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SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS
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Mr. Chairman, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you today to discuss U.S. Government assistance and the way forward in Somalia.

BACKGROUND

Having just returned from a trip to the Horn, where we have a Disaster Assistance Response Team monitoring needs in Somalia, the Somali region of Ethiopia and the Kenya-Somalia border, I hope to be able to give you a good picture of what the humanitarian situation currently is in Somalia and a sense of how our humanitarian and development partners on the ground regard the situation. I will also discuss what we see as a way forward and what USAID is doing to assure that the way forward brings peace and stability to a population that has suffered more in one year than most do in a lifetime.

In July, when I last addressed this Subcommittee, I spoke about the disastrous toll that drought had taken on central and southern Somalia, and of the 1.7 million pastoralists and agro-pastoralists whose lives and livelihoods have benefited from a robust USG humanitarian response and the generosity of the American people.

Since July, these same Somalis have experienced some of the worst flooding they can remember. Although deaths were minimal, 255,000 people were displaced, crops were destroyed and livestock was lost. The worst of it occurred in November and December, but as recently as last week flooding displaced 1,000 people in the Lower Shabelle valley. Flooding has seriously hindered the delivery of humanitarian assistance -- particularly food assistance -- with entire convoys being mired for weeks at a time.

DADAAB

During my trip I had the opportunity to visit Dadaab refugee camp—80 km from the Kenya-Somalia border—and hear first hand about the situation in Somalia. The camp hosts some 170,000 refugees, 98% of whom are Somalis fleeing their country. The majority of them have been there since 1991. The protracted refugee situation is testimony to the long standing chaos in Somalia. Just last year, when the Islamic courts were making advances in Somalia, nearly 35,000 people crossed over to Kenya into the refugee camps. Owing to security concerns, Kenya closed its border to new asylum-seekers on January 3 and forcibly returned several hundred from the border transit center. Acknowledging shared security concerns, the USG has pressed the Kenyan Government to re-open the border to legitimate asylum-seekers.

At the Dadaab camp, I witnessed a food aid distribution – supported in part through our Food for Peace program - and met with some of the newer arrivals. The severe flooding that hit Somalia also hit northeastern Kenya, including the refugee camps where the State Department and Department of Defense worked to support UNHCR’s flood relief efforts with U.S. military airdrops. In the section for new arrivals, in sparse vegetation and sandy soil, refugees had made homes out of branches and plastic sheeting. They rely completely on the international community for their survival. Aid agencies admit that they have not been able to get water services out to the new arrivals area that has received tens of thousands of people in the last year, and women now living there asked that I look into the situation. Digging wells is a difficult job in Dadaab. Water is some 150 meters below the sandy soil, requiring technical expertise that is not easily found. Emergency refugee funding made available by the State Department will help alleviate the pressures caused by increased refugee numbers.

Standing among the women and children gathered in the new arrivals area, I could only imagine the difficult journeys these families had made to get to this desolate place -- most had come from the Juba River Valley or Gedo Region—hundreds of kilometers away—and the long, hard road that lies ahead for them. When I spoke to these women, they talked of insecurity, uncertainty and threats. They spoke of family members they had left behind in Somalia. They spoke of the hardships they had fled and their fear of having to return.

NEW THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Across the border in Somalia, our partners estimate that the most recent round of conflict displaced 40,000 people in south and central Somalia. In contrast, almost 90% of those displaced by flooding have been able to return home, and the number of people estimated to be in an “acute food security crisis” has dropped by more than one half.

However, as the rains and flooding begin to ease, our partners are preparing for an explosion of water and mosquito borne diseases such as cholera, dysentery and malaria, which pose a particularly serious threat to children under five, the elderly and the population already compromised by under-nutrition.

Livelihoods are also at risk because, in addition to human disease, animal disease is also a threat. Rift Valley Fever is suspected in hundreds of recent animal deaths and several human deaths in southern Somalia, where conflict has made it difficult to collect and transport samples for confirmation. Rift Valley Fever (RVF) can decimate herds of cattle and sheep, and it poses a serious health threat in weakened human populations. Its potential economic impact on Somalia and its neighbors is significant: an outbreak in Somalia in 1997 led to a ban on imports of livestock from all Somali ports to the Persian Gulf states and the loss of as much as \$100 million in revenue within two years. To curb rumors of RVF, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) recently announced new regulations regarding the identification and treatment of the disease in Somalia. Our UN and NGO partners have the capacities and resources to assist in controlling the spread and mitigating the impact of the disease; but in order to do so they will require the ability to collect and share information and test results in a transparent, proactive fashion.

So far in fiscal year 2007, the USG has provided nearly \$16 million to mitigate the impact of drought, floods, conflict, and resulting displacement within Somalia and across its borders. This assistance builds on carryover resources from \$92 million provided in fiscal year 2006. The availability of these resources permitted our partners to respond immediately and robustly to the flood emergency in the fall, and ensured the existence of a strong food pipeline in the first quarter of this fiscal year.

USAID’s ongoing humanitarian programs are targeted in the drought and flood affected areas of south central Somalia and address food insecurity,

nutrition, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene. Our partners have well-established programs and a thorough knowledge of local and regional issues affecting the populations they serve. It is this experience that has enabled them to continue to serve beneficiaries and implement programs throughout the political turmoil of the past year.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES

While in Nairobi in mid-January of this year, I had the opportunity to meet with all of our partners. I was uniformly impressed with the dedication and knowledge each one is bringing to their work. None of groups I met with felt that the conflict occurring around the withdrawal of the courts had dramatically increased humanitarian needs, but they all stressed the need for continued support of drought and flood victims. After the withdrawal of the Islamic courts, our NGO partners took a cautious, “wait and see” attitude. Access appears to be improving in many parts of Somalia, the Government of Kenya has pledged to soon reopen its border for humanitarian deliveries into Somalia, and most of our NGO partners are back in Somalia. However, they made clear that as we move forward, humanitarian space will need to be protected, and they ask that this become a part of our diplomatic dialogue with the Transitional Federal Government.

I was very impressed with the United Nations Country Team for Somalia, which includes the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Health Program, UNHCR, the World Food Program the Food and Agriculture Organization, UNICEF, and the UN Development Program (UNDP). They are completely engaged, and they talked openly about the challenging and critical issues they are currently facing on the ground. The head of UNDP had just returned from Mogadishu, where he led a UN delegation to assess the possibility of a return of UN personnel. It is clear that the UN regards the next few months as a window of opportunity to support Somalis to achieve peace and security in their country. The UN Country Team has outlined a set of priorities for the next six months which bridge humanitarian, stabilization, and initial reconstruction efforts. These priorities also include building the capacity of key Transitional Federal Government Institutions, strengthening the security sector, and assisting the Transitional Federal Government jump-start urgent basic social services – particularly in education and health. In addition, they will ensure that livelihood and job creation be launched early in these community-based recovery activities.

USAID PRIORITIES

Our own priorities are much the same. Last year we programmed \$7.9 million in FY 06 development assistance to strengthen the capacity of civil society, support conflict mitigation, address basic education needs – including distance learning and teacher training – and increase access to water through the rehabilitation of urban water systems and development of rural water services. In 2007 – in accordance with USG policy aimed at strengthening the capacity of governing institutions – development assistance is planned to reinforce the capacity of executive, legislative, and local authorities. Our assistance will also reinforce the TFG’s capacity to deliver integrated social services – particularly in the areas of health, water and education – thereby enhancing its credibility among diverse constituencies. Through support for ongoing reconciliation programming, we are facilitating the broad-based, inclusive participation of diverse civil society actors in Somalia’s social, political and economic decision-making. Through these venues, our development assistance programming serves to mitigate the underlying threats and conditions that encourage extremism, instability and terrorism.

While I was in Nairobi, I had the opportunity to meet with Admiral Hunt, Commander of our Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF-HOA) in the Horn. He reports that coordination and collaboration between the Task Force and USAID staff – both in the Horn and here in the U.S. prior to his deployment to Djibouti – has been invaluable to the task force’s civilian-military operations. From a USAID perspective, we feel that the best and most efficient use of USG resources in the Horn is likely to come from good coordination and a mutual understanding of the roles, responsibilities, capacities and strengths of our respective agencies and operating units. Over the past 12 months, USAID, State and the Department of Defense have worked hard to operationalize an approach in Somalia and the region that truly reflects the three Ds – Diplomacy, Development, and Defense. Defined as pillars to our national security in the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy, the elevation of development – as a key pillar – is seen as reinforcing diplomacy and defense, reducing long-term threats to our national security by helping to build stable, prosperous, and peaceful societies. I am optimistic that with the coordination established between USAID, State, and CJTF-HOA in the Somalia Working Group in Nairobi,

we are creating a coordination model capable of serving both our own national security interests and the interests of the people of Somalia and the Horn.

NEXT STEPS

I'd like to share with you USAID's priorities over the next 90 days. Over this period we will use the resources available to us to:

- Respond effectively to humanitarian contingencies which may arise in this very volatile situation;
- Identify opportunities to increase training and capacity building in our current emergency programs—particularly in nutrition, health, and water services—jump starting longer-term efforts addressing the delivery of critical public services;
- Develop a post-conflict Somalia livelihood recovery strategy, using lessons learned in recent pastoralist recovery and alternative livelihood programming in Ethiopia and Kenya and in post-conflict programming in other parts of Africa;
- Support efforts made on the part of the UN and our non-governmental partners to ensure that ongoing emergency response provides a foundation for recovery and reconstruction;
- Ensure that the protection of humanitarian space becomes part of the diplomatic dialogue with the Transitional Federal Government;

I'll close by sharing with you something that has been in the back of my mind ever since I received the invitation to provide testimony today:

On July 11 of last year, I presented a picture of a people who were on the edge of a precipice, with years of chaos and conflict, catastrophic drought, disease, malnutrition, and a staggering loss of livestock resulting in the near collapse of an entire livelihood system. That was a true picture, and had anyone asked me that day to imagine that this same, beleaguered population would have to withstand months of devastating floods followed by renewed conflict, I would have found it nearly impossible to do. It is still hard for me to do, despite knowing that this is exactly what has happened since July.

But we are here today talking about a window of opportunity when it may be possible to help Somalia find a pathway out of political chaos, hunger and suffering. Seizing this opportunity will increase the chances that the region as a whole finds its way to a stable, peaceful, and productive future. The

approaches that I have outlined today are our best efforts at maximizing this opportunity, and we look forward to working with you and the Interagency, to make sure that these opportunities are not lost.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you again for having me back to talk about Somalia and what we hope to accomplish there. I look forward to responding to any questions that you and Members of the Subcommittee may have.