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"Examining the U.S. Policy Response to Entrenched African Leadership"

Good afternoon Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Isakson, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. It is always an honor to have the opportunity to discuss USAID's work with you, and, for me personally, it is a pleasure to appear before you again.

This is an especially thought-provoking issue for us to analyze today. While the Mugabes and Bashirs of the continent dominate our overall impression of Africa, in reality, these entrenched leaders are becoming the exception rather than the rule. Witness Malawi's peaceful, constitutional transition of power following the untimely death of the late President Mutharika earlier this month. Witness the process to restore democracy and unity in Mali, spurred by the swift and decisive leadership of the Economic Community of West African States. ECOWAS itself is led by the President of Côte d'Ivoire—another country that recently came out of a political crisis with a stronger democracy. The recently ratified African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance also creates a powerful, African-owned platform for consolidating democratic gains and encouraging sound leadership on the continent.

When seen against the backdrop of sub-Saharan Africa's five decades of independence, these events underscore the striking improvements in democratic governance and leadership that have gradually occurred in the region despite the setbacks that grab our attention. A generation ago, the profile of Africa's leaders left much to be desired. As recently as the early 1990s, the region was dominated by a group of so-called "big men," many of whom came to power at the barrel of a gun rather than by the ballot box. Several were tyrants who ruled however they saw fit, using fear and intimidation to cling to power, and in the process, decimating their countries' prospects for progress. Nobel Laureate and Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf wrote about that era, "Africa's crisis was a failure of leadership and management. Sub-Saharan Africa is rich in resources, talent, energy, and spirit. But it has not been rich in leadership. It is made up of rich countries that were poorly managed, and the results have been disastrous."

Today, these "big men" are being replaced by skilled, civilian statesmen and women who are transforming their societies and serving as role models for a new generation of emerging reformers. In ECOWAS alone, 11 of the 15 current heads of state have served for two terms or fewer—a remarkable transformation from those days of long-reigning "big men." These leaders include some of leading lights of not only Africa, but also of the developing world: President Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, former Fulbright Scholar and legal expert John Atta Mills in Ghana, and President Alassane Ouattara, who served as the deputy director of the International Monetary Fund before he began his decade-long journey to the presidency of Côte d'Ivoire. These leaders,

and a growing number of their peers on the African continent, have come to power through peaceful and credible elections. Increasingly, they are supporting each other and looking out for their neighbors, as the events in Mali have demonstrated. Increasingly, they are becoming key partners in development through initiatives such as the Partnership for Growth whereby the leaders of Ghana and Tanzania are working hand-in-glove with the international community to identify and address key constrains to development.

When their terms of office come to an end, a growing number of African heads of state now willingly and peacefully step down because of the term limits enshrined in their constitutions or because of an electoral defeat. According to the USAID-supported African Presidential Center at Boston University, more than 30 African heads of state are now in retirement after a peaceful transfer of power to their elected successors. At the same time, USAID is working to support civil society actors and government officials to prevent democratic backsliding in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, where President Joseph Kabila's actions have brought his commitment to DRC's hard-won democratic system and electoral process into question.

Given these trends, USAID's response to the challenge of entrenched African leadership is based on the three factors that have led to successful transitions elsewhere: channeling the growing demand for legitimate, accountable democratic government into development opportunities such as open political processes and civil society engagement; , developing a broader range of leaders and supporting reformists , and supporting regional organizations to define and improve the "rules of the game" in African politics. Africans themselves have led these important transformations; USAID has provided support and assistance to their efforts.

The **growing demand for political change** derives from the increasingly important role of civil society and independent media across Africa, coupled with greater access to information and the growth of an African middle class and a growing number of reformists in government The African Development Bank defines "middle-class" as having between $2 and $20 to spend a day, and about a third of Africans now fall into that category. With 44 percent of its population under age 15, sub-Saharan Africa is the youngest region of the world, and it is these youth who will be the engines of Africa's future. They have begun holding their leaders more accountable for performance, rather than ideology, and they are less willing to view politics as a zero-sum game waged between ethnic or regional factions for control over state resources. This new generation demands the ability to exercise its right to vote in free, fair, and credible elections, as well as to keep the political pressure on leadership to respond to the needs of their citizens once the campaigns have ended.

In Senegal, USAID focused on supporting the role of civil society to demand reforms, improve transparency, register young voters, and encourage credible elections. Senegalese civil society played a critical role in drawing attention to the efforts of President Abdoulaye Wade to influence the electoral process and improve the odds that he and his family would retain power. In June 2011, President Wade proposed an amendment to the constitution that would remove term limits and establish a Vice Presidency—allegedly to install his son Karim as his successor. Senegalese civil society erupted in uncharacteristic protest, causing the President to withdraw the proposal. Discontent continued to simmer, fueled by the peaceful protest of youth organizations like Y'en a Marre ([yawn-a-MAR]: "We've Had Enough"). By January 2012, when a

Constitutional Court decision allowed Wade to formally declare his candidacy, the streets of Senegal erupted again, this time in sporadic violence and daily protest.

The international community, including Senators Coons and Isakson, Congressmen Donald Payne and Christopher Smith, former President Jimmy Carter, and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, appealed personally to President Wade to respect the letter of the constitution and will of the Senegalese people, and not pursue a third term. His public refusal to do so refocused attention on the electoral process and redoubled the commitment of Senegalese civil society to advocate for democratic principles.

An orderly, peaceful election day demonstrated the will and maturity of civil society and the Senegalese political establishment. USAID-supported international and domestic election observation, as well as technical assistance to electoral management bodies and the election oversight committee, helped to shine a bright light on the electoral process and prevent the occurrence of widespread fraud or tampering. As the returns came in showing Wade trailing his opponent, former Prime Minister Macky Sall, the President had no choice but to admit defeat.

With this fair and credible election, Senegal is reinforces its status as the vanguard of West African democracy, and may serve as an example to other African nations with leaders seeking to entrench themselves. President Sall has committed to strengthening the independence of key political institutions and pursuing numerous reforms, including a negotiated settlement of the decades-old rebellion in the Casamance region. USAID is coordinating with other members of the international community to continue to support the realization of these reforms and the consolidation of Senegalese democracy.

In Sudan, the government regularly stifles open public discourse by cracking down on peaceful public protests and closing and intimidating media, which has severely limited citizens' access to information, including on the violence in Darfur and the Three Areas—and a rejection of the principle of democratic transformation that is at the heart of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement Khartoum signed in 2005. To encourage more open and inclusive public dialogue about Sudan's future, USAID has been helping Sudanese youth and civil society leaders learn ways to make their demands for change heard, including building the capacity of youth organizations in marginalized regions to engage in promoting peace and reconciliation. USAID is also supporting grassroots efforts by Sudanese civil society to have a dialogue on creating a more democratic and inclusive government, and we support initiatives to promote public discourse on constitutional reform. Ultimately, these modest efforts at educating and engaging Sudanese citizens about their political future will help to serve as a foundation for the country's eventual transition from dictatorship to a sustainable democracy. USAID's partners continue to face challenges operating in Sudan because of government restrictions on visas and permits to travel within the country, an issue the United States Government has raised repeatedly with the government.

In addition to the growing demand for change, transitions from entrenched leaders in Africa have involved **increased political pluralism**: the gradual replacement of one-party states and military-dominated governments with multiparty political systems that represent a more diverse range of interests and perspectives. In countries such as Ghana, Malawi, Senegal, and Zambia,

power alternates among two or more major parties on a fairly regular basis. Since today's ruling party may be tomorrow's opposition, voters have meaningful choices on election day, and the empowerment to make those choices serves as an instrument of accountability and stability over the long term. In another group of countries, including Mozambique, Nigeria, and South Africa, a national ruling party shares power with other parties that govern various states, provinces, and municipalities. In all these countries, USAID has supported work by the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute to professionalize political parties, encourage party reform, support party coalitions, provide advice on organizing campaigns and develop the next generation of political leaders within and out of government, focusing on women as well as youth.

In Uganda, so far, this strategy is making modest but measurable progress. President Yoweri Museveni has overseen the gradual reopening of political space and the reintroduction of political pluralism in exchange for the removal of term limits for his own presidency. However, each election increases Uganda's exposure to the risk of unrest by delaying the inevitable transition to a new generation of political leaders. Ugandans are becoming more and more impatient for change and intolerant of the growing evidence of corruption that has tarnished even the highest levels of government in recent years.

To bolster multiparty democracy and representative governance, USAID implemented a three-year program that strengthened linkages among and within three key actors in the Ugandan government's "nerve system": Parliament, local government structures, and civil society groups. The pioneering program, which worked to create a "voice" among the citizenry and "listeners" among the government, significantly strengthened key partners, particularly district and sub-county assemblies, the national official opposition, and civil society. The program also increased accountability and transparency in district governments by opening space for public scrutiny.

The final element of success in political transitions is **strong constitutional and institutional checks and balances** that establish and enforce the rules of the game. Under intense pressure from civil society and the media, African parliaments and electoral commissions have played a key role in upholding constitutional term limits in Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, and Zambia. USAID spent years building the capacity of those institutions and organizations in advance of the "third-term" debates in each country. USAID also monitors the extent to which civil society and the media face repression or restrictions in various countries, through two annual indices on media and civil society sustainability that complement the State Department's annual Human Rights Report and other independent sources of information, such as the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

An example of where these checks and balances were tested before a strong democratic foundation became sustainable is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The presidential and legislative elections held in November 2011 were widely anticipated as an opportunity for the DRC to continue to consolidate democratic gains made during its successful post-conflict transition, culminating in the democratic election of a President and parliament in 2006 through a nation-wide, transparent and credible electoral system. In the DRC's second national election millions of Congolese citizens went to the polls to vote in an election that featured 11 presidential candidates and over 18,000 legislative candidates. In contrast to the first post-conflict national elections, international and domestic observers, noted considerable problems

throughout the process—in the pre-election period, on election day, during the tabulation of votes, and in the process for electoral dispute resolution. The management of the electoral process by the Independent National Election Commission (CENI), changed by the President just eight months before election day, was generally inadequate. The environment in which citizens, political parties, civil society, news media, and other stakeholders sought to exercise their rights to participate in the political process was sometimes hostile and inequitable. And although political violence was significantly less severe than many feared, it was nonetheless a serious problem.

Secretary Clinton stated that the entire process was "seriously flawed, lacked transparency, and did not measure up to the democratic gains we have seen in recent African elections."

The U.S. Government and the international community will likely have a role to play in ensuring that future elections in the DRC are more credible, and in preventing further democratic backsliding. However, the process must be driven by the Congolese leadership – and governed by laws and institutions established during the transition period that created a level playing field and a credible system for balloting, counting, confirming, and announcing winners and losers – if the results are to be meaningful and lasting. The new CENI leadership needs to demonstrate to the Congolese people that it has the capacity to successfully manage future elections in an efficient and transparent manner. A thorough investigation of election-related violence, including incidents perpetrated by members of the security services and the opposition, would send the message that the government of the DRC and the political class take seriously their commitment to promote democratic processes and human rights. Journalists and human rights defenders detained illegally for their work should be released. Successful reform will require professional and fair coverage by the media. Finally, it is vital that the judicial personnel of the appellate and trial courts are capable and well trained on election law in advance of performing their complaint adjudication responsibilities.

Ethiopia is one of the starkest examples of the risks that emerge when a country lacks sufficient democratic checks and balances. By significantly constraining political speech, human rights, and the ability of civil society and the media to hold government officials accountable, the Ethiopian Government is creating an environment that is ripe for instability and that sends mixed messages about its place in the international community.

On the one hand, the U.S. Government must maintain a close working relationship with Ethiopia as one of our key African partners in fighting terrorism, countering the effects of global climate change, promoting food security, and providing peacekeepers in some of the most difficult locations in Africa such as Darfur. In fact, with the exception of democracy-building, USAID's programs in Ethiopia are among the most successful anywhere in Africa. Ethiopia commands a growing presence in global economics, and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his colleagues in the Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) can take credit for lifting millions out of poverty and improving living standards in Africa's second-most populous country. As seen in the Horn of Africa's recent food crisis, millions of Ethiopians were able to withstand the worst effects of drought due in part to the Ethiopian Government's work with the international community to build resilience to climatic shocks.

On the other hand, the experiences of Ethiopia's neighbors in Africa and the Arab World demonstrate the long-term risks of instability that come from suppressing basic freedoms. In 2005, Ethiopia held the most free and fair elections in its modern history, in which opposition parties appeared to have won a substantial minority of parliamentary seats. This outcome could have resulted in a balance of power sharing between the ruling party and opposition, and a real opportunity for political development to match the economic modernization underway in the country. Instead, the ruling EPRDF attempted to destroy the opposition or drive it underground. Since then, a systematic campaign has clamped down on basic freedoms. These actions, including domination of the 2010 elections and the passage of restrictive laws like the Charities and Societies Proclamation, have gained the EPRDF unprecedented control over the political life of Ethiopia and a brittle form of stability in the near term. However, in the long term, Ethiopia is now in danger of reliving its history of turbulent political transition. Unless restrictions on civil society and the media are lifted and dissenting political views are allowed, the country's substantial gains in economic development and poverty alleviation will be threatened.

Integrating democracy and governance work into the significant investments the United States is making in other sectors, such as food security and health, will give us important opportunities to support social and economic resilience in Ethiopian society outside of the ruling party structures and, to the extent feasible, participatory decision-making. To this end, USAID has developed a strategy that promotes a cross-cutting approach that builds democracy, human rights, governance, and conflict interests into its varied portfolio. The strategy will minimize investments in democracy and governance—such as human rights defenders and civil society support—until diplomatic or other efforts open the political space for more robust engagement. USAID has also developed a cross-sectoral objective in its strategy to promote citizen participation and social accountability around service delivery.

In Zimbabwe, our top priority remains supporting the transition to a multi-party democracy that can address the needs of its population, as envisaged in the Global Political Agreement. The lack of development in Zimbabwe, a country that was once the breadbasket of southern Africa, is directly related to poor governance, making the country a tragic but notable example of the linkages among governance, food security, poverty, and health.

USAID is supporting the efforts that exist within the government to improve basic conditions for Zimbabwe's citizens. We seek partnerships to strengthen local organizations that are providing key services and support to the local population—not only to meet immediate needs, but also to demonstrate that better governance can lead to better lives. Operating in a transitioning state has been especially challenging for our local partners: in the process of trying to improve health, livelihoods, freedom, and human rights for their fellow Zimbabweans, they face harassment and threats from the very government that should be their ally. We know that change must come from within the country, and it will not happen overnight. USAID is currently working on a new Country Development Cooperation strategy for Zimbabwe that will help to advance such change.

U.S. support has been able to make considerable progress in Zimbabwe in certain areas. USAID's concerted efforts have assisted reform-minded elements of the government in carrying out institutional reforms critical for moving the country towards democracy. For example, the Parliamentary committees are now regularly holding public hearings on key pieces of legislation

including those addressing human rights and electoral processes and efforts to revise the Parliamentary standing rules now allow the Prime Minister a question and answer time for the first time.

Demand for change, political pluralism, and checks and balances, rule of law: these are among the most vital conditions for true democratic transformation—a process that can take years, if not decades. USAID helps support environments in which these conditions can emerge, but that transformation can only occur through the sustained commitment of African leaders to serve the needs of their people, and of their people to have a meaningful voice in their government and the means to hold their leaders accountable. We must focus on the long-term institutional and structural weaknesses that compromise the rule of law, erode the quality of governance, and make citizens subservient to their governments, rather than the other way around. And it is only then that countries can begin to realize their development potential and begin to achieve sustainable progress and growth.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Isakson, and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me here today and for your continued support of good governance overseas and USAID's work to support it.