

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

February 16, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

I write with concern about the humanitarian situation in northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin precipitated by Boko Haram's insurgency. Over two million people are displaced and eight-and-a-half million people need humanitarian assistance. The United States has provided generous funding that has saved lives, but we can and should do more. On February 24, 2017, the government of Norway will host the international community to discuss how to better address this unseen humanitarian crisis. This is an opportunity to garner much needed resources to address urgent needs, identify long-term solutions, and raise the profile of the emergency. I urge you to demonstrate continued U.S. leadership by sending a senior-level interagency delegation to the conference, and to take the following actions:

- **Ensure sufficient funding to meet the scale of needs in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin including a robust pledge at the conference of additional U.S. resources.** Additional aid is required to respond to the crisis, particularly funding to combat hunger and malnutrition throughout the Lake Chad Basin, and to stave off widespread famine in the worst affected areas of northeast Nigeria. Adequate food remains the number one priority of affected populations according to humanitarian actors on the ground.
- **Provide technical support and use our diplomatic leverage to ensure the government of Nigeria prioritizes the emergency response and facilitates aid operations.** The Nigerian government has reportedly limited the availability of food in some areas of the northeast, and closed down major markets. It is imperative that food reach affected populations, including those in camps in newly accessible areas. We must urge the government to lift bureaucratic impediments, such as onerous registration and immigration processes for humanitarian organizations, which are hindering their operations. We should also encourage the Nigerian military to transition management of Internally Displaced Persons camps to civilian authorities as quickly as possible. Deploying additional USAID technical experts to Nigeria can help these efforts. Finally, the U.S. must continue to encourage the Nigerian government to fully embrace a holistic approach to counter violent extremism. A military solution alone will not end the conflict with Boko Haram,

- **Ensure that protection is at the top of the response agenda.** The U.S. delegation to Oslo should strongly advocate for governments in the region to respect human rights and critical protection norms. The population has been subject to horrific human rights abuses including sexual violence, abductions, killings and torture, and people have been cut off from their livelihoods. The tragic bombing of an IDP camp last month is one heartbreaking example of how the population has been affected by this conflict. Military operations must respect rights enshrined in international law, and should not exacerbate human suffering. Those who abuse rights, including government affiliated militia, must be held accountable. Governments in the region must develop a strategy to allow civilians to access livelihoods and humanitarian assistance, and all returns of displaced persons should be voluntary.

Given the importance of the U.S. –Nigeria relations it is crucial that we respond. I hope that we can work together on this and other issues in the coming weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
Ranking Member