

February 29th, 2012

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Nita Lowey

"I join Chairwoman Granger in welcoming you back to the Subcommittee. You've done such an exceptional job as Secretary of State in the midst of great turmoil throughout the world, and I hope we can convince you to keep the job during the President's second term.

"As we have discussed many times, diplomacy and development are essential components of the United States' national security strategy. Investments in people through education, economic opportunity, health, and nutrition promote stability, peace, and economic growth. The Administration's commitment to sustainable development, human dignity, and the rule of law in a challenging budget environment recognizes that these small investments greatly benefit our country.

"The request for Fiscal Year 2013 represents a responsible and realistic vision for these vital programs that balances many competing priorities. This budget supports historic transitions to democracy, rebuilds agricultural systems, confronts growing environmental challenges, helps communities affected by humanitarian disasters and disease, and drives sustainable development by forming new partnerships with companies, universities, NGOs, and philanthropies. It also reflects a concerted effort – envisioned in the QDDR – to achieve operational efficiencies, eliminate unnecessary and inefficient programs, and focus on meaningful, outcome-based evaluation systems to ensure that each taxpayer dollar is being spent wisely and effectively.

"There is so much to discuss, I could easily use the full hearing time by myself. But since I only have these five minutes, I want to quickly address a list of issues that I hope you will touch on in your testimony:

- First, from the Syrian regime's despicable attacks on its own citizens to the ongoing NGO crisis in Egypt to the new and transitioning governments in Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen, the Middle East and North Africa present some of our most complex foreign policy challenges. I am

pleased that the request supports our strategic alliance with Israel, including assistance to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge. I hope you will discuss how the new Incentive Fund proposed in this budget will help address the ever-changing situation in the region while providing transparency and accountability for the very substantial sum requested.

- Second, one of the biggest threats in that region is the Iranian regime's continued quest for nuclear weapons. I supported sanctioning Iran's Central Bank, and applaud the President for his efforts. I am committed to increasing pressure on Iran to stop their pursuit of nuclear weapons. I would like to hear what the Administration sees as the way forward.

- Third, I am extremely concerned about the current situation in Afghanistan. The recent riots as well as the killing of two U.S. soldiers inside a highly secure area of the Interior Ministry give us all pause. I understand the desire, expressed by many in Congress, to cut our losses and leave Afghanistan as soon as possible. I am also very concerned by the role that Pakistan is playing in the region and the challenges we face in that relationship. I hope you will discuss the Administration's plans for these two critical countries.

- Fourth, last month we marked the third anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. I remain concerned about the pace of reconstruction efforts there, as well as the political uncertainty with the resignation of the Prime Minister last week. I would appreciate an update on the progress we are seeing in Haiti and U.S. government efforts to better coordinate donor objectives with the local Haitian communities.

- Fifth, the Global Health Initiative request reflects a substantial cut from the FY2012 levels. While we welcome efficiencies and improvements, we must adequately fund these programs to build on our substantial investments over the last decade. I hope you will address how this request will maintain U.S. leadership in the fight against disease.

- Sixth, I am pleased with the funding level requested for family planning programs. But I am concerned that we will again see attacks on these life-saving efforts, and I would like you to touch on what the impact would be of cuts to our bilateral assistance and the imposition of divisive policies like the global gag rule, as well as the importance of our relationship with UNFPA.

- Finally, I am deeply troubled by the failure to prioritize basic education. We cannot make progress on any of our international priorities – from food security to building democratic institutions to sustained health outcomes – if generations of children grow up without basic literacy skills. I remain frustrated by this administration's apparent lack of focus on international education and hope you will address this.

"Thank you again for your tireless efforts on behalf of our nation. I look forward to your testimony."

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