

**Written Statement of
U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Samantha Power
House Foreign Affairs Committee
May 17, 2023**

Thank you Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, and other distinguished members of the Committee.

The challenge the world faces today is clear: The decades of development gains that have laid the foundation for an era of relative peace, stability, and prosperity are at serious risk.

During our lifetimes, the United States has helped accelerate tremendous progress in reducing extreme poverty, fighting disease, addressing hunger, getting kids in school, and fueling democracy's rise.

But now, many of these trends have moved into reverse. The pandemic decimated health systems, leading to a resurgence in diseases from measles to tuberculosis. It also battered many nation's finances. After a decade of heavy borrowing and more recently rising inflation—exacerbated by Putin's war—60 percent of the world's poorest countries are at or near debt distress. And natural disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity, leading to a sharp rise in humanitarian needs. The upshot of it all is stark: For the first time in decades, human life expectancy is on the decline—while extreme poverty is on the rise.

At the same time, democracies everywhere are under attack. Our rivals are using transnational corruption, digital repression, disinformation—and in Ukraine, actual artillery fire—to undermine freedom, elevate autocrats, and curry favor.

It's a daunting list of challenges. And I know some question whether the United States should be taking on these challenges through our development investments, or whether the scope of the challenges is too great to make a meaningful difference.

But the fact is our national security hinges on this work. Deprivation and indignity abroad can fuel resource competition, political fragility, and extremism that endangers us here at home. Disease outbreaks can cross oceans, and recessions in foreign markets can threaten our own economic growth.

And if we don't lead efforts to take on these challenges, the People's Republic of China and Putin are ready to step in, whether through opaque loans on unfavorable terms, or with mercenaries in tow.

An international order that values democracy and human rights and respects international borders is not a given. Indeed, authoritarian actors are challenging and aiming to reshape it. We have to invest in the stable and humane world we need.

USAID is privileged to have a leading role in tackling the most significant challenges of our time, in close coordination with our interagency partners advancing diplomacy and defense. And we are grateful to the American people—and to you—for giving us the resources to make a major difference.

That said, we know that to drive progress on the scale we need, we have to bring other donor countries, the private sector, multilateral institutions, foundations, and local organizations in our partner countries along with us. So USAID has set a new reform agenda aimed at delivering progress beyond our development programs—using our expertise, convening power, and advocacy to draw in others, leverage more resources, spark innovation, and inspire broader movements for change. The Biden-Harris Administration's FY 2024 request of \$32 billion for USAID's fully- and partially-managed accounts will allow us to make more of that transformative impact.

Alongside our partners, we'll invest in countries experiencing democratic openings, helping them show that democracy delivers tangible results for citizens. We'll work with nations to attract private sector investment and drive broadly shared economic growth. We'll support countries that are rebuilding their decimated health systems. And we'll meet growing humanitarian needs not just with emergency assistance, but long-term investments in resilience.

And, crucially, we'll invest in our workforce to carry out this ambitious agenda. Since 2019, our operating expense funds have increased at half the rate that our programming has grown—giving us more to do with fewer people and resources. But this budget will help us invest in the people and systems we need to power an Agency that is nimble and responsive.

We know that, with the United States leading the way, the world can drive meaningful progress against our toughest challenges—because we have decades of gains in global health, education, and prosperity to prove it. It's on us, now, to resume that progress.

A few months ago, President George W. Bush posed a question. “What’s the role of a great country in the world? Is it to look inward? Is it to think about how to solve big problems?” As he said, “We all decided to work together to solve big problems.” Let’s continue that legacy.

Thank you.