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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

DAVID MCKEAN, STAFF DIRECTOR
KENNETH A. MYERS, Jr., REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

September 18, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you today on an issue of critical importance: ensuring effective leadership of our foreign assistance and development programs. Both of us firmly believe that development is integral to our national security and must be elevated to an equal role alongside defense and diplomacy. Because we believe so deeply that U.S. foreign assistance and development must be strengthened, we have introduced bipartisan reform legislation with Senators Menendez and Corker (S. 1524 – Foreign Assistance Revitalization and Accountability Act) to improve capacity, accountability and effectiveness.

However, we are writing today to underscore our concern about the direction of U.S. development policy. First and foremost, our efforts to support a bold foreign assistance reform and development agenda are hampered by a leadership vacuum at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) – the leading U.S. government agency responsible for foreign assistance, development and humanitarian assistance. USAID is the last major agency in the U.S. government to remain unfilled. Despite a greater need than ever worldwide for strong U.S. development leadership – including two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – we have yet to receive a nominee from the Administration.

We urge you to nominate an Administrator for USAID expeditiously. We recommend that you give strong consideration to selecting a candidate who has already gone through the vetting process and that has experience in global development. We believe that time is of the essence, and that the longer we wait for a new leader for the Agency, the more serious the problems become.

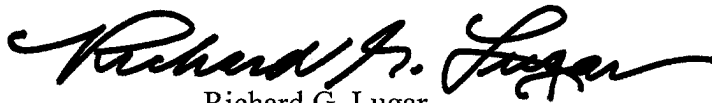
In general, we are broadly concerned about the state of U.S. development policy. Not only does U.S. development lack clear leadership at the top, but increasingly we believe that key development voices are being shut out of major policy decisions and interagency processes. USAID and its development perspective are conspicuously absent from our most significant foreign policy challenges in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. We have taken your message to heart – that the U.S. requires a balanced foreign policy that will elevate development as an integral third pillar. That is why we believe it is essential to empower a single development agency with the appropriate tools, resources and policy voice so that it can undertake its responsibilities in an effective and capable manner.

We want to reiterate that we are firmly committed to working with you on a development agenda and ensuring that appropriate reforms to our foreign aid institutions will occur. We have been heartened by the steps taken by your administration, thus far, to promote a robust development agenda. We are strong supporters of your FY 2010 international affairs budget request – which calls for important increases in a number of critical development sectors. We intend to fully support the reform process, including the Presidential Study Directive on Global Development Policy, as well as the State Department’s Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. We applaud your interest in increasing global food security and promoting global health.

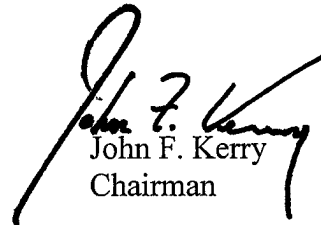
A strong leader at an empowered USAID will facilitate all of our work and will allow us to tackle tough decisions in the days ahead.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Richard G. Lugar
Ranking Member



John F. Kerry
Chairman