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UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BEFORE THE
FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES SENATE
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Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I am honored to be here today as President Obama's nominee to be the next Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) in the U.S. Agency for International Development. I am grateful for the confidence President Obama and USAID Administrator Shah have in my leading a bureau which is so central to the United States' development and humanitarian agenda, and for Secretary Clinton's support.

Through my own work over the last 17 years, I have seen the dedication and energy of USAID teams in many of the toughest parts of the world. From the continuing crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to the recent challenges of the Pakistan floods, USAID professionals have been on the frontlines in some of the world's most challenging environments. If confirmed, I look forward to joining this hard-working group in pursuit of the Administration's vision of restoring USAID to status as the world's premier development agency.

I want to thank Senator Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, Senator Menendez, and Members of the Foreign Relations Committee for your strong support of foreign assistance and guidance for increasing the strength of USAID.

My thanks also to my family and many friends and colleagues who have provided me unfailing support and encouragement over the years, and for those who are able to be here today.

I would also like to recognize the service of two extremely dedicated USAID senior officers who have so ably led the DCHA bureau over the past 18 months: Susan Reichle and Dirk Dijkerman. Their leadership has been invaluable, especially in response to the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods.

I am particularly honored to be nominated to head the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. DCHA's responsibilities are significant, and if confirmed, I will oversee nine offices, including the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Food for Peace, Democracy and Governance, Transition Initiatives, Conflict Management and Mitigation, Civilian Response, Military Affairs and American Schools and Hospitals Abroad.

Taken together, these offices represent the core capabilities required to provide rapid and effective assistance to those suffering from disaster and conflict, help foster a faster and more durable recovery and, importantly, shore up democracy and governance as the most critical means of preventing further conflict and lessening the devastation of natural disaster. With the seasoned expeditionary teams in OFDA and OTI, the DCHA Bureau is able to respond quickly to complex and natural disasters, help stabilize fragile states and lay the groundwork for sustainable development in partnership with USAID missions.

It is a tremendous privilege to be considered for this position. Shortly after college, in a somewhat abrupt shift for an English Literature major, I spent two transformative years in Nepal. As I lived and worked among those experiencing extreme poverty and grew to know many of the Tibetan refugees living in Nepal, a larger world opened up and set me on this pathway. I then lived and worked in Kazakhstan during the rocky years of the Soviet Union's dissolution, before joining Mercy Corps in 1996. I became president of Mercy Corps in 2005, and through my time there, have helped the agency grow into a \$250 million organization with programs in more than 40 countries around the world. Most importantly, I have had the honor of working with 3,700 courageous, dedicated team members who often leave their families and risk their lives to help others.

While with Mercy Corps, I have been directly involved with many of the world's most complicated crises over the past decade and a half: from the post-war response in Kosovo, to the Bam earthquake, to the epic year of the tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake and even Katrina. In each of these crises, I had the opportunity to work with and alongside the dedicated men and women of USAID's DCHA Bureau and been privy to their professionalism and dedication.

If confirmed, I would bring several key lessons from my years of working in this field to USAID. First, I am deeply committed to focusing on effectiveness and results, especially in the heat of a rapid response. I served for five years as head of the advisory board of Sphere, an international NGO initiative dedicated to improving standards, participation and coordination during emergency response. This initiative was born from the conviction that we in the international humanitarian community must be more accountable and effective in responding to complex crises and alleviating suffering among the most vulnerable. I am energized by Dr. Shah's vision for success by building excellent capacity, executing better strategic plans, and achieving more accountable results.

Secondly, I have seen the importance of embedding the seeds of longer term recovery in the earliest stages of a disaster response. Just a month after the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, I visited a camp for displaced villagers in Muzaffrabad. An elderly man beckoned me over. He thanked me for all the food and clean water he had received in the immediate aftermath of his arrival from his small village. He also proudly showed me the earthenware jugs he was starting to make again, supported by an effort to help small business restart. He was eager to get back to work as quickly as possible and restart his

life. If confirmed, I would work on enabling faster and more effective transitions, by working in partnership with the affected governments, communities and businesses and by focusing on joint plans for long-term success among all the parts of USAID and the rest of the US Government.

Thirdly, I have seen the ability of teams on the ground to innovate and develop new solutions that address critical problems. Effective new solutions can emerge by listening closely to the local communities and enabling our teams to try different approaches. I am deeply impressed by Secretary Clinton and Dr. Shah's call for an increased focus on innovation to tackle great development challenges and if confirmed, would work energetically to apply that mandate to the conflict, humanitarian and transition work of DCHA.

Finally, I have also been greatly inspired by the scholar Amartya Sen, who noted in his book *Development as Freedom* that "famines don't happen in democracies." President Obama and Secretary Clinton have both spoken powerfully about humanitarian assistance as core to who we are as Americans as well as the key role that democratic governance plays in helping states emerge from the fragility that imperils their citizens. I have seen the role that poor governance plays in spawning conflict or heightening the devastation of a natural disaster. My experience has made me a passionate believer in the DCHA mission. Simply providing humanitarian assistance is never just enough. The DCHA capabilities collectively enable us to invest in democracy and strengthen civil society as well as think more analytically about preventing conflict. These approaches are critical for mitigating the impact of disasters, and helping to quell conflict in their aftermath.

Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates and Administrator Shah have all spoken eloquently about the urgency of increasing our civilian capacity for development, so that it can stand alongside defense and diplomacy in enhancing global security, reducing poverty and strengthening democratic governance. In my role as co-president of the board of the US Global Leadership Coalition, I have seen the bipartisan support for ensuring we have strong and effective development capabilities.

If confirmed, I would enthusiastically join the Administrator in helping to meet the vital challenges we face around the world -- from Afghanistan and Pakistan, to Sudan and Somalia and the constant threat of floods, famines and earthquakes in fragile states around the world -- by helping to re-energize and expand a more effective agency and bureau.

In closing, I would note that I am often asked by people if it is depressing to always be heading to another disaster or conflict zone, and after reflection, I realized that, in fact, I often return with a renewed sense of our collective humanity. Perhaps most importantly, I have been profoundly affected by the courage, dignity and resilience of those affected by disaster as well as those who rush to assist.

Mercy Corps began working in Iraq in 2003 with funding from USAID. We had a large team of Iraqis who worked with courage to provide assistance to those affected by the

conflict. When Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, they were so grateful for all the support they had received from the American people that they wanted to give back in an expression of friendship and support. These Iraqi citizens took the initiative to organize and all donated a day of their wages to help those suffering from the flooding.

I am honored to be considered for this position and humbled by the responsibilities it entails. If confirmed, I look forward to joining the ranks of the many dedicated and courageous men and women working in USAID and the DCHA Bureau. I am deeply committed to the mission of DCHA and the role it plays in embodying our core American values and contributing to national security.

As President Obama said in the 2010 national security strategy: “Our long-term security will come not from our ability to instill fear in other peoples, but through our capacity to speak to their hopes.”

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today and I welcome any questions you might have.