

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Chairman John F. Kerry
Opening Statement for Hearing on The International Affairs Budget
May 20, 2009

Chairman Kerry Opening Statement At Hearing On International Affairs Budget

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) released the following opening remarks at the hearing titled, “Foreign Policy Priorities in the President’s FY10 International Affairs Budget”.

Full text as prepared is below:

Madame Secretary, we are delighted to have you with us today.

This is the first time you’ve testified since your confirmation hearing, and I see you’ve been pretty busy since then. In fact, I read that as of the end of last month, you had traveled 74,107 miles, logged over 157 hours in the air, and visited some 22 countries. We appreciate your taking this short trip from Foggy Bottom to testify about our foreign affairs budget.

It’s only been four months, but it has been heartening to see diplomacy already restored to its rightful place at the forefront of American foreign policy.

This administration has quickly turned the rhetoric of engagement into some promising new realities on the ground. It has initiated dialogue with Iran and Syria; reset relations with Russia; reached out to Latin America and China; revived the Middle East peace process; and recommitted to Afghanistan and Pakistan. In other words, there is scarcely a corner of the globe untouched by this administration’s diplomatic initiatives, or a vexing challenge it hasn’t tackled head-on.

But as we all know, if we are to realize fully the promise of these opening days, much work remains to be done. In a globalized world, our problems are interconnected, and so –ultimately – is our security. That is why this century’s security challenges demand a new level of commitment to diplomacy and development.

We must address weak and failed states as well as strong states. We need to reach new understandings with China, India, and the developing world to avert catastrophic climate change and put low-carbon technologies into the hands of billions of people. We need to find ways to bolster vulnerable allies in places like the West Bank, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. And we need to find new ways to speak to disenfranchised populations and address the conditions that empower extremists.

So it’s clear that, even as we confront an economic crisis here at home, we cannot afford to delay the task of strengthening our diplomatic and development capacity. We cannot afford to come up short on our promises to allies, to vulnerable populations, and to the world. We must seize this opportunity to make significant strides toward restoring America’s leadership role. That will make the world safer, and it will make us safer.

The President’s FY 2010 request of \$53.8 billion for the International Affairs Budget recognizes these realities—and begins to marshal the resources to address them.

It starts the process of rebuilding our diplomatic and development operations and significantly increases the size of the Foreign Service, providing 800 additional officers to the State Department and 350 additional Foreign Service Officers to USAID.

It puts the United States on a path to double foreign assistance by 2015.

It vastly increases our civilian assistance to Pakistan and sets us on a course toward redefining our relationship

with the Pakistani people—something that Senator Lugar and I have been particularly focused on.

Finally, the President's budget proposes important global initiatives in food security, climate change, global health and basic education. It doubles agricultural development funding to \$1 billion; doubles environmental and climate change activities to nearly \$600 million; and it sustains our commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS, funding global health programs, and increasing our investment in basic education.

Each of these priorities is essential in its own right. Together, they represent a commitment to reinvest in our civilian programs and ensure that our diplomats and development professionals have the resources and expertise they need to meet twenty-first century challenges.

Our aid programs need to be enhanced and modernized for a new set of challenges. When we talk about reforming foreign aid or rebuilding civilian capacity, what we are really talking about is having the right people on the ground with the right resources to manage our strategic relationships, address threats before they fully materialize, and advance our most important ideals.

Congress has an important role to play as well in supporting and initiating the reform process. We have not successfully passed a State Department authorization bill since 2002, and I look forward to working with you to pass an authorization bill that will reform and strengthen our civilian institutions.

We have a long way to go before we have fully addressed the imbalance between our military and civilian capacities, and restored to the State Department some of its traditional responsibilities—as even Secretary Gates has rightly acknowledged that we must do. Still, this budget is an important step in the right direction.

As we face multiple crises and major challenges, we must redouble our commitment to a robust international affairs budget that will build the capacity of our civilian institutions.

I commend you and the administration for this strong and ambitious budget, and I look forward to exploring it in greater detail with you today.

###