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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

January 24, 2018

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

I am concerned with both the substance and final approval process of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission statement, which you recently presented at your December town hall meeting. I strongly urge you to rescind the mission statement you presented for USAID and replace it with the mission statement developed by Administrator Mark Green in direct consultation and participation from thousands of USAID employees and staff. I also urge you to include the objective of “ending extreme poverty” in the mission statement. Finally, I recommend giving Administrator Green the honor of presenting the replacement mission statement.

As you may know, in an effort to make USAID mission statement development process more inclusive, Administrator Green solicited comments from Congress last year on its draft mission statement. I appreciated his outreach and submitted formal comments on the draft (see attached letter). I received a very encouraging response from Administrator Green and had a productive in-person meeting with him. I left that meeting encouraged that the final USAID mission statement would reflect my comments and suggestions. The final version of the mission statement the Administrator submitted to the State Department in August reflected much of my feedback, including the significant of “democracy promotion” to U.S. development missions. The mission statement you presented on behalf of USAID in December, however, does not reflect my feedback and undermines my confidence in your interest in working collaboratively with Congress.

In addition, I am concerned that the phrase “under the auspices...” in your mission statement lends credence to bi-partisan Congressional concerns, as well as broad U.S. stakeholder concerns, that your redesign process will result in State Department subsuming USAID.

I strongly urge you to strike this language from USAID’s mission statement. Much of USAID’s success depends on the Agency’s independence and its ability to function in support of broad U.S. foreign policy objectives that often align with the State Department’s strategic diplomatic objectives and national security goals. This independence is critical to building trust and strong development partnerships with host country governments, local partners and


community leaders, and non-profit and private sector corporate partners. Successful U.S. international development efforts that improve quality of life and self-sufficiency contributes to making the world safer and more stable, which is central to U.S. national security. The “under the auspices...” language may have a chilling effect on USAID’s partner organizations and the host countries and communities where USAID operates.

I have already shared my concerns with you about the elimination of democracy promotion from the State Department’s mission. As we discussed, representative democracies that are accountable and responsive to the citizenry are the backbone of thriving, sustainable societies. Without good governance principles, investments in sectors such as health and food systems, and improved business and job opportunities, are far more likely to fail. Moreover, it is precisely societies and countries where good government institutions are weak that some of the greatest threats from radicalization and terrorism arise. Administrator Green shares my view on this matter, and I was very pleased to see “strengthen democratic governance” incorporated into the final mission statement USAID sent to the State Department for approval. Its stark absence from the mission statement you released for USAID is deeply troubling. I urge you to remedy this omission.

Finally, the goal to end extreme poverty is both a moral and security imperative reflective of U.S. values. Vulnerable people fall victim to an array of political, social, and economic abuses. Extreme poverty creates a social climate where vulnerable people are susceptible to extremist influences, pandemic outbreaks, famine, proliferation of refugee and migrant populations, poor governance, and political corruption. The consequences of these challenges, if left unchecked, will have a negative impact on U.S. security interests. The most cost effective means to addressing these challenges is through prevention, which should start with maintaining USAID’s commitment to ending extreme poverty.

I urge you to reconsider USAID’s mission statement. I urge you to give Administrator Green the opportunity to set his Agency’s mission and to maintain control and autonomy of USAID’s international development efforts. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
Ranking Member