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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

November 9, 2017

The Honorable Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Green:

I write today to express our concern over USAID's recent announcement that it is not hiring or assigning current Foreign Service applicants, and that the posts the applicants had applied for have been cancelled. I request that you immediately reverse this misguided decision and follow through on the hiring and placement of personnel to these positions.

Nearly ten years ago Congress challenged USAID to boost the capacity and expertise of its Foreign Service by authorizing the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI) from 2008 - 2012. By authorizing the DLI, Congress made clear that having a capable and strong Foreign Service at USAID is essential for a successful foreign policy and national security approach. USAID's decision to turn away seasoned development experts from the Foreign Service severely undermines U.S. foreign policy and national security goals. It is my understanding that USAID's internal guidance on the hiring freeze exempted any position "necessary to meet national security (including foreign relations) responsibilities." It is difficult to believe that many of these Foreign Service positions do not meet the exemption threshold.

Moreover, some of the applicants whom USAID turned away had been waiting for confirmation of new assignments for as long as two years, only to be told last week that the job they applied for no longer exists. This abrupt and unexplained move may dissuade these highly skilled and dedicated candidates from seeking Foreign Service posts with USAID in the future. Those who do choose to reapply to future openings will again be subject to an intense and lengthy application process. Given the substantial investments the U.S. government has already made to prepare these applicants for careers in foreign service, I question the utility of denying these applicants only to spend new resources on the same process for these applicants should they choose to reenter the application process.

The decision to reject these applicants, as well as cancel the positions, runs contrary to the vision and goals of USAID's mission, at a time when that mission is more critical than ever to fostering security and stability around the world.

So that I can assess the rationale for this decision and its impact on USAID, I request that you respond in writing to the following questions:

- 1) Why is a hiring freeze still in place, and when does USAID expect to lift it?
- 2) Has USAID qualified any of these positions as national security related, and if so, why did USAID not grant exemptions to the freeze for these positions?
- 3) How many positions within USAID are exclusively for Foreign Service candidates? How many Foreign Service applicants has USAID accepted in 2017?
- 4) What does USAID mean that the positions were “cancelled”?
- 5) Do applicants for these USAID Foreign Service positions have the option to accept a non-Foreign Service post until the hiring freeze is lifted, and will it count towards any Foreign Service requirement or credit they may be pursuing as part of their Foreign Service career?
- 6) How many exemptions to the hiring freeze has the Agency made to date, both for Foreign Service and non-Foreign Service posts within the Agency?
- 7) How many open Foreign Service Limited positions are considered exempt from the hiring freeze, and can some of those positions be filled by some of the Foreign Service applicants who received the November 1, 2017 notice?
- 8) Will applicants who received the November 1, 2017 notice be permitted to apply for future foreign service assignments without restarting, from the beginning, the lengthy foreign service application process?
- 9) How many positions were ultimately created by the Development Leadership Initiative, and how many of those were subsequently “cancelled”?

I request that you provide your responses by November 22, 2017. In addition, I request that you contact Josh Klein on my Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff to arrange a briefing on this decision. Furthermore, in the future, I expect that you will continue the longstanding practice to consult the Committee prior to making decisions that would eliminate positions or scale back the USAID workforce. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
Ranking Member