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**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MULTILATERAL INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS, AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC, ENERGY,
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**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Udall, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. It is an honor to appear before you to discuss the critical role of the United Nations as a venue for multilateral engagement, and especially with regard to global climate change.

My name is Reid Detchon, and I am Vice President for Energy and Climate Strategy at the United Nations Foundation here in Washington, DC. While my background and expertise lie in the energy and climate fields, I would like to say a few more general words at the outset about the importance of strong and constructive U.S. engagement with the United Nations. This is an issue that my organization cares about deeply, and while partially beyond my scope, I would be happy to relay any questions you might have to my colleagues at the Foundation.

The UN is an imperfect but necessary institution, providing a universal platform to address some of the most vexing challenges facing humanity – issues that no country, no matter how prosperous or powerful, can address alone. The U.S. has played a central role in the UN’s work from the very beginning, and will continue to do so as long as the organization exists. The benefits to our nation and to the world range from peacekeeping to humanitarian relief, as the UN takes on the problems that are too tough for any one country to handle. One need look no further than the current work being undertaken by UN humanitarian agencies to help feed, shelter, and provide medical care to millions of people in earthquake-hit Nepal, or efforts by the UN and partners to vaccinate more than one billion children against polio over the years, to understand the ongoing need for this type of multilateral institution.

Over the years, Congress has demonstrated a keen interest in continuing efforts to reform the UN’s budgetary, management, and accountability processes. Such initiatives are critical to the UN’s ability to meet the challenges of the 21st century and ensure that Member State resources are used most effectively, and the UN has made notable progress in this regard. Significant changes in how the organization does business have occurred in a number of areas in recent years, from the management of peacekeeping operations, to tougher ethics rules, to streamlined budgeting processes, to improvements in how the UN delivers humanitarian and development aid on the ground. These and other measures have fundamentally strengthened the UN as an institution, although much work remains to be done to build on these achievements.

Some additional, more recent reforms accomplished at the UN include, among other things: a new policy of making all of the institution's internal audit reports publicly available online – a victory for transparency that the U.S. called “a turning point in how the UN does business”; the General Assembly's approval of a core budget for 2014-15 that cut spending, reduced staffing by 2 percent, and stabilized compensation for UN employees; and implementation of the Global Field Support Strategy – an initiative aimed at improving the efficiency and speed of administrative and logistical support to UN field missions – which has led to a \$250 million reduction in operational costs for UN peacekeeping.

Despite this progress, however, some have suggested that the U.S. should withhold its financial contributions to the UN in order to force additional reforms. This strategy means well but is fatally flawed. None of the recent reforms I just described would have been possible without strong U.S. engagement. That means, in part, meeting our financial obligations to the institution by paying our dues on time, in full, and without onerous preconditions. Failing to do so can take away our seat at the table; it reduces our influence over the reform process, alienates our allies, whose support is critical to progress on our policy objectives, and puts UN activities that are directly in our national interest – such as peacekeeping operations – in financial jeopardy. Maintaining our good financial standing at the UN, in short, is critical to our ability to advance a constructive reform agenda.

The United Nations' most important role is to serve as a convening body for the world's nations to address global challenges. Turning to the subject I know best, the challenge of assessing and responding to the threat of global climate change is a textbook case of the UN's value to the international community. If confronted with a problem of global scale and significance, anyone would want to assemble the best experts from all over the world to assess it and propose possible responses. In fact, that describes exactly what the UN has done with regard to climate change. For such problems, it is often said that if we didn't have a UN, we would have to invent it.

Two UN agencies – the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program – created the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 27 years ago to prepare assessments, based on available scientific information, on all aspects of climate change and its impacts, to help formulate realistic response strategies. The initial task for the IPCC, as outlined in a resolution of the UN General Assembly in 1988, was to prepare a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to the state of knowledge of the science of climate change, the social and economic impacts of climate change, and possible response strategies and elements for inclusion in a possible future international convention on climate.

The scientific evidence assembled by the first IPCC Assessment Report in 1990 underlined the importance of climate change as a challenge that inherently requires international cooperation. Two years later, in June 1992, the world agreed in Rio de Janeiro on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. President George H.W. Bush, for whom I served in the Department of Energy, signed this treaty on behalf of the United States, and it was ratified by the U.S. Senate without dissent later that year. Its central objective was to achieve “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

Since then the IPCC has delivered four more comprehensive scientific assessments on climate change. This process is based entirely on published, peer-reviewed studies; it does not involve independent research. The Fifth Assessment Report, the product of more than 830 experts from more than 80 countries, consisted of three Working Group reports and a Synthesis Report for policy makers. It was approved by the IPCC's member countries (195 in number) and released in four parts between September 2013 and November 2014.

What did this report conclude?

- Warming of the climate system is unequivocal.
- It is at least 95% certain that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century.
- Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems.

Those are scientific assessments, produced impartially by a UN process, to inform public policy.

In December, negotiators from all the countries in the world will meet in Paris for the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Ever since 1992, the UN's Member States have grappled with what to do about this thorny topic. This year, they seem ready to agree.

No country likes to be told what to do – not the U.S. or China or India. Instead, the agreement being forged for Paris will build on national commitments to action, taken in each country's own self-interest. The U.S. position will reflect the decision we have made to double the fuel economy of our cars and light trucks, as well as new efforts to reduce carbon dioxide pollution from power plants. China will present its pledge to get 20 percent of its total energy consumption from zero-emission sources by 2030. That will require China to deploy an additional 800 to 1,000 gigawatts of nuclear, wind, and solar energy – almost as much as the entire electricity generation capacity of the United States today. India will showcase its plans to deploy 100 gigawatts of solar in just seven years – that's the equivalent of 100 giant nuclear or coal power plants – and another 75 gigawatts of wind, biomass, and hydro. These are remarkable numbers that are changing the global energy landscape.

The agreement expected to be reached in Paris, incorporating the actions of nearly every country on Earth, will have “legal force” because it represents the sum of legally binding actions taken at the national level, but it is not binding on the United States in the sense of requiring change in existing statutory authority. Rather, it reflects a new global approach to climate action, based on leadership by companies and by governors and mayors in addition to national governments. New business opportunities are emerging every day as the cost of clean energy technologies becomes increasingly competitive throughout the world, and investors are responding with more than \$300 billion a year in capital investment.

The UN's Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, recognized this opportunity in 2011 in launching his initiative on Sustainable Energy for All, which sets three ambitious but achievable global goals for 2030:

- Ensuring universal access to modern energy services – to reach the 1.2 billion people without any electricity and the 2.7 billion people who still use polluting fuels like wood and charcoal for cooking and heating.
- Doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency – from roughly 1.3% to 2.6% a year.
- Doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix – to roughly 36% from 18% today, while reducing the use of traditional biomass.

The UN General Assembly is poised to include all three of these objectives in a new Sustainable Development Goal on energy as part of the post-2015 development agenda, expected to be agreed in New York in September.

Sustainable Energy for All also represents an innovative new partnership model for the UN, bringing the public and private sectors together on equal footing to support best policies and practices and mobilize private investment toward common goals. Literally trillions of dollars will be required to achieve the initiative's three global objectives by 2030 – a level of investment that governments alone cannot provide. The projects must therefore be economically viable, and private-sector investment will be needed to complement the important work of governments, development banks, other institutions, and civil society. The structure, systems, and processes of Sustainable Energy for All are intended to reflect this essential partnership between government, the private sector, and civil society.

Another example that illustrates the value of the UN system for protecting the global environment is the Montreal Protocol, the highly successful international agreement to phase out the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), adopted pursuant to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, which was itself drafted by the UN Environment Program and agreed in 1985. As would later happen on climate change, countries came together under the auspices of the UN – first to understand an emerging threat to the global environment, then to conclude a framework agreement on how to address it, and finally to negotiate a plan of action.

Mr. Chairman, I hope these examples serve as vivid illustrations of the value of the United Nations as a forum for convening all the nations of the world to agree on concerted action to address global threats – not just in peacekeeping, but also in protection of the global environment.

Thank you for your time and attention and for the honor of addressing this Subcommittee today.