct awards to local organizations and \$7.6 million to help staff this effort.

Investing in our people and building a stronger culture

Of course, none of what we set out to achieve would be possible without USAID’s dedicated team of development professionals serving our nation throughout the world. Many of our staff are still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, having lost loved ones even as they sought to protect others in their community from the virus.

With your support, we are also increasing the size and agility of the career workforce to better advance U.S. national security priorities. Since last year, we have hired approximately 500 career employees and are working to reach our target levels of 1,850 Foreign Service and 1,600 Civil Service employees this year.

The FY 2023 Request includes \$1.7 billion to continue these efforts to invest in our people and build our institutional capacity, increasing the number of U.S. direct-hire positions that advance our most critical and effective foreign assistance program. This funding covers salaries and benefits of our direct hire Foreign Service and Civil Service workforce, overseas and Washington operations, and central support, including human capital initiatives, security, and information technology. The FY 2023 Request also includes resources for the launch of the Global Development Partnership initiative, a workforce expansion program, that will focus on democracy and anti-corruption, global health security, national security, climate change, operational management, and a more permanent humanitarian assistance workforce.

But in reconstituting our workforce, we want to recruit and retain talent differently than we have before, with an emphasis on hiring and nurturing a workforce that truly represents America. Thanks to the sustained leadership of our staff, we’ve taken several steps toward these aims. Their work and advocacy over many years enabled one of my first acts as Administrator, which was signing the USAID Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan—a framework document to guide the Agency’s efforts to integrate DEIA into every aspect of our work.

Since signing this document, we’ve taken concrete steps to advance our DEIA goals. We have conducted assessments that provided us with data and employee experiences to help us decide how to prioritize our efforts and resources. We onboarded five DEIA Advisors in Washington operating units and are actively recruiting more. And we have established the Office of the Chief DEIA Officer and welcomed our Agency’s first-ever Chief Diversity Officer. We also launched our first recruitment conferences for students at both Historically Black Colleges and

Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions, with another planned for Arab American students later this year.

Since appearing before you last year, I have had the chance to travel to three HBCUs—Delaware State, Tuskegee University, and Alcorn State—as well as Florida International University, the largest Hispanic-Serving Institution in the U.S., to sign new agreements that will help expand our recruitment and research partnerships.

Additionally, we are addressing current DEIA data gaps by making our data collection process more inclusive. We're expanding our talent recruitment pipelines and lowering barriers to entry for development partnership opportunities by collaborating with minority-serving institutions, increasing engagement and career development opportunities for underrepresented students, and establishing hiring goals to increase the number of employees who are persons with disabilities.

However, it is not enough just to recruit talent, we must nurture and develop it. We will expand access to professional development and learning opportunities and equip our managers with the tools to lead talented and diverse teams. We are also developing commitments to our locally-employed colleagues to codify entitlements, benefits, and career advancement and professional development opportunities for our Foreign Service Nationals, who constitute 70 percent of our overseas workforce.

Conclusion

The challenges we have encountered in the past year are grave and loom large, but I sincerely believe the opportunity before us is even larger. By providing the resources necessary to seize this moment, the United States can galvanize commitments from our allies and our private sector partners; support the people of Ukraine in their moment of need and help manage the impact the Kremlin's war is having on the world's food supply; control the COVID-19 pandemic while laying the groundwork to detect and prevent future pandemics, strengthen health systems, and quickly rollout future vaccines; help countries adapt to the worst effects of climate change while embracing new renewable technologies and green jobs; and demonstrate to the world that democracies can deliver in a way no autocracy can. These actions are the key to reversing years of democratic decline and creating a more stable, peaceful, prosperous and stable future for people at home and abroad.

With your support, USAID will move aggressively to grasp this opportunity to build a brighter future for us all. Thank you.