

**Statement by Eric G. Postel
Nominee for
Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development
before the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
December 9, 2010**

Madame Chair and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for Assistant Administrator of the Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade Bureau at the United States Agency for International Development. If confirmed, I will be honored to work with Administrator Raj Shah, Secretary Clinton, USAID's talented and dedicated personnel, Congress, partner countries, and partners to advance the United States' development efforts.

I first began working in emerging markets more than 25 years ago and since then have had the opportunity to work with people in more than 45 developing countries on four continents. Through this experience, I witnessed the power of economic growth as a transformative force for development and social change.

From creating stock exchanges in Africa, to fostering the provision of financing and credit for small and medium enterprises in Central Asia, I have had in-depth exposure to the challenges and benefits of implementing development assistance programs from a wide variety of organizations, including USAID.

This perspective has served me well in the public policy arena, both as a member of the Sub-Saharan African Advisory Committee to the U.S. Export-Import Bank, and as an appointee to the U.S. HELP Commission – a commission charged with making recommendations to the Congress and the President on the reform of U.S. foreign assistance programs.

If confirmed as the Assistant Administrator for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade at the United States Agency for International Development, I will put this practical experience to work in implementing the shared vision of development articulated by President Obama, Secretary Clinton and Administrator Shah.

President Obama's Global Development Policy states that the United States will "elevate broad-based economic growth as a top priority". I share this view and believe strongly that the only way for countries to "graduate" from foreign aid assistance is to grow to the point where they can pay for their own development.

U.S. Government support cannot, by itself, create economic growth in developing countries, but our assistance, coupled with sound trade and investment policy, can help countries to generate growth for themselves. Indeed, sustainable

development is heavily dependent on a strong private sector, involving enterprises from the largest to the smallest, and USAID has an important role to play in this realm.

The EGAT Bureau has been assigned a significant role to play in natural resources management, water, biodiversity and the President's Global Climate Change Initiative. If confirmed, I will draw upon my diverse experience to provide leadership in developing new approaches to evidence-based innovation and fostering ground-breaking technologies.

Madame Chair, in this increasingly complex world, knowledge is often the difference between poverty and an adequate income. It has been demonstrated that to grow, countries must educate their citizens. At the same time, jobs need to be created so that people have avenues for putting their education to use. With strong support from the Congress, USAID has long devoted significant efforts to assisting countries in education. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing that crucial effort.

In September, USAID Deputy Administrator Steinberg described for this Committee the imperative of focusing on issues related to women's empowerment and protection. Academic research continues to demonstrate that empowering women leads to development for all. USAID's programs supporting women and girls have for decades been at the forefront of best practices. We must continue the effort to weave this thread throughout all USAID programs.

The final EGAT functional area I would like to mention is infrastructure. While serving on the HELP Commission, I supported a renewed focus on developing countries' functional infrastructure to remove physical barriers to trade. While the United States cannot provide infrastructure support everywhere in the world, USAID has a long history of technical excellence in this area, despite having lost significant numbers of technical staff during the last twenty years. Administrator Shah has already made clear his intention to rebuild capabilities in this arena so that USAID can better assist critical priority countries such as Haiti, Pakistan and Afghanistan, among others.

If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that the highest possible skills, experience and creativity are brought to bear in each of these important realms. Furthermore, I will work to ensure EGAT both broadens and deepens its contributions to the efforts of many other U.S. government agencies, NGOs and private sector organizations. Finally, I will work to lead the Bureau to be a nimble and informed respondent to the issues and legislation emanating from both houses and parties in Congress.

Madame Chair, I can honestly say that if confirmed as Assistant Administrator, I am looking forward to delving into the nuts-and-bolts of USAID operations, and

helping the Administrator to deliver on the Agency's new reform agenda, USAID Forward.

In these difficult times, resources are especially limited. The enduring challenge for the entire EGAT team will be to focus efforts on creating measurable, sustainable impacts in partner countries. Spending money to create so-called "outputs" is simply an insufficient return on Americans' tax dollars. To be successful, we must expect and produce concrete development results.

Therefore, if confirmed, I intend to work with my colleagues, Congress and other US Government entities to ensure that we focus our efforts upon strategic activities in ways which have truly measurable and major impacts.

As Administrator Shah has said "This is a time to be bolder, to reach beyond our comfort zone, and to be imaginative about how we can work better, cheaper, and faster in the pursuit of high impact development." If confirmed, I pledge to be an accountable steward of your constituents' hard-earned tax dollars toward this end.

Madame Chair, I am deeply honored to be considered for this position and excited about working with the skilled professionals of USAID to help the Administrator transform his vision for USAID into reality. Every day USAID advances the goals of the United States and offers hope to millions of people in desperate circumstances. I am humbled by the Agency's important responsibilities and grateful for the chance to serve the United States of America.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to any questions you may have.

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