

Testimony of
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Testimony

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak with you today on the implementation of the Global Food Security Act and giving me the opportunity to discuss the work that U.S. Government agencies, including the Department of State, have been doing on the issue of food security. Your passion and conviction in fighting hunger and malnutrition has been crucial to progress on this important issue.

The bipartisan Global Food Security Act (GFSA) gave the President the tools to address food insecurity and the suffering, chaos, and instability it can cause. Now more than ever, the issues of global food security are critical to global security and, specifically, the security of the United States. When global food prices spiked in 2008, civil unrest and violence erupted in more than 60 countries. Food insecurity continues to exacerbate political instability today. The 2015 Intelligence Community Assessment on Global Food Security estimated that the overall risk of food insecurity in many countries of strategic importance to the United States would continue to increase through 2025, and, in some countries, declining food security might spark large-scale political instability or conflict.

While food insecurity drives conflict, conflict also drives food insecurity. Today in 2017, over 80 million people are experiencing extreme food insecurity. Nearly 20 million people face the threat of famine as a result of man-made crises in Yemen, Nigeria, and South Sudan – all of which are driven by violent conflict – and in Somalia where ongoing conflict is aggravating the effects of severe and prolonged drought. Further raising global levels of food insecurity are the more than 65 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and have limited access to livelihoods.

Part of building long-term food security entails developing agricultural economies and introducing new technologies and methods. USAID and other agency programs under the whole of government Feed the Future initiative do just that. However, the solutions to severe food insecurity emergencies also require diplomacy, including mitigating conflicts, building

democracy and governance, and addressing the causes of prolonged instability. That we are facing the threat of famine in four countries highlights the need to address the root causes of food insecurity – in these countries, largely conflict and drought – as well as building long-term resilience to avoid, rather than respond to, severe food insecurity and malnutrition.

The Department of State is in the unique position of engaging with foreign governments, international organizations, and other partners diplomatically, and to work with them to develop and promote an effective response to improve food security and nutrition. The Department uses bilateral and multilateral channels to address the causes of global food insecurity and famine, as well as to build long-term economic resilience to address issues of food insecurity, malnutrition, and evolving socio-economic issues, such as youth, migration, and urbanization, which have potential long-term impact on food security.

Multilaterally, the Department of State is working through the UN system, as well as initiatives under, *inter alia*, the G-7, G-20, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to develop food security programming to build capacity and resilience. The Department of State leads the U.S. government in the annual intergovernmental forum, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which occurs at the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. The CFS produces global policy recommendations, frameworks and voluntary guidelines on food security, agriculture and nutrition.

The State Department co-leads our engagement in the Food Security Working Group within the G-7 and negotiates the food security deliverables and outcomes of each G-7 presidency. G-7 leaders met on May 26-27 in Taormina, Italy, where they issued the G-7 Taormina Leaders' Communique. Global food security and nutrition featured prominently in the document, with G-7 leaders stressing two main messages: (1) the urgency of mobilizing assistance to address the immediate impacts and underlying causes of famine and near-famine conditions in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen, and (2) G-7 leaders' commitment to taking a variety of actions, including increasing official development assistance, attracting responsible private investments, and other measures, to reduce food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Department also co-leads our engagement on food security and nutrition in the G-20. At the recent G20 Summit, the United States supported the collective actions outlined in the 2017 G-20 Rural Youth Employment Initiative, which promotes employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for rural youth as a driver of inclusive rural transformation in developing countries with a focus on Africa. The United States also joined other G20 members in recognizing the famine and near-famine conditions in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen and reaffirmed our commitment to address the underlying causes of recurrent and protracted crises.

Through APEC, the Department is actively involved in the Policy Partnership for Food Security (PPFS) that further supports the goals of the GFSA by strengthening public-private cooperation to address regional food security issues. This year the Department is particularly engaged in supporting development of the Action Plan for the Multi-Year Strategic Framework for Food Security and Climate Change.

In addition, the Department is engaging with international actors to support global resilience programs focused on vulnerable food sectors, such as fisheries. For example, the Department is engaged in COAST, a program aimed at establishing innovative insurance facilities for the fisheries sector to reduce the risk that changing weather and natural disasters pose to food security, and to encourage sustainable food production where possible. This food security initiative aims to create incentives for sustainable fishing practices in the Caribbean; however, it is applicable in other parts of the world as well. Fish and seafood are critical sources of protein and nutrition, and make up a significant portion of the total animal protein consumed in many low-income countries

The Department is also broadening the breadth of the GFSA implementation through additional diplomatic activities, such as engaging with allies and partners to encourage additional financial support and collaboration for an effective response to global food insecurity. The U.S. government has been a leading funder of food security programming, including food aid, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture, including mobilizing private sector commitments. The United States is also one of the largest donors of humanitarian assistance for the four countries facing famine, having provided to date in FY 2017 more than \$1.8 billion in humanitarian assistance to vulnerable and conflict-affected people in South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen, including internally displaced persons and refugees. Through multilateral forums, the Department continues to work with other donors and countries in the region to find long-term solutions to the conflicts that are fueling much of the food insecurity these countries face, and join the international response by providing additional financial support.

Innovation is a key element of our work on food security and some of the programs I have mentioned have shown how the U.S. government can use new models to mobilize private and public resources to address food security. I will briefly mention two issues that I think have particular importance: nutrition and urbanization.

Under the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) mandated by the GFSA, improving nutrition, particularly of women and children, is a key objective. Although often considered a health issue, nutrition is a multi-sectoral issue and has a major impact on human and economic development. Malnutrition is responsible for almost half of all deaths of children under the age of five, and worldwide, 155 million children are chronically malnourished. Proper nutrition is especially critical during the first 1,000 days from pregnancy through age two. Chronically malnourished

children face stunted growth and impaired cognitive development, often leading to completing fewer years of schooling, earning less income as adults, and ultimately hindering their economic potential. This can translate to a loss of eight percent of a country's GDP.

There is a robust set of international institutions to address nutrition issues robust global policy architecture, and the State Department is involved in all of these global policy mechanisms. The Department co-founded the 1,000 Days Partnership to bring attention, awareness and investment to this critical nutrition window. The Department also engages in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, a global movement to encourage countries to address their own malnutrition challenges. The Department also leads the U.S. engagement in the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, which acts to end all forms of malnutrition in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The U.S. has been one of the key stakeholders along with a group of other countries and organizations in the Nutrition for Growth Summit, a quadrennial event that has brought countries, civil society, the private sector and international organizations together on the issue of global nutrition.

Urbanization is another important issue. The urban share of global population is projected to increase to two-thirds by 2050, and 90 percent of this growth is expected to occur in Africa and Asia, where urban populations are already growing at twice the rate of rural populations. Malnutrition is a challenge in both rural and urban settings, particularly among the poor where access to nutritious food is limited as is the ability to purchase food. Urbanization is often associated with economic growth and the rise of the middle class, but merely living in a city does not guarantee wealth accumulation. Nearly one billion people live in slums worldwide, and face limited access to food, water, sanitation, and basic services. In this context, feeding rapidly urbanizing populations – including the urban poor – is becoming a central concern for food security policy, an issue the Department brought to the UN Habitat III summit last year.

To conclude, achieving the goals of the Global Food Security Act requires building diplomatic partnerships and developing innovative new solutions. The Department of State is working closely with interagency partners, foreign governments, non-traditional partners and international actors to achieve the goals of the GFSA. We are promoting sustainable finance systems for food security that catalyze nontraditional financing streams, such as domestic resources from national governments, private resources, and overseas development assistance. We are diplomatically engaging foreign governments bilaterally and through international fora to promote policies to improve global food security and nutrition, which ultimately leads to global security – including U.S. security interests.