

Statement by Congresswoman Betty McCollum
“Foreign Assistance: Proposals for Reform”
Appropriations Subcommittee on the State Department and Foreign Operations
January 23, 2008

Modernizing America’s engagement with the developing world as an investor, donor and partner in providing development assistance, humanitarian aid and capacity building, as well as hope for the world’s poor, is a vital U.S. role in the world.

Chairwoman Lowey, thank you for holding this important hearing. The timing of this hearing is absolutely right. Modernizing development assistance and improving coordination of foreign assistance across dozens of federal departments and agencies must be a top priority for both Congress and the next President.

I had the privilege to serve with Mr. Rupp on the Smart Power commission and strongly support the commission’s recommendations.

We need to be smart and use our nation’s great military, political and economic power wisely. This means our development investments need to be focused, effective, and yield real outcomes in the lives of needy people around the world.

We need development to be an equal partner with defense and diplomacy.

The National Security Strategy put forth by the Bush Administration in 2002 and 2006 is based on defense, diplomacy and development.

Today, it is clear that development, both strategically and structurally, is not an equal partner, but all too often an afterthought or secondary concern.

There is an every growing chorus – including a number of our witness here today – that believes the U.S. needs a cabinet level “Secretary of Development” – a champion to advocate directly to the President for development, aid effectiveness, coordination across departments and agencies, and to give strategic focus to our investments.

I strongly support this idea. I strongly support Congress and our next President developing a strategy, a structure, and a level of resource commitment to support a cabinet level secretary who has the statutory authority to give focus, impose coordination, and champion a long-view of development.

Foreign assistance modernization must demonstrate America’s commitment and ability to partner with governments, but also with the world’s 2 billion people struggling to escape oppression, poverty and disease. We need to make investments in development assistance that reflect the challenges of the 21st century and the realities of globalization.

We need a strategy that is rooted in innovation, coordination, and an understanding of cultures, customs, languages and the complexity of local conditions. Our failures and lessons learned in Iraq clearly demonstrate this.

We need development investments in which one dollar yields two, three or four dollars worth of results.

Our nation's investments in development, democracy; global health and human capacity building need to take a view focused on generational impact, not quick political fixes.

We need to make a commitment to outcomes that are not only based on quantity, but also result in real improvements in the quality of life for families in the world's poorest countries.

Finally, we need restore the civilian expertise within our government to achieve our development strategy – we need to invest in Americans who are willing to serve their country and the world.

In short, we need a cabinet level Department of Development.

Thank you, Madam Chair.