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The Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy
“The China Challenge, Part 3: Democracy, Human Rights, and Rule of Law”
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Chairman Cory Gardner, Ranking Member Edward Markey, and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for inviting me to this important hearing on democracy, human rights and rule of law in China.

On behalf of the American people, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) promotes and demonstrates democratic values abroad, and advances a free, peaceful and prosperous world. In support of America's foreign policy, USAID leads the U.S. Government's international development and disaster assistance through partnerships and investments that save lives, strengthen democratic governance, assist countries with emerging from humanitarian crises, and help partner countries move forward on their journeys to self-reliance.

For the purposes of today's hearing, I will first highlight USAID's support for Tibetans and then speak more broadly about our support for democracy, human rights and rule of law in the Asia region.

Support for Tibetans in China, India and Nepal

As an oppressed religious minority in China, Tibetans face restrictions on their rights, as well as their unique religious, linguistic and cultural traditions and practices. With strong bipartisan support in Congress, USAID partners to help protect and preserve Tibetans' threatened way of life. For nearly 20 years, USAID has supported Tibetan communities in and around the Tibet Autonomous Region and in other areas of China. Since 2012, we have supported Tibetan communities in India and Nepal.

Within China, we support the promotion and preservation of Tibetan culture and the resilience of Tibetan communities. This includes the development of sustainable livelihoods and assistance with environmental conservation. We are helping Tibetan communities preserve their cultural and religious traditions, including the Tibetan language. To-date, USAID has supported the preservation of nearly seven million Tibetan cultural heritage items, including documented cultural traditions and historically important Tibetan texts — many previously unknown, including text composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama. All items have been digitized and made available online. Thanks to our environmental conservation support, Tibetan communities are empowered to lead the management of their natural resources, including grasslands, rangelands and rivers, which are important to maintaining their traditional way of life.

We have helped advance sustainable livelihoods for Tibetans. For example, we have helped nearly 4,000 Tibetans secure new or better employment opportunities. We have helped Tibetan-owned small- and medium-sized businesses attract investment valued at approximately \$2 million. And we have developed the life skills of thousands of Tibetans, including hundreds of English Language Program graduates over the past decade. These individuals are now widely recognized as leaders in their communities and hold critical roles within NGOs and local civil society organizations.

Outside of China, in India and Nepal, USAID helps Tibetan communities strengthen their self-reliance and resilience, including by strengthening their health and education systems. This support is managed by our mission in India and implemented primarily by The Tibet Fund. On health, we are working to improve the Tibetan health system in ways that help expand access to care, including maternal, child and tuberculosis-related care. The Tibetan health system serves a population of approximately 107,000 Tibetans in India and Nepal. On education, we are working to strengthen the Tibetan education system in innovative, replicable ways. We have provided training and professional development to more than 1,100 teachers at 75 Tibetan schools, benefitting more than 21,000 students in India and Nepal.

We are helping Tibetans thrive economically, become effective leaders and maintain the vitality of their communities and institutions while sustaining their unique identity and culture. We have bolstered the public service leadership and management of more than 330 Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) staff through high-quality trainings. And, in support of sustainable livelihoods, USAID launched a pilot program to help garment vendors make their businesses viable or grow their operations through small, low-interest loans. In fiscal year 2017, the program benefited over 800 microenterprises and boasted a 100 percent on-time repayment rate.

Supporting Democratic, Citizen-Centered Governance in Asia

Across Asia, USAID sees countries making short term economic decisions that can lead to unsustainable debt, undermine sovereignty, or limit economic, political and social freedoms, which ultimately undermines a country's path to self-reliance. Put simply: the alternative choice we offer is one of strategic partnership, not strategic dependence.

Over the last five years, democratic institutions across Asia have been significantly tested. Some foreign influences overtly and covertly have co-opted political leaders and exploited institutional weaknesses, giving rise to increased corruption, opaque commercial deals and subversions of national sovereignty. These developments consequently undermine the democratic institutions and the long-term stability of our partner countries.

Across Asia, and in support of President Trump's vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region, USAID promotes democratic, citizen-centered governance that is representative of the will and interests of the people, and is infused with the democratic principles of participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability. We support legal and

institutional respect for human rights — the protection of which is a cornerstone of democratic governance and ensures meaningful citizen engagement. We promote adherence to international rules and standards and the integrity of electoral processes. Our work helps protect human rights and promote religious freedom, support the independence of media and information integrity, strengthen reliance on evidence-based policy analysis and advocacy, and foster anti-corruption initiatives. We advance these objectives through support for like-minded civil society leaders and strategic alliances between current and emerging democratic leaders.

We have seen some promising developments. For example, in the Philippines, USAID improved the independent detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption in the public and private sector. The conviction rates for Office of Ombudsman cases increased from 45 percent to 77 percent from 2012 to 2017 while simultaneously increasing the number of cases filed against high-ranking government officials from 395 to 2,513 over the same period. And in Indonesia, USAID helped the country rebuild, launch and expand its first-ever integrated national complaint handling system. The system now processes more than 20,000 citizen complaints per month — a tenfold increase from fewer than 2,000 a month in 2015 before USAID's assistance — and has been formally adopted by the national government. Despite this and other progress, we recognize that we are far from where we'd like to be and must remain steadfast in our engagements.

We are also working to improve governance in the natural resource sector. The natural resources upon which many of our partner countries depend for their long-term growth and economic sustainability are threatened by a variety of factors, including irresponsible extraction, predatory behavior and poor governance. That's why USAID prioritizes improving the management and resilience of natural resources across Asia. We promote transparent government policies, regulations and transactions that foster adherence to internationally-accepted standards, including environmental safeguards, and mitigate the entry of predatory players. For example, some poorly conceived infrastructure projects on the Mekong River threaten the food, water and livelihoods of 60 million people who live downstream in Southeast Asia. USAID is launching a three-year program called Mekong Safeguards that will support policies that lead to high-standard, high-quality infrastructure development in the region. Under the Indo-Pacific Strategy, we are also supporting the Infrastructure Transaction and Assistance Network (ITAN), which aims to promote sustainable, private enterprise-driven infrastructure development in the region.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that China is increasingly exerting its influence across the region. This presents challenges to our partner countries' sustainable development and can threaten country sovereignty. The strategic partnership we offer to countries throughout the region provides a clear, alternative choice — one that invests in increasing country self-reliance and sustainable prosperity, and helps countries to make informed decisions about their own futures.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your counsel and questions.

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