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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and Members of the Committee,

I would like to express my thanks to the Committee for this opportunity to address the very difficult ongoing issues in the Great Lakes areas of Central Africa. I am honored to offer my personal observations regarding the region, and some thoughts about current and future policy.

I was honored to appear before this Committee about two years ago, to discuss the Democratic Republic the Congo (DRC) and related regional issues. While there has been some progress in the intervening period registered in specific areas of eastern DRC, I am saddened to note that there has been a general degradation of the general situation in much of Central Africa, and specifically the Great Lakes region. Ongoing conflict in eastern DRC and the Republic of South Sudan, civil unrest in Burundi, and major security issues in the Central Africa Republic (CAR) are understandably a focus of the limited media attention given to this region in the western press. These should be a major concern of governments in the region and beyond, including our own, and I would like to offer my congratulations to Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield and Special Envoy Perriello for their strong and continuing efforts to address the range of issues associated with these conflicts and to find solutions, along with the work of representatives of other governments, the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, and a wide range of regional and international non-governmental organizations.

One common major element found in all the areas of conflict and unrest in the Great Lakes region, and indeed other areas, is the weakness of institutions and practices associated with governance, along with the often related issues of inter-community and ethnic tensions, as well as poor economic and social development and the lack of economic opportunity for people in the affected areas. In my view, the interrelationships between problems of governance, weak institutions, and instability are very clear, and I don't believe one can meaningfully talk about one aspect without reference to the others.

Governance issues in the region have been recently particularly pronounced in recent months in the form of extended terms of office by heads of state. The news stories from Burundi have been especially dramatic reporting widespread violence, reports or allegations of mass graves, and repression by security services of any dissent, all revolving around the extension of the President Nkurunziza's term of office into a previously-prohibited third term. The actions by the Bujumbura government and the associated repression and violence are appalling. A quick survey of the region, however, underscores that the Burundi presidential action is hardly an exception. The Congo Republic (Brazzaville), Rwanda, and Burundi have all recently modified constitutional presidential term limits to permit the continued tenure of heads of state in processes that I don't believe could be fairly described as democratic or reflecting free and open public debate by any objective observer. The presidents of Uganda and Angola have both been in office for over thirty years with no signs of any change soon. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there has not yet been a formal effort to modify the existing presidential two-term limit of the 2006 constitution. There has been, however, a lack of timely and adequate action over a prolonged period of time to realize needed actions to carry out election processes also required by that constitution, and related delay tactics often referred to "glissement" or "slippage" in the DRC. The result is that it has become increasingly clear that it will be impossible to hold legitimate free and fair national elections this year, including a presidential vote, as required by the constitution.

This result is undoubtedly at least part of the motive underlying the poor election preparation history. Various actions including the repression of dissent and peaceful protests, and the replacement of elected provincial governors by appointed commissioners, among others all point to concurrent efforts to tighten central executive control and a de facto if not formal presidential term extension beyond the constitutionally dictated expiration late this year.

These trends obviously undermine democratic principles and reinforce authoritarian governance practices. They seem especially dramatic in the DRC given its size and the promising start toward democracy seen in the 2006 elections, but the negative impact of establishing indefinite presidential terms, or “presidents-for-life,” is no less in other countries. Authoritarian models can achieve economic successes and even apparent stability over some periods of time; Rwanda is an example. They also, however, stifle opportunities for open debate and dialogue, an open exchange of ideas and expression, and thus do little to resolve, or even worse tend to exacerbate underlying regional, community, political and other tensions. They do not augur well for long-term national or regional stability, as demonstrated by many examples in the region and beyond. When accompanied by relatively weak institutions, as in eastern DRC, conditions are set for ongoing unrest, violence and conflict as we have seen over the past two decades, as well as future explosions of conflict potentially affecting the entire region, as we have also seen in the past. South Sudan and the CAR are other prominent regional examples.

There is no magic formula for the United States or others to address these problems. In considering policy options, we should also be mindful of our limits. One can not, for example, in my view import democracy to a country from outside. Participatory governance must be built on an indigenous foundation and reflect local realities. Even the conduct of a reasonably successful and fair election does not signal democratic success if accompanying practices and institutions, including open media, civil society participation, and conditions favoring peaceful, open debate, are not evolving concurrently as well. The development of political parties that go

beyond simply serving as vehicles of individual politicians is also a key factor, an element missing in the DRC and often other countries.

Given the current situation, I believe governance issues merit being one of our major policy and program priorities in the region, along with basic security, and humanitarian access and assistance to victims of violence and conflict.

I applaud and strongly support the statements and actions by the U.S. and other governments generally to emphasize the importance of presidential term limits and respect for existing constitutional processes. President Obama's speech last July at the African Union summit was an excellent example focusing attention in the region and beyond on this very important area. But in my view statements are not enough. While there have been some sanctions and suspension of international aid to Burundi arising from government actions there, there have been few practical costs to governments in the region to the removal of term limits or authoritarian government practices in general. We obviously would not want to reduce assistance to already long-suffering civilian populations and victims of violence in these areas. I believe, however, we can do more and should be exploring actively with other governments in the region, and multilateral institutions such as the African Union, as well as partners in Europe and elsewhere further concrete measures, including sanctions, that can be taken to increase pressures on governments moving toward greater authoritarianism. The more we can coordinate and harmonize actions with others, quite clearly the greater the impact of any measures taken.

Arguably of even greater importance in my opinion, we should be doing much more to encourage and support development of the institutional basis needed for long-term democratic success. These are not "quick response" or short term projects. Sustained efforts can and I believe will pay major dividends, however, over a longer period of time. There have been and continue to be many very dedicated people working in difficult and often dangerous circumstances in our foreign affairs

agencies, the United Nations, and non-governmental and other organizations working in this area for some time. I salute them, but I think we can do more.

Near the top of these issues in my opinion are those often grouped under a “Rule of Law” heading. Specific program areas can include strengthening weak or non-existent judicial systems, unprofessional or poorly trained police, deplorable prisons, and related systems, coupled with human rights monitoring and enforcement. Again, specific activities must be well tailored to local circumstances. If a police force, for example, is being used as a political instrument by an authoritarian regime, obviously the focus of efforts is different than a force that is simply poorly trained, inadequately resourced, or not structured well in a country making positive moves to improve respect for human rights and democratic practices. It is difficult for me to imagine, however, any society functioning well which lacks a basic competent and capable police force, a reasonable judicial system, or adequate facilities for those guilty of criminal behavior. Yet I know from experience it is very difficult to secure donor resources for programs in this area, with donors often reluctant to get themselves involved in in these sectors. DRC judicial systems, for example, were in general in terrible shape as the country emerged from war in 2006, with only meager resources available to address the problems. With some irony, it was widely perceived albeit rarely publicly articulated by many working in the country that military judicial systems functioned relatively better than the civilian system, although both were problematic. Yet, funds and programs to realize significant improvements in either were hard to come by. While circumstances and potential in each country obviously vary, I think it a safe assertion that police, judicial, and prison systems throughout the region need to improve, and must be included in the list of priorities.

Our public diplomacy efforts are much reduced from previous times, but can and should be critical to outreach and work with academic communities, civil society, media and other individuals and groups in any society critical to successful governance. Efforts where feasible to assist with development of effective

parliamentary practices, including organizational and executive oversight processes, can be very effective to foster continued progress to achieve and build the practice of open government. The impact of current efforts, however, are limited by the number of people and other resources available, and I think our impact in this area has been declining for some time. Related, while there are many media outlets in several countries of the region, in the large majority of cases these are little more than mouthpieces for the main backer, whether the government or individual politicians or other organizations. The training, development, and support of good journalism, ethics, and general media practices by individual journalists or organizations as appropriate to the local situation can be an important component of our programs, coupled with attention paid to actions inhibiting press freedom including physical threats. In the case of the DRC, Radio Okapi is a notable exception, providing a reliable and objective source of news and information nationwide. Operated by the United Nations and supported by the Hironnelle Foundation and other donors, however, its long-term future remains in question. Nonetheless, in my view the model is valuable not only in the DRC, but potentially for other countries as well. I believe it deserves more attention, and political as well as financial support. Work with civil society groups also is critical, and a healthy civil society sector is a vital component of any well-functioning participatory system. Our activities, however, again must be well targeted, appropriate to the environment and approached as an integral part of a general strategy. There is no one-size-fits-all rule that works.

I do not wish to denigrate in any way the work being done by many highly dedicated individuals in U.S. government agencies, other bilateral and multilateral organizations, and NGO's, often working in extremely difficult and often dangerous conditions. I do suggest, however, that this sector should receive higher priority attention and resources as a part of a strategic approach to security and governance in the region.

I would also note that we should not disassociate economic and social development programs from those of security and governance. Providing economic opportunities for civilian populations is key, undermining the appeal of militias or other radical or violent groups, strengthening community cohesion, and generally being an essential component to achieve secure and stable conditions in a region. It has, however, often been difficult to achieve sustainable effective programs in this sector. For example, past programs centered on demobilized combatants and children abducted or recruited by armed militias in the DRC were widely viewed over time as failures, with widespread reports of “demobilized” combatants eventually turning back to arms, and children being reintegrated into their communities with great difficulty, or returning to militias. While I am not an expert in this area, it seemed clear to me that a major problem was the lack of sustained follow-through in these programs, specifically an extended period of engagement in the affected communities to ensure that ongoing economic viability of the demobilized individuals was in fact achieved, and associated social reintegration goals were realized. In a related area, a Leadership Training Initiative pioneered by former Congressman and later Great Lakes Special Envoy Howard Wolpe under auspices of the Wilson Center was showing very positive results in Burundi, and a nascent initiative in the DRC also held great promise to bridge ethnic and cultural gaps, and reduce the risk of large-scale ethnic-based violence. The program was not economically focused as such, but rather promoted a greater awareness of shared values and needs, essential to social and economic stability. Adequate funding, however, was always difficult to secure. The program tended to operate in a shadow and was difficult to sustain. The common element in both of these programs was a problem of longer-term sustainability. Short term fixes in this area largely do not work. Sustained efforts of the type I describe, however, are indicative of the kinds of programs I believe are critical to support evolution toward open government, open and free public dialogue, and debate, not violence, as a means to address tensions. In short, key components of a general strategy to promote democracy.

I do not believe that any discussion of governance in Central Africa could be complete without mention of the ongoing conflicts and other security problems, with attendant devastating effects on millions of innocent civilians living in the region. There has been at least some success in this area in recent years. I would particularly acknowledge the contributions in recent years of pressure from the United States and other governments to limit cross-border activities by some in the region supporting armed militia activity in neighboring states. These efforts have made a key contribution in particular to the successful effort to eliminate the very real and long-running damage caused by the so-called M23 and its predecessor movements in the eastern DRC. The other key component of this success was in the work of the UN peacekeeping force (MONUSCO) Intervention Brigade, composed of troops from three Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries, and other MONUSCO forces, working in close cooperation with the Congolese Army (FARDC). Unfortunately, that cooperation is now an ongoing problem. There has been a near complete breakdown of coordinated actions in eastern DRC between MONUSCO and DRC forces, especially in troubled North Kivu province. The Kinshasa government has in fact been seeking to reduce the size of the MONUSCO force, a proposal not yet endorsed by the Security Council. I suspect that in fact the desired goal of the DRC government is a relatively early end of the peacekeeping mission, also problematic in my view given the serious continuing threats posed by various foreign and Congolese militias operating in the area.

It is my view, however, we often expect too much of peacekeeping forces. UN forces have been sent to the DRC, CAR, Darfur, and South Sudan among others, for example, within the parameters and constraints of contemporary peacekeeping when in fact there is no existing peace to keep. Post-conflict peacekeeping too often is forced to adapt de facto as best as possible to active conflict peace enforcement, or at minimum conflict management, operating in an environment where major parties involved are not interested in peace nor political dialogue and solutions. The peacekeeping missions, however, are most often equipped with authorities and capabilities designed for and consistent with traditional peacekeeping models, with

the notable exception of the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade. It is not surprising, then, to find limited success or mixed results at best arising from these situations.

The recent debate in the African Union (AU) about deploying peacekeeping troops to Burundi in response to civil unrest and widespread violence provoked by the president term extension is a recent example. I regret that this initiative faltered, as I believe some external politically neutral security presence is needed in Burundi as a part of the effort to put an end to the terrible violence reported in that country. I could not help but wonder, however, even if there had been an AU vote authorizing such a force, what the mandate, authority, and capability of the force would have been. I would not be optimistic about the success of a multilateral military force lacking political and legal authority and associated capabilities to act forcefully to confront threats to civilian security, nor one that is anything other than a part of comprehensive and integrated strategy to realize durable, longer-term stability. While a multilateral military force can and should do all possible to provide protection to civilian populations and mitigate as much as possible the violence inflicted on civilian victims in areas of unrest and conflict, it can not by itself be expected to achieve lasting peace and security. It should be one needed component of a broader strategy.

As a final observation, I would note that it is absolutely essential for the U.S. to achieve the greatest degree possible of program and policy coordination with other partners. The importance of strong policy coordination with key governments in the region, as well as European and other partners on all of these matters would seem to be self-evident. I would especially emphasize the need for ongoing close policy consultations with key governments in the region concerned with the Great Lakes situation, the African Union, and regional organizations.

Given that resources never come close to matching needs in such a vast area, receiving relatively international attention, it is also important to achieve the highest degree of coordination among donors to avoid duplication, or worse conflict,

of programs and maximize their impact. It is my experience that responsible officials of all key agencies are generally very receptive to such consultation and coordination, but it is an area that requires constant attention and considerable effort.

To summarize, I believe we must pursue a comprehensive strategy that includes components addressing the key sectors of governance, economic and social development, and basic security, as well as ongoing humanitarian access as needed in all areas. This strategy should include an increased emphasis on governance policy issues. These start with the widespread practices of governments in most countries of the region to reinforce centralized power, suppress dissent, and extend presidential terms of office. The seriousness with which we view such actions and the risks they pose should be clearly and explicitly articulated, but we should be ready to do more. Consistent policies including sanctions, visa restrictions, and other targeted measures in response to actions undermining democratic practices, should always be considered and utilized as needed. Programs to provide greater economic opportunities, and address key social issues including reduction of inter-community, ethnic or other tensions are also needed components of a general strategy, tailored as appropriate to local circumstances and based on and requiring a thorough understanding of local communities and conditions. In areas of ongoing conflict, an enforcement capability must also be incorporated to work to achieve a basic level of security and deal with those seeking to promote violence and block political solutions. In most cases in the Great Lakes region, this will likely be provided to the extent possible through UN or AU peacekeeping forces. The highest degree possible of policy and program coordination with concerned partners should be achieved, particularly with key governments and institutions in the region.

The objectives associated with stable, secure, and open governments and societies in this region do not represent not short-term goals, and as experience has shown, they are difficult to achieve. I have no illusions about our ability to produce dramatic or immediate change, and certainly not acting alone. It is clear to me,

however, we have a national interest to do all possible to realize a secure, stable, and prosperous Great Lakes region, with governments based on the free and open participation of their citizens. This will require sustained and serious attention and support from the United States and others.

I again would like to express my thanks to the Chairman, Ranking Member, and all members of the Committee to hold this hearing to give increased attention to an under-reported area, and in particular to afford me the opportunity appear to appear.