

**USAID Assistant Administrator Erin McKee Testimony
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. National Security Interests in Ukraine
November 8, 2023**

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: Thank you for your invitation to speak today about USAID's ongoing efforts in Ukraine – and for your support for Ukraine. We are at a critical moment in our effort to assist Ukraine, with our partners fighting a war for survival, and our adversaries seeking to exhaust our will to support Ukraine's vital needs.

Since Putin began his full-scale war against Ukraine, the people of Ukraine have demonstrated unforgettable courage and resilience in the face of a brutal, unjustified onslaught. Putin's ongoing senseless attacks wreak death and destruction on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Innocent people have lost their loved ones. Invaders threaten the people of Ukraine with unconscionable abuses and atrocities, including documented evidence of war crimes such as conflict-related sexual violence, including gender-based violence against women, children and men, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and abuse. Russia's forces have ripped Ukrainian children from their homes. This is an orchestrated and systematic effort to forcibly transfer children to occupied parts of Ukraine or to Russia itself, where they

are subjected to pro-Russia indoctrination, and in many cases, military training.

Ukraine has outperformed all expectations on the battlefield. We understand there is concern for how long this war may take, and I want to reinforce that our assistance to Ukraine has strengthened Ukraine's ability to withstand Russia's aggression, and has strengthened the United States' capability to partner with Ukraine and other European democracies under threat from the Kremlin.

USAID is providing humanitarian and early economic recovery assistance. This combined with U.S. direct budget support is supporting Ukraine's recovery from the shock of the full-scale invasion and helping Ukraine return to financial independence. In response to the immediate crisis, USAID has provided nearly \$2 billion in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since February 2022. The generosity of the American people has supplied emergency health care, agriculture, and energy support to Ukraine's most vulnerable populations. Thanks to congressional appropriations, USAID disbursed reliable and sustained direct budget support to the Ukrainian government along with unprecedented levels of oversight. This enabled first responders, healthcare workers, teachers and others to continue their vital work and sustain Ukraine's economy and institutions, while they defend their country's freedom and sovereignty.

To respond to Russia's weaponization of hunger, USAID launched the Agriculture Resilience Initiative, known as AGRI-Ukraine, to help keep farmers afloat. USAID also works very closely with the private sector to improve Ukraine's energy security and transform Ukraine's energy sector into a modern engine of growth. Side by side with our agriculture and energy efforts is USAID's support to small and medium enterprises, helping Ukraine create jobs and increase its revenue. Without continued funding for this economic development, embattled Ukraine will remain dependent on donor support.

At this time, there is no funding left for direct budget support. Without further appropriations, the Government of Ukraine would need to use emergency measures, such as printing money or not paying critical salaries, which could lead to hyper-inflation and severely damage the war effort.

USAID has exhausted all of its supplemental humanitarian assistance funds as well. USAID partners will use remaining funding for humanitarian assistance in the coming months, but additional funding is critical in the face of enormous need. If Congress does not approve supplemental funding, it would force USAID to reallocate already scarce global resources to address Ukraine's needs. Our partner organizations in Ukraine would have to either

reduce the number of people getting assistance by up to 75% or suspend humanitarian programs entirely.

While our urgent priority is to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs of the people of Ukraine, USAID also looks to the future: to building resilient infrastructure and institutions that will support Ukraine's path towards European Union integration.

For decades, USAID has buttressed Ukraine's progress toward transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance. The United States continues to strengthen Ukraine's institutions, carry out judicial reform, institutionalize transparent financial systems, and meet the goal of the people of Ukraine for zero tolerance of corruption.

None of what we have achieved together would have been possible without the generosity of Congress and the American people. As articulated in the National Security Strategy, our USAID-State Joint Strategic Plan, and the Ukraine Country Development Cooperation Strategy, the United States must continue to aid the people of Ukraine. Through your bipartisan support, we have been able to deliver consistent and reliable life-saving assistance to people in need. We now face a critical crossroads.

Putin's goal is to weaponize winter and destroy Ukraine's

independence. Our assistance is vital to ensure he does not succeed. It is critical that we continue to do everything in our power to avoid the disastrous consequences of unchecked aggression by the Kremlin. The besieged people of Ukraine are fighting for their country's survival as a sovereign, democratic state. They are also fighting for basic needs, such as food, water, medicine, heat, and electricity.

Putin must not succeed. We must continue to support the people of Ukraine in their fight to thrive as a free, secure, independent country; a democracy rooted in the rule of law; and a place where all have dignity, human rights, and the opportunity to reach their full potential.