

**“THE FOUR FAMINES”: ROOT CAUSES AND  
A MULTILATERAL ACTION PLAN**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MULTILATERAL  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,  
MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS, AND  
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC, ENERGY,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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## **“THE FOUR FAMINES”: ROOT CAUSES AND A MULTILATERAL ACTION PLAN**

**TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2017**

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MULTILATERAL INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT, MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS,  
AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC, ENERGY,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:33 p.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Todd Young, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Young [presiding] and Merkley.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TODD YOUNG, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA**

Senator YOUNG. The Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy will come to order.

I want to thank the ranking member. I have really enjoyed working with you on this and other issues, Senator Merkley. I am grateful for our bipartisan cooperation, and thanks for your partnership on this hearing.

Together, we decided to title today’s hearing, “The Four Famines: Root Causes and a Multilateral Action Plan.” We chose this title very deliberately. We certainly want to receive an update regarding the humanitarian crises in Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. We want to have as clear of an understanding as possible on what is really happening in each of these four countries. But receiving an update and obtaining a better understanding of these crises is, frankly, not enough. There are plenty of meetings, conferences, dialogue, hearings in this town that can provide such an update.

Based on an understanding of the root causes, I, for one, am most interested in identifying and catalyzing additional specific actions that other governments, NGOs, and multilateral institutions can take, actions they can take without delay, to help prevent millions from dying of starvation in these four countries.

Before I preview the witnesses and participants joining us today, I would like to briefly comment on these posters you see around the room. These are from the four famine countries. We hear the statistics regarding these crises, and sometimes we can fall into a dispassionate, clinical, or intellectual discussion, lacking a sense of ur-

gency, and forgetting we are talking about real men, real women, real children who are in dire need of our help.

I realize these pictures may be disturbing to some. They are certainly deeply troubling to me. But I think it is important to have these posters here today, because they remind us we are talking about real people who need urgent help. Can you imagine how you would feel if your mother, your father, your sister, your brother was one of these children?

Today, we have an impressive group of leaders and experts joining us to help identify additional steps we can take to help. Today's hearing will be divided into three panels.

The first panelist is Mr. Matthew Nims, the acting director of the Office of Food for Peace at the United States Agency for International Development.

Mr. Nims, thanks so much for joining here us today. We look forward to your testimony.

As a quick preview, the second panel will consist of two distinguished leaders from multilateral entities that play an indispensable role in alleviating suffering in these and other humanitarian crises. They will include the Honorable David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Programme, and Mr. Justin Forsyth, deputy executive director for partnerships at the United Nations Children's Fund.

In our third and final panel, we will be joined by three individuals, Mr. Dominik Stillhart, the director of operations for the International Committee of the Red Cross; Dr. Deepmala Mahla, South Sudan director for Mercy Corps; and the Honorable Eric Schwartz, president of Refugees International.

Given this extraordinary group of leaders and experts with real-world experience, I am, of course, eager to get started. But before we do so, I would like to offer a few brief comments to frame our hearing today.

Today, the world confronts what many view as the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. The numbers are absolutely staggering.

As Executive Director Beasley says in his prepared statement, about 20 million people are at risk of severe hunger or starvation in the four countries, with nearly 6 million children in these countries malnourished; 1.4 million people, like the children depicted on these posters, are in severe condition.

What makes these numbers and these images around the room especially heartbreaking is the fact that these four crises, to varying degrees, are manmade. They are preventable, exacerbated by armed conflict and deliberate restrictions on the humanitarian access.

Today, in these countries, we are seeing attacks on humanitarian personnel and insufficient global responses to the funding needs for these crises. We are also seeing far too many manmade impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Now, the international community must speak with one clear and unambiguous voice. Combatants must end attacks on humanitarian personnel and facilities. Governments should fully fulfill their moral obligations to help financially. And countries should

stop using food and medicine as weapons, weapons of war to gain political advantage or leverage.

Deliberately attacking humanitarian personnel and facilities, and impeding humanitarian relief to areas not under combatant control, are clear violations of customary international law. They are morally reprehensible, and they must stop.

That is why I introduced bipartisan S. Res. 114 with Senator Cardin back in April. This resolution called for an urgent and comprehensive international diplomatic effort to address manmade obstacles in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen that are preventing humanitarian aid from being delivered to millions of people who desperately need it. I am pleased that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed a version of this resolution, and I am most hopeful that the full Senate will pass it soon.

I hope this hearing will give each of us a clearer idea of what can and what must be specifically done to help those at risk of starvation in each of these four countries.

So with those thoughts in mind, I would now like to call on Ranking Member Merkley for his opening remarks.

Senator Merkley?

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MERKLEY,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM OREGON**

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, particularly for your deep, genuine, persistent interest and engagement on such an important issue.

And we certainly are deeply pleased to have six such incredible international experts to give us insight on the challenges that we face, eradicating hunger and malnutrition is a great challenge.

An appalling number, almost 800 million people across the world, do not have enough food to eat every day. More than 20 million people face starvation in the four countries we are focusing on: Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen.

Taken individually, the numbers are staggering. Taken together, it is heartbreaking.

In these four countries, with so many children, severely, acutely malnourished, it is not just a moral outrage. It is a disaster for those alive today and all those who would build a country for the future. Severe malnutrition in the first 5 years of life can stunt both the brain and the physical development, creating long-term disruptions in human capital.

It is no wonder, then, that international aid officials say they are facing one of the most severe humanitarian disasters since World War II.

While each country and situation is unique, each and every one of these famines has manmade contributions. It is, therefore, essential that the hearing today address not only the root causes that drive the suffering but also the multilateral actions the international community can take to address it.

In each of these countries, some combination of weak governance coupled with unprecedented drought and conflict have brought famine-like conditions. Conflicts severely restrict the delivery of food aid. Whether it is the fight against extremist groups in Nigeria and Somalia, the civil conflicts in South Sudan and Yemen, the effect

is the same. Conflict prevents the delivery of food assistance at the scale necessary to meet the need, especially if the warring parties attempt to use starvation as a weapon. And I think the chairman spoke directly and powerfully to that issue.

Climate disruption also plays a role. Severe drought in Somalia is a key driver. Beyond Somalia, climate disruption is contributing to droughts and food shortages that are spurring refugee movement and stressing weak governments. As our planet continues to warm, the potential for new famines only gets worse.

And famine is not just about food. It is about water. Sometimes, it is the lack of clean water and proper hygiene that create deadly scenarios where diseases like cholera spread. The problem gets even worse in refugee camps. Cholera is on the rise in East Africa with thousands of cases in Somalia and South Sudan in recent years.

Over the long term, it is critically important to address the conflicts in climate disruption that are driving famine and will continue to do so. And in the near term, it is imperative that we do everything possible to help those suffering from these four famines.

The United States has been a leading provider, often the leading provider, of international disaster relief. This is something Americans should take great pride in.

While I support the administration's commitment to provide \$639 million in aid to these four countries, I am concerned that the proposed sharp cuts in funding for USAID, the State Department, the United Nations, and foreign assistance more broadly will have a negative impact.

I understand the administration is considering moving the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration away from the Department of State and into the Department of Homeland Security. At a time when refugees are on the rise globally, including as a result of these famines we are discussing, we should only be redoubling our efforts to support refugees and vulnerable populations by keeping refugee assistance and resettlement under the direction of the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

It is essential that the U.S. commit American resources and lead the world's effort to address not only these existing crises, but the ones to come as well—to prepare for them, to be ready for them, to contribute to the prevention.

Emergency funding is critical, but it is not enough. We also have to invest in development and diplomacy, and intergovernmental cooperation.

I am especially appreciative of all the work done by organizations represented here today—USAID, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Red Cross, Refugees International, Mercy Corps—Mercy Corps headquartered in Oregon, I am proud to note—and all the work that they are tirelessly engaged in to address these issues.

And I am pleased that our USAID representative, Matthew Nims, is from the Food for Peace Office, which was zeroed out in the President's budget. But earlier today, the Ag Subcommittee of Appropriations, in a bipartisan fashion, made sure that this program is funded. Therefore, you will have a job. [Laughter.]

Senator MERKLEY. And a very important job it is.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for their willingness to join with us today. Thank you for your work. Thank you for sharing your expertise.

Senator YOUNG. It is great to have you here, Mr. Nims. Your full written statement will be included in the record, so I welcome you to summarize that statement in 5 minutes, if that is possible, sir.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MATTHEW NIMS, ACTING DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF FOOD FOR PEACE, UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. NIMS. Thank you, Chairman Young and Ranking Member Merkley, very much for the invitation to come speak with you today about, just as you described in your opening statements, this unprecedented food security crisis the world is facing.

We are grateful, from the USAID side, from the Food for Peace side, and I think I speak for a lot of the other members that are going to be talking, we are very grateful for your continued support to the humanitarian efforts in bringing attention to the struggles of the world's most vulnerable people.

I think we have all seen the headlines about the potential for famine in the four countries, about the massive levels of food insecurity globally. The USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET, has indicated an unprecedented 81 million people across 45 countries will be in need of emergency food assistance this year, largely due to persistent conflict, severe drought, and economic instability.

Across South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, and Yemen, a combined 20 million people are at risk of severe hunger or starvation. In terms of scale, to put it in perspective, that is nearly double the populations of Indiana and Oregon combined.

In Yemen, in particular, the scale of food insecurity is staggering. More than 17 million people, an astounding 60 percent of the country's population, are food insecure, including nearly 7 million people who are unable to survive without food assistance.

In responding to these emergencies, we are seeing some commonalities as these conditions worsen. High malnutrition levels across these countries are very worrying. In all four countries, more than 1.4 million children are projected to face severe, acute malnutrition this year.

These numbers are shocking, particularly when you consider severe malnutrition in emergency contexts can threaten the very survival of children and, long-term, have negative effects on all aspects of individual's health and development.

In three of the countries, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, cases of cholera are on the rise. The people of Yemen face the world's worst cholera outbreak, with more than 332,000 suspected cases reported as of last week. In fact, I think we are closer to 350,000 already.

As extreme hunger weakens people's immune systems, it leaves them susceptible to deadly but largely preventable diseases like cholera. So it is critical we contain the outbreaks.

The manmade nature of these crises is another common thread. In South Sudan, Nigeria, and Yemen, the food security situation is

a direct consequence of prolonged conflict. In Somalia, ongoing conflict has exacerbated severe drought conditions.

In all four of the countries, we call on all parties to allow safe, rapid, and unhindered access to people most in need.

As you know, in South Sudan, despite our efforts in the last 3 years to stave off famine, famine was declared in two counties in February due to the ongoing conflict and lack of safe and sustained access. The international community responded by scaling up humanitarian activities. And in June, it was announced that famine conditions have subsided.

However, overall, food security across the country had continued to deteriorate, and life-threatening hunger has spread in both scope and scale. An estimated 6 million people, more than half of South Sudan's population, now face life-threatening hunger.

Nearly 4 million South Sudanese have been displaced from their homes. And an exodus of 1.9 million South Sudanese into neighboring countries, including into conflict areas of Sudan, definitely shows the desperation they face.

I had the honor of traveling with Chairman Corker and Senator Coons to Bidi Bidi, the settlement in Uganda, in April, where many South Sudanese refugees shared their harrowing stories with us and thanked us for the assistance provided by the U.S. Government. I was struck by the bravery they showed in the face of such adversity.

The United States, through its many partners, continues to robustly respond to these emergencies and helps lead the international effort.

Through your generous support, we just announced an additional \$639 million in humanitarian assistance for the millions of people affected by food insecurity and violence in these countries. Our assistance includes emergency food and nutrition assistance, life-saving medical care, improved sanitation, safe drinking water, emergency shelter, protection for civilians affected by conflict, and support for hygiene and health programs to treat and prevent disease outbreaks.

This brings the total U.S. humanitarian assistance to more than \$1.8 billion for these four crises since the beginning of fiscal year 2017.

Finally, as I close, I would be remiss not to acknowledge that these four crises are our areas of greatest concern, but they represent merely the spearhead of humanitarian emergencies, including ongoing crises in Syria, Iraq, and in places like Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In particular, I would draw your attention to the worrying news coming out of Ethiopia. According to FEWS NET, the situation in southern Ethiopia is deteriorating and may be catastrophic without additional intervention. The drought in southern Ethiopia comes as the country's north and central highland areas continue to recover from a severe drought last year that was triggered by El Niño, and consecutive poor rainy seasons. We are continuing to ramp up our assistance, including resilience investments to support Ethiopia's capacity to better withstand shocks like a severe drought in the future.

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to sharing more about our response to date, and taking your questions.  
[Mr. Nims's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MATTHEW NIMS

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to come and speak with you today about the unprecedented food security crisis the world is facing.

My name is Matthew Nims, and I am the Acting Director of USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP). The United States has long been the largest provider of emergency food assistance in the world and we are grateful for your continued support to humanitarian efforts and raising awareness to the struggles of the world's most vulnerable people. USAID uses a mix of tools to respond to emergency food needs, including U.S. commodities, locally and regionally procured food, vouchers, cash transfers and other complementary activities to reach the world's most food insecure with lifesaving aid. We also support development programs that address the root causes of hunger in areas of chronic crisis to build resilience and food security of local communities.

Global donors continue to be confronted this year with major humanitarian crises around the world, which demand an immediate, substantial, and collaborative response. The USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET, warned early on that 2017 would see an unprecedented 81 million people across 45 countries in need of emergency food assistance, largely due to persistent conflict, severe drought and economic instability. South Sudan experienced famine earlier this year and three other countries—Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen—face the threat of famine, putting a combined 20 million people at risk of severe hunger or starvation. In terms of scale, more than twice the populations of New York City and Washington, D.C. combined are at risk.

Over the past year, I have traveled to some of these countries and others facing severe food insecurity to see firsthand the situation on the ground. Today I want to share with you more about the ongoing crises in these countries, what we and others in the international community are doing to respond, and the challenges these countries face.

*South Sudan*

Let me start with South Sudan, where famine was declared earlier this year in two counties. This crisis is man-made. More than three years of horrific violence in South Sudan has transformed the world's youngest nation into one of the most food-insecure countries in the world. Despite our efforts throughout the conflict to stave off famine in collaboration with the U.N. World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF and other partners, famine was declared for about 100,000 people in parts of the country in February due to the on-going conflict and lack of safe and sustained access for humanitarian workers. The international community responded by scaling-up humanitarian activities and, in June, it was announced that famine conditions had subsided. However, during that period, overall food security across the country continued to deteriorate and life-threatening hunger has spread in both scope and scale. An estimated 6 million people—more than half of South Sudan's population—now face life-threatening hunger.

People continue to be driven from their homes by violence, and many are forced to eat water lilies and wild grasses to survive. Innocent civilians are targeted by violence from armed actors on all sides of the conflict, and have little to no access to basic services. Despite numerous ceasefire proclamations, the fighting has continued. It has disrupted markets and harvests, and the South Sudanese people—having exhausted all their resources—are left with little or nothing to survive. Many face a choice no one should have to face—stay where they are and starve, or run for their lives, potentially into mortal danger, so they can find food.

The warring parties of this conflict are responsible for this situation. Nearly four million South Sudanese have been displaced from their homes internally or as refugees, and the exodus of 1.9 million South Sudanese into neighboring countries—including into conflict areas of Sudan—shows the desperation they face as the geographic scale of the conflict spreads. Schools have emptied out, leaving 1.8 million children out of school and 17,000 children recruited into armies.

Nearly 1 million Southern Sudanese have fled to Uganda, more than half of them just since January. The Bidi Bidi refugee settlement did not exist this time last year yet is now home to more than 270,000 refugees, who continue to arrive at an average of more than 1,000 each day. I had the honor of traveling with Chairman

Corker and Senator Coons to Bidi Bidi in April where many refugees bravely shared their harrowing stories with us. At the intake center where refugees are registered, many were grateful for the food they were provided by WFP with U.S. support, the first food many had had in days or even a week as they made their trek from South Sudan to Uganda. We met young girls who ran from conflict with their younger siblings and now were the sole family caregiver. We also met with young women, who were raped as they fled or as soldiers ransacked their villages, and who were now pregnant and trying to rebuild their lives on their own; and we met with many who just wanted peace, to return home and resume being productive members of their community.

The United States continues to be at the forefront of a robust humanitarian effort to save as many lives as possible. The United States, through USAID and the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has provided nearly \$2.75 billion since 2013 to help the South Sudanese people. We deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in December 2013 to lead the U.S. humanitarian response; the DART remained in place through the July 2016 violence and remains on the ground managing the U.S. humanitarian response. Throughout the crisis, and ramping-up over the past six months, the U.S. has responded with comprehensive humanitarian assistance, including food, safe drinking water, emergency medical care, critical nutrition treatment, and emergency shelter and relief supplies. So far in FY 2017, we have provided more than 100,000 metric tons of food assistance, at times using airdrops and mobile teams to reach populations in famine in highly insecure areas.

Our health, water and sanitation interventions are critical because we know that people don't only die in large numbers from hunger, but from the diseases to which they succumb when hunger weakens their immune systems, leaving them susceptible to deadly but largely preventable diseases, such as cholera and malaria. Our assistance is also helping to provide psychosocial support to survivors of gender-based violence, give children a safe place to learn as an alternative to fighting, and reunite families separated by fighting.

However, significant challenges remain. While a robust international humanitarian response helped roll back famine, the continued failure of South Sudan's leaders to prioritize the wellbeing of their people will result in continued deterioration, making a return to famine a real possibility in coming months and years. Our partners continue to face security and access challenges that make our life-saving operations more dangerous and complex. Governmentmandated bureaucratic impediments, numerous road checkpoints by all parties to the conflict, weather-related obstacles, and limited communication and transportation infrastructure have restricted humanitarian activities across South Sudan. Additionally, aid workers have been harassed, attacked, or killed, and relief supplies looted by all parties to the conflict. According to the U.N. South Sudan is the most dangerous place in the world for humanitarian workers—at least 84 aid workers have died in South Sudan since 2013. We call on all parties to allow safe, rapid, and unhindered access to people most in need. All parties to this conflict must stop targeting aid workers and stop impeding humanitarian response efforts.

### *Somalia*

In 2011, nearly 260,000 Somalis—half of them children under five—died in a famine triggered by what was at the time the Horn of Africa's worst drought in more than 60 years. Today, Somalia once again faces the threat of famine. Recent analysis by FEWS NET indicates troubling parallels to conditions which led to the 2011 famine. In many areas, vegetation conditions are the worst on record, surpassing those observed during the 2011 crisis. Somalia's overall below-average April-to-June rainfall was insufficient to end the country's ongoing drought, which is expected to continue until at least the onset of the October-to-December rainy season. FEWS NET estimates that the upcoming harvest will be up to 60 percent below average, compounding an already dire food security situation. In addition to these factors, the situation is further exacerbated by ongoing conflict.

Despite the mitigating impact of humanitarian assistance, the number of people facing life-threatening levels of acute food insecurity in Somalia increased from approximately 2.9 million to more than 3.2 million people between February and May. An estimated 6.7 million Somalis—more than half the population—are currently in need of immediate humanitarian assistance as a result of the combined effects of the drought and ongoing conflict. An elevated risk of Faminelevel acute food insecurity in Somalia persists due to the population's reliance on emergency food assistance, the high likelihood of a poor harvest, high acute malnutrition, and Somalia's ongoing cholera outbreak. Approximately 1.4 million children younger than five years of age in Somalia are projected to face acute levels of malnutrition by the end

of 2017, with 275,000 facing severe acute malnutrition, according to revised projections by the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF).

As sources of safe water dry up, cases of waterborne disease are on the rise. The U.N. reports more than 53,000 suspected and confirmed cases of cholera, including 795 related deaths across the country, since January 2017. In comparison, the 2016 cholera outbreak with a caseload of 15,619 was considered one of the largest and longest that Somalia has undergone over the last five years. The drought is also forcing people from their homes. According to the U.N., more than 761,000 people have been displaced due to drought since November 2016. Many displaced families are not getting the emergency aid they need because the urban centers and existing settlements to which they are fleeing lack comprehensive systems to register and assist new arrivals.

The crisis in Somalia also has regional effects, as people leave to look for food and support in neighboring countries. This migration compounds the already tenuous situations in Ethiopia and Kenya. We support the food security needs of refugees in these countries and are seeing highly concerning malnutrition rates among those arriving into Ethiopia from southern Somalia. These countries are also facing inflows of refugees from South Sudan, making the impacts of these food security crises regional in nature.

Over the last several months, the United States has worked to rapidly scale up our emergency response efforts in Somalia, providing vital food and malnutrition treatment and ensuring communities have safe drinking water and improved sanitation and hygiene. The United States has provided more than \$336 million in emergency assistance to date in 2017 for Somalia.

USAID partners are distributing food rations to the most acutely food-insecure people, as well as food vouchers and cash transfers where markets are functioning. We are also strategically utilizing existing long-term development resources where possible to complement rapid emergency humanitarian assistance. USAID's assistance in Somalia is typically linked to activities designed to help build the resilience of the Somali people, including vocational training or productive asset building activities, such as rehabilitating community water and sanitation infrastructure or roads. However, due to the rapidly deteriorating food security situation, many of these productive activities are on hold until households' food security improves.

This is the first time since Somalia's devastating 2011 famine that FEWS NET has warned of an elevated risk of famine in the country. But it is important to recognize the differences between the Somalia of 2011 and now. The Somali Federal Government formed just a few years ago, while access to affected populations remains a key obstacle, there is wider humanitarian access, and investments in development and resilience have helped better position some communities to endure this drought. The United States continues to help build the capacity of the fledgling Somali Government to support its own population. The Federal and State Governments have formed Drought Coordination Committees, which work to raise funds and coordinate the delivery of assistance to communities across Somalia. The drought Somalia faces is also affecting the greater Horn. Importantly, the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia all publicly committed earlier this year to regional cooperation and cross-border collaboration to tackle both this drought and, through longer-term investments, the underlying fragility that tips vulnerable communities into crisis in recurring droughts.

### *Nigeria*

The savagery of Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa and the ensuing conflict in Nigeria's northeast has triggered a humanitarian crisis, violations in international humanitarian law, and protection risks in northeast Nigeria and surrounding countries in the Lake Chad Basin region. The conflict has displaced over two million people and leaving more than 10 million vulnerable individuals in need of humanitarian assistance.

Food assistance and nutrition continue to be the most critical needs in northeast Nigeria. An estimated 5.2 million people face severe food insecurity during the current May to October lean season in northeastern Nigeria. The most vulnerable populations include those displaced in Borno State, where famine already likely occurred in 2016. Despite improvements in humanitarian access and partner capacity, insecurity and limited capacity continue to constrain the reach and scale of assistance available. Though insecurity limits access and information gathering, there are signs that a famine may be ongoing in parts of the state that are inaccessible to humanitarian actors. As access has improved, humanitarian agencies are encountering communities with dire levels of hunger and malnutrition, particularly among children. In addition, a recent influx of refugees returning to Nigeria from Cam-

eroon is causing overcrowding in internally displaced person sites in northeast Nigeria, increasing humanitarian needs and straining available resources.

This crisis involves numerous other tragedies and protection issues. We hear reports of families without shelter and on the brink of starvation, vulnerable women and girls forced to trade sex for food to keep their families alive, men and boys forcibly recruited into armed groups or killed, and children whose worlds have been shattered after months of captivity. We also have reports of girls as young as eight years old being used as suicide bombers. Yet, the severe and heartbreaking needs of these vulnerable communities far exceed the resources available to help them.

Since late 2016, the U.N. and NGOs have scaled up emergency operations. Since December 2016, WFP continues to reach more than 1 million people in northeast Nigeria each month with in-kind food assistance or cash-based transfers. Relief organizations have also expanded nutrition programs, including activities that train community volunteers to help screen and refer malnourished children to health centers. UNHCR and ICRC continue to provide protection to internally displaced persons (IDPs), unaccompanied children and separated minors, as well as assistance to refugees returning voluntarily from Cameroon.

Despite clear progress, the global emergency response is still not meeting all of the widespread needs due to the scale of the crisis and the persistent insecurity that thwarts humanitarian operations. Faced with threats of ambushes, suicide attacks, and improvised explosive devices, our partners are bravely putting themselves in danger to deliver aid to those who need it most. They must be allowed to continue their important work without fear of violence. As we continue to scale up our humanitarian response to this crisis, we must work with the Government of Nigeria and the governments around the Lake Chad Basin to reach communities that have been most impacted by insecurity perpetuated by Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa.

#### *Yemen*

There continues to be grave concern about the risk of famine in Yemen, now the world's largest food security emergency, where more than seventeen million people—60 percent of the country's population—are food insecure, including nearly seven million people who are unable to survive without food assistance. Simultaneously, the people of Yemen also face the world's worst cholera outbreak.

The primary driver of this crisis is the ongoing conflict that broke out in late 2014. Fighting has also hampered commercial trade, which is particularly devastating in a country that imports 90 percent of its food and most of its fuel and medicine. The food that does make it to markets continues to be increasingly expensive, with some foods doubling in price as supplies dwindle. For one of the poorest countries, these price increases dramatically affect people's ability to buy food and are further exacerbating the food security situation.

Two years of conflict has disrupted more than Yemen's food supply. Two million people have been forced to flee from their homes, and more than 75 percent of the country is in need of food or other humanitarian assistance—including approximately 462,000 children who are severely malnourished. During a major food crisis like this, preventable disease is often the leading cause of death. In many cases, diseases like cholera also inhibit the ability to treat malnutrition, so they must be treated first. Contaminated drinking water, unsafe hygiene practices, a lack of sanitation services, and a crippled health care system are big contributors to the resurgence of a cholera outbreak that originally began in October.

To reach people in need, our humanitarian partners are navigating active conflict, checkpoints and other access constraints, bureaucratic impediments, and heavily damaged infrastructure. Despite these obstacles, USAID, PRM, and our partners are able to reach millions of people with life-saving aid, and the United States continues to mount a robust humanitarian response. Last month, USAID partner WFP reached nearly five million people with emergency food assistance. Our programs provide food vouchers and nutrition services. Mobile health clinics bring muchneeded emergency medical services in a time when nearly 15 million people lack access to basic health care. We are also providing hygiene kits, safe drinking water, and improved access to sanitation services to fight malnutrition and stave off disease. In late May, WFP provided logistical support to an U.N.-chartered aircraft carrying 67 tons of intravenous fluids and cholera kits to Yemen. For children especially, the toll of conflict can have lasting effects. Our mobile protection teams provide treatment to children throughout the country.

There is no doubt that our humanitarian programs are saving lives. According to FEWS NET, without the large-scale, international humanitarian assistance currently being provided to partners in country, the food security situation would be significantly worse across Yemen. According to FEWS NET, if imports decrease and

markets are further restricted, there is a threat of famine this year. We call on all parties to ensure unimpeded access for commercial and humanitarian goods throughout the country.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge that these four crises are our areas of greatest concern, but they represent the spearhead of humanitarian emergencies, including ongoing crises in Syria, Iraq and increasing concern in places like the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In particular, I would draw your attention to the worrying news coming out of Ethiopia. According to FEWS NET, the situation in southern Ethiopia is deteriorating rapidly and may be catastrophic without additional intervention. This drought in southern Ethiopia comes as the country's north and central highland areas continue to recover from a severe drought last year that was triggered by El Niño and consecutive poor rainy seasons. Thus far in fiscal year 2017, the United States has provided more than \$225 million in humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia, including for refugees also present in the drought-affected areas. We are continuing to ramp-up our assistance, including resilience investments to support Ethiopia's capacity to better withstand shocks like this severe drought in the future.

#### *Root Causes and Challenges*

Throughout the hotspots highlighted, several concerning themes emerge. Protracted, complex crises are taking up increasing amounts of scarce humanitarian resources, causing unprecedented population movements, and presenting unique challenges, including to U.S. national security. USAID estimates that in FY 2017 over half of our humanitarian funding will be allocated toward just six major emergencies, nearly all conflict driven. This notable shift to conflict as the largest driver of humanitarian crisis over the past decade is remarkable. Ten years ago, 80 percent of humanitarian resources were dedicated to natural disasters and 20 percent were used in response to conflicts. Today those numbers are reversed. The number of people in need of humanitarian aid has more than doubled over the past decade, and more than 65 million people are displaced internally or as refugees as a result of conflict and persecution. This shift towards conflict-related crises brings with it different challenges such as ensuring critical and safe access to communities in need.

To address these challenges, we are adapting to increasingly complex environments, and finding ways to provide assistance efficiently and safely, in order to save more lives. USAID is continually seeking ways to make our dollars stretch further, to reach the most people with the assistance they urgently need. This includes everything from providing newly displaced families in Syria with smaller, more portable food packages, to using geolocation technology to track assistance all the way to the beneficiary; from introducing retinal scans to verify the right assistance is going to the right person to making sure our internal operations—from staffing, oversight and implementation—continues to improve.

USAID also seeks to prevent and mitigate the impact of conflict and political instability in the recognition that prevention is equally important in addressing the causes of humanitarian crisis, and is more cost-effective in the long run.

We also cannot forget the need to focus on resilience to shocks. While the crises we discussed here today are driven by conflict, building community and country level resilience to recurrent shocks, like drought, is vitally important. Building resilience to recurrent crises has emerged as a priority for USAID and the U.S. Government, host governments, and development partners. The U.S. Government's new Global Food Security Strategy, developed last year as directed by the Global Food Security Act, elevates resilience within our work to combat the root causes of hunger, poverty and malnutrition. We have recognized that treating recurrent humanitarian crises as anomalies is extremely costly; including loss of lives and livelihoods, losses to national and regional economies, and the unsustainable financial burden of recurrent humanitarian spending in the same places. A UK study of Ethiopia and Kenya estimated that for two large droughts every \$1 invested in resilience would result in \$2.90 in reduced humanitarian spending, avoided losses and improved development outcomes over a decade. This ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

A comparison of two communities in Malawi during the 2016 El Niño drought further illustrates the point. In one community, responding to urgent, life-saving needs cost an average of \$390 per household. This community will also likely require similar assistance during future droughts. By contrast, a neighboring community in which we invested an estimated \$376 per household over five years through a Title II development program between 2009 and 2014 did not require food assistance in 2016.

What we cannot do is provide a humanitarian solution to a political problem, and we are working with our colleagues at the Department of State, our partners around the world, and the international community in order to continue to press for cessation of hostilities and enduring political solutions that bring conflict to an end. The United States relies on bilateral and multilateral channels to engage with foreign governments, international organizations and other partners to seek address the root causes of global food insecurity and famine. Only then can we move away from the dire human cost of these conflicts, and towards prosperity and stability.

Addressing humanitarian needs is also a global responsibility. As the President and Secretary of State have said, other countries need to do more to help meet these needs. The administration continues to work with other donors to increase their share of the response. In addition, the U.S. is challenging international and non-governmental relief organizations to expedite efforts to become more efficient and effective. The administration is evaluating needs and responding robustly and responsibly based on priorities, access, the capacity of our implementing partners, and other donors. Our priority is to ensure that funding is programmed responsibly and effectively.

Thank you for your attention to these issues and for the support Congress has provided to USAID and specifically our humanitarian programs over the years. Through your generous support, the United States at the G-20 meeting announced an additional \$639 million in humanitarian assistance for the millions of people affected by food insecurity and violence in these countries, bringing total FY 2017 commitments so far for affected people from these four countries to over \$1.8 billion (or about 20 percent of the total FY 2017 humanitarian appropriations). We do this work not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is in the interest of the American people and promotes global stability. Please know that your support transforms and saves lives every day.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Nims.

I am going to ask you a series of questions. We will have 7-minute rounds. There will be an opportunity for multiple rounds for each of the three different panels. There may be some questions I ask you, Mr. Nims, where I am asking you to recapitulate something you have already delivered in your testimony, and that is because I think it is essential that we underscore certain points in the course of this whole exercise.

So with that, how would you characterize, Mr. Nims, the humanitarian situation in the so-called four famine countries?

Mr. NIMS. So I think largely, mostly due to prolonged conflict and severe drought, and I guess continuing economic instability, we think that those four countries face incredible risk of famine in 2017.

So famine is a very serious word in our business. South Sudan experienced famine earlier this year, as I mentioned. And Somalia, Nigeria, and Yemen face the threat of famine.

Really, again, looking at the numbers, this puts a combined 20 million people at risk of severe hunger or starvation.

Senator YOUNG. Would you, overall, described this humanitarian crisis as the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II?

Mr. NIMS. Yes. As I stated, our famine early warning system says that, right now, we have an unprecedented level of need, 81 million people across 45 countries in the need of emergency food security.

Additionally, of the 15 major food insecurity operations that we have going on in the world, 13 of those can be said to be based on manmade conflict.

Senator YOUNG. Focusing more narrowly on Yemen, would you agree that Yemen is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world right now, in terms of the number of people impacted?

Mr. NIMS. Yes, I would. Right now, Yemen is facing the world's largest cholera outbreak, and as well has the largest number of food insecure in the world, with almost 17 million people. The primary driver definitely has been the conflict that broke out in March 2015.

Senator YOUNG. So you have indicated 17 million food insecure. How many have been infected by cholera, something reported a lot recently?

Mr. NIMS. That is 17 million. That is about 60 percent of the population. It is an astounding number. Seven million of those are unable to survive without food assistance, as I mentioned.

Right now, I think the estimates are that over 350,000 people have been infected with cholera.

Senator YOUNG. For those who may not be as familiar with the situation in Yemen, or the geography there, why is the Port of Hodeidah so important to helping the millions of people in Yemen at risk of starvation?

Mr. NIMS. So the port of Yemen is the most crucial port for Yemen right now. Over 90 percent of all imports come in through that country.

Why that is doubly important is the fact that Yemen is 90 percent dependent for its food consumption on imports. So the Port of Hodeidah is the main hub for all of that activity.

Senator YOUNG. Mr. Nims, can you describe what happened to the original cranes at the Port of Hodeidah?

Mr. NIMS. So the original cranes in August 2015 were bombed in an airstrike.

Senator YOUNG. How has that negatively impacted humanitarian operations at Hodeidah and, more broadly, in Yemen?

Mr. NIMS. So with the loss of these cranes, it definitely has impacted the discharge rate of vessels going into the ports, so that has really slowed the port operations overall. That has had an impact, definitely, on the humanitarian side, as well as overall commercial activity for all of Yemen.

Senator YOUNG. Were USAID funds used to purchase, as best you can tell here in this setting, these mobile cranes to replace those put out of service by the Saudi-led coalition?

Mr. NIMS. Those look very similar to, if not the cranes, that USAID did purchase.

Senator YOUNG. It was not designed to be a trick question. [Laughter.]

Senator YOUNG. But I appreciate your integrity.

How much of U.S. taxpayer funds were used for these cranes?

Mr. NIMS. That was \$3.9 million.

Senator YOUNG. They are now in the possession of the World Food Programme. Is that correct?

Mr. NIMS. Correct.

Senator YOUNG. I understand there was an attempt by the World Food Programme to deliver those cranes to Hodeidah earlier this year. What happened? Why weren't they delivered?

Mr. NIMS. There was an attempt to do exactly that. There had been clearances gained from the emergency humanitarian operations center, from this coalition of groups that helps to ensure flow goes into the port.

They had received clearance, the WFP, to enter those cranes into Hodeidah. As they got closer to that, the security situation had changed in the Red Sea, and that shipment was turned back.

Senator YOUNG. Are you aware of the June 27 World Food Programme letter asking the Saudi Government for permission to deliver the cranes?

Mr. NIMS. I am aware of that letter, yes.

Senator YOUNG. Do you support the World Food Programme's request to have the four USAID-funded cranes delivered to Hodeidah?

Mr. NIMS. Yes. Delivery of the cranes would have a definite impact on both the humanitarian situation, as far as getting throughput through the Port of Hodeidah more quickly, as well as having a really good impact on the commercial activity overall in Yemen.

Senator YOUNG. And apologies for the recapitulation here. So what are the negative humanitarian consequences of not having those cranes delivered? Just to connect the dots.

Mr. NIMS. Because the cranes will help the throughput and help port operations, when we do not have the cranes, it takes longer for ships to discharge. It takes longer for regular operations of the port to continue. The cranes will greatly facilitate having this movement of goods through the port.

As I stated earlier, Yemen is completely dependent upon importation, by and large, to address the conditions they have, as well as their overall food needs in general. Having these cranes will improve that situation.

Senator YOUNG. Some have suggested there is a large-scale problem with the theft of humanitarian aid at the Port of Hodeidah. Is there a significant problem with theft of humanitarian aid at the Port of Hodeidah?

Mr. NIMS. First off, the U.S. Government and USAID, and particularly my office, takes any allegations of diversion of humanitarian activities very seriously. This is paramount in all of our operations.

This humanitarian need is really being held off by our continued operations that have been crucial through the port, as well as with our partners.

In this situation, we have taken this very seriously. We have investigated this through our partners. We have investigated this, to a degree, on our own. And we have had no evidence of any large-scale humanitarian diversions occurring at the port at all.

We are able to say this because of the integrity of our partners and because of the methods that they use, as well as our own methods of third-party monitoring and other systems that we employ to ensure that this food gets to where it is supposed to go.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. That is what my other sources have indicated as well, multiple other sources.

Some have argued that it is too unsafe for the cranes to be delivered to Hodeidah. Do you share that assessment? Why would the World Food Programme, I ask almost rhetorically, want to deliver the cranes there if it is so unsafe?

Mr. NIMS. Our very good partners, the World Food Programme, has determined that it is safe for the cranes to go in. They, along with other U.N. organizations and some of the NGOs that are here

today, currently have staff and operations in the port, and we stand with WFP.

Senator YOUNG. And I would note multiple ships go there as well that are not affiliated with the World Food Programme.

So thank you for your candid and concise responses to my questions.

Mr. Merkley?

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Nims, just to pursue a little bit the logistical challenges, what nation was behind the airstrikes that had such an impact on the ability to unload cargo?

Mr. NIMS. In reference to that, I believe I said April—no, August 2015. I really do defer to my Department of Defense colleagues, as well as, potentially, Department of State, to be able to answer that question.

Senator MERKLEY. So let's suppose it is Saudi Arabia. [Laughter.]

Mr. NIMS. Okay.

Senator MERKLEY. In deference to not having a representative other than yourself of the U.S. Government here at this moment, do you know if we have protested to the government responsible for destroying that equipment?

Mr. NIMS. I am not aware of any protesting of the destruction of that equipment.

Senator MERKLEY. Why not? Not why are you not aware, but why would we not raise that with an ally?

Mr. NIMS. Again, I would defer to my other colleagues, to the Department of Defense, as well as the Department of State, on that issue.

Senator MERKLEY. Do we have a challenge in terms of the maritime access for ships to actually get to the docks in Yemen?

Mr. NIMS. Yes, there is a challenge to go through a fairly arduous process of the emergency humanitarian operations committee. It does take time, and it does complicate the regular flow of goods through that area.

Senator MERKLEY. Have Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, whose navies control access, been partners in allowing access? Or have they been difficult?

Mr. NIMS. They are definitely members of this group of the emergency humanitarian operations committee, and I think that the bureaucratic nature alone has caused severe delays. And I think our partners would be better placed to answer this question, but I would believe that there would be other delays as well.

Senator MERKLEY. Was that a diplomatic way of saying that we could use better partnership from those two nations?

Mr. NIMS. I think a great way to answer that question, sir, and thank you for that question, would be to say, in all of these situations, whether it be Yemen or other parts around the world, we can use better cooperation from those host countries as well as countries affected in the crisis. And I think that this is most definitely an issue in Yemen and other places.

Senator MERKLEY. The reason I am asking this is because the United States is in a position to weigh in diplomatically to try to make the partnership work better to deliver aid. I am really trying

to get a sense of whether you believe that we have the ability and determination to do so.

Mr. NIMS. I believe that the humanitarian side of USAID has put forward consistent efforts and consistent information about some of the impediments that we are finding that our partners face every day.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay. Let me shift gears here.

During the continuing resolution, the funding, we worked in a bipartisan way to provide about \$900 million more to adjust famines. I am not sure if all of it was directed to these four nations, but the large majority.

How are we doing in terms of delivery of that aid? Often, when aid is not delivered quickly, the impact is far worse. In other words, speed is of the essence.

How are we doing?

Mr. NIMS. Thank you for that question, Senator.

Senator MERKLEY. You like that question better than the previous questions. [Laughter.]

Mr. NIMS. It is something that I can talk to.

Definitely, first of all, from a profound sense from both our teams in the field, and some of the NGOs and the international organizations here, another vote of thanks for that incredible level of resources that have come our way.

And I can say that even before that announcement, \$1.8 billion from the U.S. Government that has been put forward for these crises, USAID Food for Peace has been programming funds even before the announcement of the additional funding. As I said in my testimony, we are close to now \$1.8 billion for the U.S. Government that has been put forward for these crises from USAID alone.

The \$990 million that you referenced was apportioned to Food for Peace in June, on June 20th. The administration's announcement, I think, on the margins of the G-20 talked about \$639 million for the four countries. Of that amount, over \$330 million was from USAID Food for Peace. That amount was part of the \$990 million. We can trace it back to then, as far as it is going.

Our office is on track, we think, to be able to obligate, in a very responsible way, the remaining balance of that \$990 million before the end of this fiscal year.

Senator MERKLEY. For those four famine countries, does that aid involve making purchases in the United States and shipping it overseas? Or is a significant portion of it able to be used directly, in terms of the fastest possible path to getting nutrition on the ground where it is needed?

Mr. NIMS. So that will be, actually, a blend. \$300 million of the \$990 million was converted into Title II, which is in-kind food resources. That is in process right now with our partners at the World Food Programme, as well as others. So there are purchases that are happening now in the U.S.

At the same time, another remaining balance of that that has come from Food for Peace are going to exactly that, local purchase, regional purchase, maybe vouchers, and those types of activities directly where they are needed to ensure pipelines and operations continue starting now and going forward.

Senator MERKLEY. Is there anything that you would like Senator Young and myself to do to help speed up that aid?

Mr. NIMS. I think, as far as timing goes, and as far as the U.S. Government share of these resources at this time, I think that what we are doing right now is struggling and working hard to make sure that those get out the door in a timely manner, and that our partners can utilize those in the most effective way possible. My team is working very hard to ensure that that happens, and that USAID is doing that.

I do think that, given the nature of these conflicts, given the nature of what we have just been talking about, that these will simply not end, these situations, at the end of this fiscal year or even the end of this calendar year.

I think continued efforts on understanding these conflicts and what is going on—I think another part of this is a message that I think the humanitarians have been a lone voice recently talking about this, but I think that it is growing, is that we cannot humanitarian our way out of these conflicts.

As we said early on, all of these, even I would say Somalia, have serious, manmade elements to this. What we need is a combined U.S. and worldwide diplomatic and developmental push to really solve these conflicts.

Though I am incredibly proud to be at this table talking about the efforts of both the U.S. Government and the partners that are going to be talking later on, I do believe that we are straining the system to its capacity, given what is going on in the world. And I think that we need to look at these through other matters as well.

Senator MERKLEY. I so much appreciate your service and do please feel free to follow up with us, if we can be helpful. Thank you.

Mr. NIMS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you for the late push for the diplomatic surge resolution that we have called for. I, too, want to thank you for your testimony.

This concludes the first panel, and we will now take just a few minutes to allow Executive Director Beasley and Mr. Forsyth to take their places at the table.

Mr. NIMS. Thank you, Senators.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

You are dealing with a marine here, so I like to run a tight ship. During your few minutes to get settled, I thank you for your indulgence. We still have two panels to appear before us.

I would like to welcome Executive Director Beasley and Mr. Forsyth.

Once again, the Honorable David Beasley is the executive director of the World Food Programme. And Mr. Justin Forsyth is the deputy executive director for partnerships at the United Nations Children's Fund.

Based on your affiliation with the United Nations, I would note that both of you are appearing voluntarily today as a courtesy to brief the committee. We are honored to have both of you here today.

Executive Director Beasley, without further delay, I welcome you to provide your opening statement first.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID BEASLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, SOCIETY HILL, SC**

Mr. BEASLEY. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Merkley, it is, indeed, an honor to be with you. I thank you for calling this together for what is a very important issue at a critical time in world history.

I thank you also for reminding everyone that we are here on a voluntary basis. This should not be understood to be a waiver, express or implied, of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and its officials under the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

And we just made the lawyers happy, so let me begin. [Laughter.]

Mr. BEASLEY. I have been on the job now for a little over 100 days, so let me touch upon what I have seen in these first 100 days, because I reluctantly came into this role. I was at a point in time in my life that I did not need a job. I did not need a title. But the cause was so overwhelming with what the world was facing, as you said, Senator, the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. It is astounding what is happening out there.

So I was very concerned that I would come into a U.N. system that would be bureaucratic, could not get the job done, red tape, and the U.S. cutting back its funding. So I do not want to take a responsibility that I could not achieve the objectives that anyone would want to do as an executive director in such a time as this, only to find that the World Food Programme is one absolutely, as we would say, a lean, mean operating machine that gets it done.

I have just been overwhelmed with the support around the world. But I have been absolutely horrified at what I have experienced and seen, having made already seven field visits around the world, including places like Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda. And I am heading into Yemen next week.

But what we have been seeing is absolutely horrendous. Just in the last year, the number of people looking for food on an average daily basis has gone from 80 million to 108 million just in the past year, all because of manmade conflict, a 35 percent increase.

Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan, northeast Nigeria, we are dealing with terrorism. We are dealing with extremism. We are dealing with manmade conflict in other ways. And that does not even touch on Syria and Iraq and many other countries that were alluded to by Matt just earlier.

Of our top 13 expenditure countries with regard to operations, 10 of them are manmade—as Matt said earlier, 13 out of the 15, however you want to calculate the numbers.

Regardless, what the World Food Programme and the United Nations dealt with 30 years ago is different today. It is no longer just emergencies, tsunamis, earthquakes, and things of that nature. Today, it is manmade conflict. Over 80 percent of our funding is based upon conflict.

These are difficult times. One thing I have been saying to my friends, based upon my own observation, if the United States, for example, wants to spend another half trillion dollars on military operations, cut the World Food Programme.

We are the first line of offense and defense against extremism and terrorism on the field whether you are talking about Somalia or Nigeria or Syria, whether you are talking about Boko Haram, Al Shabaab, ISIS, Al Qaeda, other places. If mothers and fathers cannot feed their little children and they have no place to go, then they will turn to the only thing available.

So when the World Food Programme is there on behalf of the United Nations and countries like the United States, it makes a huge difference. In fact, our studies are already showing, coming out of the field in my experience talking with those that I have talked with on a firsthand basis just in the last couple weeks is that, for example, in Syria alone, and this applies to the other countries as well, before a family will leave their home country, they will move three times within their country. And for every 1 percent increase in hunger, there is a 2 percent increase in migration.

So for example, when we feed an average family or an average person at \$0.50 a day, whether it is in Yemen or whether it is in Syria, \$0.50 a day, but that same person, if they were refugee in, let's say, Germany, it goes from \$0.50 a day for food costs to a total humanitarian cost of 50 per day.

And you couple that with the fact that people do not want to leave their home. They have been living there all their lives. They have generations and generations they do not want to leave. But they will do that, only if they have to.

In my experience, in talking with these refugees or internally displaced people from country to country, is it backs up this study. Because everyone that I talked to, I will ask them, how many times did you move? Why did you move? Literally, in the last 2 weeks, in talking with refugees in Uganda moving out from South Sudan, in talking with 15-year-olds, 16-year-olds, 17-year-olds, for example, whose mothers and fathers have been killed, macheted to death only in the last 2 weeks in this ongoing crisis that is taking place as we sit right here—and as I have said to my friends, if we do not receive the funds that we need in the next few months, we are talking about 600,000 children dying.

You have seen the numbers that have already been alluded to here today, that 5.4 million children are dangerously malnourished, 1.6 to 1.7 million are acutely, severely malnourished. The situation is as dire as it gets.

And if you recall, in the Somalia famine that took place in 2011 to 2012, by the time the famine was declared, half the people had died—258,000 people died then. And the numbers that we are talking today make that pale in comparison of the tragedies and atrocities that we are talking about.

As Matt alluded to, and you did, too, Senator, 20 million people in these four countries face famine, do not know where their next meal is going to be. Ten million are in serious, serious jeopardy.

We need the funds, and we need access. We must have both.

And I say to my friends all over the world, particularly those that are major donor countries, if you are not going to provide the funds that we need to do what we do best, and we can get the job done because I can say without a shadow of doubt that the World Food Programme, if we have the funds, we have the expertise, we

have the experience, we have the assets, and we can get the food to every single person out there.

But we have to have the money, and we have to have the access. These two things are critical. And if you are not going to provide the funds and the access, then stop the wars.

Sustainable development goal number two that the entire world has agreed to: End world hunger by 2030. It was an achievable goal a couple years ago. Hunger was being reduced all over the world. Even though the population of the world has been going up, up, up, up, the rate of hunger had been going down, down, down, down to about 800 million people.

But yet, today, because of manmade conflict, greed, corruption, malfeasance in governments, the problem is only exacerbated and getting worse and worse. I do believe, if we can end these conflicts, we can end world hunger. I have no doubt. With the commitment of the United States as a leader in this area, and other countries that are willing to step up, I have just been shocked and so pleased and overwhelmed by the countries that are willing to stand firm with the United States and others.

Germany is stepping up from what used to be \$60 million a year to now over \$850 million a year. The EU is up to \$650 million, about \$800 and some odd million this past year, \$650 million this year. The U.K. is up to \$400 million, give or take. Canada is \$200 and some odd million. The value of the dollar has been hurting them. And other countries like Japan and the Scandinavian countries, the Nordic countries—but there are other countries that could do more, in my opinion.

The Saudis, they ought to fund the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, 100 percent of it. It is unreasonable and, I think, shameful that they are not.

The GCC states ought to be stepping up more for funding their brothers and sisters and their friends in the neighborhood—Iraq, Syria. But instead, it appears that the West is bearing these burdens.

Other countries can do more. I am hopeful that China as well as Russia will. I am traveling to these countries, making the appeal. Just in the last 2 weeks, I have been to many of these countries, and I have been, as I said earlier, overwhelmed and very pleased to see that countries and our great partners are stepping up, like Germany and other countries.

So my question that I would like to pose to leaders around the world is, if you are not going to provide the funds we need, will you provide the diplomatic power that is necessary to end these conflicts? I do not think these conflicts are that complicated in some of these places, Senator.

So, anyway, it is good to be here with you. I look forward to answering any questions you have.

[Mr. Beasley's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID BEASLEY

*Introduction*

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, members of the Senate Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy and Environmental Policy, thank

you for convening this hearing on “The Four Famines: Root Causes and a Multilateral Action Plan.” Today, I will provide a briefing on the state of the four looming famines in South Sudan, northeast Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen; WFP’s efforts to respond to and prevent famine; and major challenges and opportunities for effectively responding to these emergencies. This brief responds to the questions posed in Chairman Young’s letter to me on June 15, 2017. This brief is being provided on a voluntary basis and should not be understood to be a waiver, express or implied, of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and its officials under the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

The looming famine emergencies have two things in common: they are primarily driven by conflict and they are entirely preventable. With modern forecasting, improved agricultural practices and effective humanitarian organizations, bad weather alone is not capable of pushing large groups of people into famine any more. Conflict between armed groups or between armed groups and the State, in these cases, is the catalyst to cause famine to occur. Displacement, a major consequence of conflict, means that lives are disrupted, fields not kept and harvests missed. Each lost harvest drives poverty deeper. Families become dependent on other communities, themselves already poor. They buy food on credit, become dependent on humanitarian assistance just to meet their basic needs or they migrate to urban areas where they do menial labor or beg on street corners. These impacts are exacerbated by funding shortages and impeded access for humanitarian agencies like WFP and have placed millions at risk of death from starvation and disease. Still, when properly resourced, food assistance is already working to save lives. Funding provided by the United States—the global leader in food assistance—has helped to prevent famine and forced migration from occurring, has pulled several counties in South Sudan out of famine and is helping to contribute to improved regional and global stability. While it is important for the United States to continue to lead the response to global famine relief funding, other nations must also rise to meet this unprecedented challenge.

#### *My First 100 Days*

My first months as Executive Director of WFP have been committed to two major activities: seeing first-hand the emergencies that WFP is responding to, and working to ensure that all donor nations are stepping up to do their part to save lives and prevent these emergencies from escalating beyond their borders—making sure the burden is shared.

In my first three months as Executive Director, I’ve undertaken seven field visits including to our operations in famine affected South Sudan and Somalia and the refugee camps in Uganda. As I have seen firsthand, the world is experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. Next week I’ll be traveling to Yemen with the leaders of UNICEF and WHO.

About 20 million of our brothers and sisters in South Sudan, northeast Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen are at risk of famine, and an additional 10 million are facing crisis conditions. It is the most vulnerable in these countries—especially children—that are at highest risk of death from starvation and related diseases. Nearly six million children in these countries are malnourished, with at least 1.4 million in severe condition—roughly the equivalent of every child under the age of five in Florida and South Carolina. As many as 600,000 of these children could die in the next four months without intervention. When famine strikes, it is the result of our collective failure as a global community to respond.

#### *WFP Overview*

The World Food Program is the world’s leading humanitarian agency fighting hunger. In 2017, WFP plans to reach 17 million people in these famine prone countries. In the month of June alone, WFP reached 11.2 million people, assisting 5.4 million people in Yemen, 2.3 million in South Sudan, 2.4 million in Somalia and 1.1 million in northeast Nigeria. When funding is provided and access is guaranteed, our efforts have demonstrated that we can provide assistance that pulls communities from famine conditions, and, importantly, that we can prevent famine from occurring in the first instance.

#### *South Sudan*

In South Sudan, WFP has assisted 3.4 million people across the country since the beginning of the year. Famine that was formally declared in February 2016 has been alleviated in the two affected counties. While the official declaration has ceded, suffering continues on a massive scale. In fact, today, the number of people in need of emergency food assistance has increased from 4.8 million to over 6 million, including over 1.7 million people facing emergency or faminelike conditions. The potential for starvation is ever more present for up to 45,000 people in Unity and

Jonglei states, even though the size of the affected population is no longer sufficient (i.e., greater than 20 percent of the county's population) to meet formal famine criteria. The ongoing conflict has created two million refugees. We are grateful to countries such as Uganda, which I've recently visited, for generously hosting over a million refugees from afflicted countries.

The cost of providing humanitarian assistance as well as the number of people in extreme need will continue to rise in South Sudan—and in other famine risk countries—as the country enters into the 'hunger' or 'lean' season, the period where food stocks run out and where rainfall can limit overland access by WFP and other organizations. In South Sudan, for example, we estimate that approximately 60 percent of roads are currently impassible, a figure which will rise to 90 percent at the height of the rainy season. The lean season has arrived earlier this year—and will persist for a longer period—across several of the famine risk countries given consecutive years of drought and conflict that have reduced available food stocks.

#### *Yemen*

WFP is currently scaling up its emergency operations in Yemen, where two-thirds of the country's population is in need of emergency food assistance. Approximately 17 million people in Yemen do not have access to sufficient food to live healthy lives. Of those 17 million, WFP has identified 6.8 million people who are severely food insecure and require emergency food assistance. Yet given funding shortfalls, full emergency rations reached only 3.9 million people in June. In addition to providing general food rations, in July WFP aims to provide specialized nutritious foods to over two million children between six months and five years old who face increased risk of death from malnutrition. Meanwhile, the cholera outbreak in Yemen has expanded to 21 of 22 governorates in the country, claiming the lives of over 1,700 people and affecting over a quarter of a million people whose bodies have been weakened by a lack of food and proper nutrition. WFP, long recognized for its logistics expertise, is partnering with the Ministry of Public Health and Population and the WHO to provide medical supplies, including a chartered flight in May that delivered 80 metric tons of supplies.

#### *Nigeria*

In northeast Nigeria, given funding shortages, WFP is targeting only the most vulnerable women and children and has been forced to halve food rations in recent months—at a time when the lean season is setting in and hunger is on the rise. At present, at least three Local Government Areas remain inaccessible because of ongoing conflict, each on the brink of famine. At least 1.9 million people have been displaced in the country. WFP has been able to quickly scale up its operations in Nigeria, from serving 160,000 people in October 2016 to over a million people each month since December 2016.

#### *Somalia*

In Somalia, WFP has similarly scaled up its response, reaching five times more people in May (2.4 million) than it did just five months prior in January. This includes reaching almost 775,000 women and children with preventative and curative nutrition assistance. This escalated response has so far prevented famine onset in the country, however 3.2 million people are currently facing critical and emergency conditions. While we are approaching the close of the rainy season, it is estimated that 25 percent of all food insecure people remain located in inaccessible areas, either because of impassible roads or inadequate security.

#### *WFP's Strengths*

What is true across all four countries is that in the places where WFP provides food assistance malnutrition rates are falling. Donor funding is being put to good use and it is making an impact, delivered by dedicated staff working in some of the most dangerous settings in the world. In extreme cases, WFP staff has made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives in service to their brothers and sisters and all of humanity. We owe them a great debt of gratitude and a steadfast commitment to ensuring that their mission is completed.

As I said to the world in my first meeting of the WFP Executive Board in June, I could not imagine walking into this job with four looming famines, and unprecedented human displacement if the World Food Program were not already a highly effective and efficient provider of humanitarian assistance, operating at speed and at scale. These attributes have made WFP a highly sought after partner. The World Bank, for example has requested WFP to work alongside them, the World Health Organization and UNICEF to jointly design and deliver packages of assistance in conflict and fragile settings that would play a major role in decreasing mortality and malnutrition rates. Meanwhile, in Yemen, WHO has requested WFP to staff and

run their Emergency Operations Center that will oversee the management of the cholera outbreak.

#### *Funding Needs*

Despite this good work, overall funding support to WFP remains insufficient to carry out all of its programmed activities. Globally, humanitarian needs are growing faster than available funding. The number of people who are acutely food insecure in the world has risen from 80 million in 2016 to 108 million in 2017, a 35 percent increase in a single year. In addition to these famine emergencies, WFP is currently responding to two additional Level 3 emergencies—our highest classification—in Iraq and Syria and six Level 2 emergencies in Ukraine, Mali, Libya, Horn of Africa Drought, Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is difficult to overstate how unprecedented the food assistance needs are in the world today. Funding remains the principal barrier to reaching millions more in desperate need in famine risk countries and beyond.

Currently, we have received less than half of the funds we need, as WFP's planned activities in the four famine risk countries are funded at 42 percent. Over the next six months, WFP needs more than US\$750 million to address needs in these countries. Funds must be made available now to avoid needless suffering for children, women and men, and also higher costs. At present, WFP's Yemen operation is funded at 37 percent, South Sudan at 33 percent, Somalia at 49 percent, and Nigeria at 65 percent. Delays in responding to these famines, whatever the reason, cause the unnecessary loss of life. Without proper funding, WFP and other partners must make difficult decisions about where food is distributed—decisions about who lives and who dies. A declaration of famine means that people are already dying from hunger and related causes. By the time famine was declared in Somalia in 2011, more than half of the eventual 258,000 victims had already died.

When we do not provide funding for the famine response, or prevent famines from occurring, the losses are intergenerational. Children who lack proper nutrition early in their life experience permanent losses in physical growth—height, weight and brain development—leading to a diminished capacity to learn and a greater susceptibility to infection. Studies have shown that children who receive proper nutrition in their first 1,000 days are ten times more likely to survive life-threatening illnesses, attend almost five more grades of schooling than their malnourished peers, earn 20 percent more in wages as adults, and can increase a country's GDP by over 10 percent annually. In Yemen, one out of every two children under the age of five is stunted and suffers from chronic malnutrition. Without sustained intervention, there will be social, economic and security consequences that will long outlive these looming famines.

#### *United States Leadership*

The United States has led the global response to the four famines, providing more funds than any other single donor nation. This is consistent with the United States' long history and tradition of leadership in the fight to end hunger. This is evident in Congress' action to pass the FY 17 Consolidated Appropriations Act signed in May, where supplemental funding was made available to respond to the unprecedented needs associated with the four famines. We appreciate efforts from the United States to see that this funding is quickly made available to partner organizations like WFP. We commend the President and the American people for making \$639 million dollars in humanitarian assistance immediately available to respond to the famine emergencies, \$331 million of which will be directed to WFP to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. This support, which President Trump announced on July 8th at the G-20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany, comes at the time when people are most vulnerable, when food has run out from the last harvest, when there is nothing left for these families to feed their children.

Contributions from the United States have long included an important mix of both American commodities and cash-based assistance. This allows WFP to reach more people using the right tool, in the right place, at the right time. The mix includes food grown by American farmers, local and regional procurement, vouchers and debit cards. This is wholly consistent with WFP's efforts to utilize only the most appropriate food assistance modalities, all guided by rigorous analysis that takes into account local conditions.

It is essential for the United States to continue to lead in this effort—as you have done and as I know you will continue to do—because when the U.S. acts, the world takes notice. This committee, this Congress and the President are standing on the shoulders of giants in American political history. You are following in the footsteps of a generation of leaders who had the foresight, courage and wisdom to invest in Europe in the aftermath of WWII. They helped to found institutions like WFP, and

through these efforts have consistently demonstrated that these investments serve to reinforce American interests, not to undermine them.

#### *Partnerships*

It is not just U.S. funding and farmers that are helping to support the mission of WFP. Across the four countries at risk of famine, WFP is partnering with 14 separate U.S.-based NonGovernmental Organizations (NGOs) to implement emergency and non-emergency food assistance programs. Partnerships with these NGOs allow WFP to reach more people, in more places, with life-saving food assistance, and is reflective of the global reach and impact of U.S. civil society organizations. These include Adventist Development and Relief Agency, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Food for the Hungry International, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Malaria Consortium, Mercy Corps, Mercy USA for Aid and Development, Relief International, Samaritan's Purse, World Relief, and World Vision.

American companies have also answered the call. WFP is proud to announce a new partnership with MasterCard that will facilitate the provision of an additional 100 million school meals over the next five years. While we at WFP are a global leader in logistics, we continue to learn and improve through partnership with UPS. And where WFP is using its purchasing power to support smallholder farmers in the countries where we work, Cargill is working to make sure those farmers have long lasting markets for their crops. These are just several examples of critical partnerships with the U.S. private sector.

#### *Burden Sharing*

While the U.S. continues to lead in global funding for the famine response, other donor nations must also do more. When I am not in the field visiting the people that we serve, you can be sure that I am in donor capitals asking that all nations are contributing to ending these emergencies and resolving their underlying conflicts. And other donors have begun to answer that call. This is especially true in the case of Germany, where funding to WFP last year increased to nearly \$900 million, up from approximately \$60 million ten years ago. Germany and the European Union greatly increased their contributions in response to the escalation of humanitarian emergencies in Syria and the four countries at risk of famine.

I have made it a goal of my time as Executive Director of WFP to broaden support for the organization. The United Kingdom has been stepping up more (providing \$156 million to the famine countries); the European Union has been stepping up more (\$72 million); Canada has been stepping up more (\$37 million). But other states can and do more—and I have made this clear to them in one-on-one bilateral meetings and when we sat across the table from one another at my first WFP Executive Board meeting. I also have not been shy about mentioning the need for these other donor states to do more in news media interviews.

#### *U.N. Collaboration*

Given the complexity of the emergencies in these four looming famines, broadening our base of donor funding is just one critical step that we must take. Our work must also be supported by partnerships with other humanitarian organizations. Providing food alone is insufficient in these complex emergencies. Vaccinations to counter the spread of disease, water to prevent dehydration, and shelter for displaced people are also essential. This is where partnerships and coordination matter, with organizations like UNICEF and UNHCR—as well as a host of other humanitarian agencies—drawing on WFP's extensive logistics capacity to deliver critical non-food items to those in need. At any given moment WFP's 5,000 trucks, 70 aircraft, and 20 ships are delivering food and supplies across the globe, a larger logistics capacity than any other humanitarian organization. Working with partners like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) allows WFP to break the cycle of hunger and poverty by providing seeds and training to vulnerable populations that allow local food production to take hold, effectively reducing the need and cost of humanitarian assistance in the future. These partnerships that acknowledge the longer-term development needs of affected populations provide an exit strategy for humanitarian organizations.

#### *U.S. Investments*

Other programs like school feeding—made possible with funding from U.S. programs like the George McGovern-Bob Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program—represent sustainable safety net systems that can be taken up by recipient governments to prevent communities from falling into extreme poverty and reducing the need for costly interventions later on. Similarly, investments in early warning systems like USAID's Famine Early Warning System (FEWSNET), WFP's Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Service, and the

global Integrated Phase Classification, allow humanitarian partners to project and respond in real time to potential emergencies. FEWSNET and VAM for example, issued warnings regarding potential famine conditions in the four countries as early as January 2017, allowing the international humanitarian community sufficient time to organize and raise awareness and funds to respond. Without this capacity to forecast food insecurity, the cost of humanitarian intervention is much greater, both in dollars and lives lost. The most cost effective way to respond to famine is prevent it from happening in the first place. Make no mistake, our ultimate goal is to work ourselves out of business—to build a world where WFP is no longer needed.

#### *Crises Caused by Conflict*

We cannot solve these emergencies with money and effective partnerships alone. The four looming famines are rooted in ongoing conflict. In fact, currently 10 of WFP's 13 largest food assistance operations are driven primarily by conflict, and today fighting and violence drives over 80 percent of all humanitarian needs. Until we are able to end the underlying disputes through diplomacy and other actions, conditions will never fully improve.

Conflict and hunger are mutually reinforcing. Recent research conducted by WFP indicates that for each percentage increase in food insecurity, migration increases by approximately 2 percent, increasing the likelihood that food insecurity and the underlying conflicts will spill over borders. What is required to prevent further regional and global instability is unimpeded humanitarian access, best provided through a peaceful resolution of conflict, but at the very least, through a commitment by all warring parties to International Humanitarian Law to protect civilians and allow free-passage of humanitarian goods and services to reach those in need. We need to bring pressure to bear upon these nations in conflict and the parties involved.

#### *Avoiding Diversions*

Still, while a major barrier, issues of humanitarian inaccessibility and food assistance “diversions” have been at times exaggerated or misconstrued. In complex emergencies in insecure environments, WFP has demonstrated that it can provide quality food assistance with minimal losses. In 2016, for example, WFP handled 4.2 million metric tons of food across 72 countries. Of this, only 0.47 percent—less than one half of one percent—was lost before arriving to people in need, due to conflict and civil strife, improper or extended storage, inadequate transport, or the deterioration of food at its origin. In fact, WFP consistently experiences losses far below the internationally recognized industry threshold of two percent. It accomplishes this through a truly integrated supply chain that combines resource mobilization, food sourcing, and real time tracking of food down to the last metric ton.

In June 13th testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, for example, Secretary of State Tillerson stated, “the focus on the Port of Hodeidah [in Yemen] is critical because it is the port of entry where we can begin to deliver massive amounts of humanitarian assistance; it is controlled today by the Houthis. The aid that has been sent in through that port, we know, most of it has not made it to the people it was supposed to make it to.” Secretary Tillerson is correct in stating that Hodeidah is an important port for the passage of humanitarian assistance—nearly 80 percent of WFP in-kind food assistance in Yemen travels through this port. While there are significant delays affecting vessels entering in to Yemeni ports, Hodeidah remains a critical entry point for food assistance in to the country. In fact, almost 19 million people live in the northern opposition-controlled areas of Yemen, and can be reached only through the Hoediedah or nearby ports. Four WFP vessels carrying over 100,000 MT of wheat are expected to arrive and discharge in June and July alone. Despite media reports, in 2017 there has been only one instance of WFP-contracted trucks being threatened or looted by armed groups.

#### *Hunger and Migration*

What is true about humanitarian crises today is that they do not respect borders. Hungry people in the four famine emergencies and beyond have made the choice to journey to Europe, and to the United States, because their safety and wellbeing could not be guaranteed in the places where conflict rages on. This is not an easy choice to make. In fact, our research indicates that people displaced by violence in Syria, for example, will not move out of the country until they have moved at least three times inside the country because they do not want to leave their home. They want to stay in their own countries; but are compelled to move to ensure their basic needs are met. Migration also dramatically increases the cost of providing humanitarian assistance. For example, it costs about 50 cents per day to provide food to

someone who is internally displaced within Syria. But if that same person becomes a refugee in Germany, it costs the German people 50 Euros per day.

*Blunting Extremism*

Meanwhile, global military spending is nearly \$2 trillion a year. Emergency food and other essential humanitarian assistance are much more cost effective. Secretary of Defense Mattis has said, “America has two fundamental powers. One is the power of inspiration. The other is the power of intimidation. Those of us in uniform are in an intimidating role up against the enemy. But we now fight wars among innocent people, among populations that need to be on our side if we’re going to win. There is where America’s power of inspiration comes to bear.” As I’ve said on several occasions in recent months, bags of food stamped “from the American people,” distributed by partners like WFP are among the most effective programs out there, dollar for dollar, for fighting extremism.

Evidence on the links between food insecurity, armed conflict and extremism is increasingly available today. WFP is involved in several efforts to make these links explicit, drawing on our extensive operations in the some of the world’s most difficult settings. We have seen how hunger, marginalization, and frustration are capable of driving people—especially youth—into insurgencies and extremist organizations. The failure to meet the needs of these people serves to foster further frustration, increasing the pool of willing candidates to join these movements and leading to decreased food insecurity from violence and economic disruptions, completing the circle. People should not have to choose between feeding their family or resorting to violent extremism—we have the tools through food assistance to eliminate that awful choice. Food assistance through WFP and other U.S. partners can save lives and create the space and time necessary to arrive at political solutions to these conflicts.

Thank you, as representatives of the American people, for continuing to feed hungry people. Rest assured, I will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that all nations are contributing financially to end these global crises. However, our efforts will never fully serve to end human suffering if a peaceful resolution to the conflicts driving these crises is not provided. We must take concerted action to build peace and stability in these nations through any means possible. One thing is undeniably true: with your help WFP is preventing famine, saving lives and diminishing the spread of extremism—and we will continue to do so.

Senator YOUNG. I think that is a great point to end on for your opening remarks. I thank you very much. I anticipate following up on that matter and others.

Mr. Forsyth?

**STATEMENT OF JUSTIN FORSYTH, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR PARTNERSHIPS, UNITED NATIONS, CHILDREN’S FUND, NEW YORK, NY**

Mr. FORSYTH. Thank you very much, Chairman Young, and thank you very much, Senator Merkley, for the honor of being here today and the chance to speak to you and to build on the very passionate and profound comments from David Beasley.

I wanted just to start with a story that actually goes back to 2011. I spent a lot of time in Somalia and in northern Kenya during the last famine in 2011. I remember very distinctly standing in the Dadaab refugee camp. Many of us, I think, in this room who work in the humanitarian world have been to the Dadaab refugee camp, one of the biggest refugee camps in the world in northern Kenya, where many of the Somalia refugees come into.

I remember being on the outskirts of that camp in 2011, and I saw a family digging a hole by the side of the road. And I stopped, and we talked to that family, and they told us their story.

They had walked 4 days out of Somalia, fleeing drought and conflict. Three of the men in their group had been killed. Another seven of them had been kidnapped by one of the armed groups. All of the women had been raped.

They told the story about how the littlest child in their group, a girl called Hawa, only a year old, had survived all of that, that horror on that journey, but she arrived in the Dadaab camp and, tragically, died a day later of diarrhea, one of the biggest killers in the world of children.

I remembered a few months later, then, that visit to the Dadaab refugee camp in Mogadishu in a camp in the middle of Mogadishu called Sigali, which is in the rubble of the center of Mogadishu. Al Shabaab was still in Mogadishu then, and you could hear the firing in the distance.

And I met another mother and child, and they told a very similar story. Happily, due to the expert help of aid agencies, that little girl called Nastaya survived, but she was very malnourished. I saw her again several months later, and she was much better and fully recovered.

The reason I tell that story is because I think, through that famine in 2011, which is relevant to the four looming famines today, we learned three big lessons, which we have learned in other humanitarian situations.

Firstly, actually, as David Beasley has said, is that we need to act early. That many children, in particular, die before we even declare these as humanitarian emergencies or famines. That is the first important lesson.

The second lesson is that this is not only a nutrition crisis, but a water, a sanitation, and a health crisis. And in places like northern Nigeria, but also Somalia, Yemen, and South Sudan, an education crisis as well.

We need integrated response. You cannot address these issues just through one intervention. The reason that children are dying from diarrhea or cholera in Yemen is because they are malnourished. The reason they are catching cholera or getting very violent forms of diarrhea is because they are malnourished. This is a vicious circle, and you need to be able to address it.

This integrated approach is really important in saving those 1.4 million children's lives that are severely, acutely malnourished.

Then the third point, which I think we learned very strongly in 2011, as well as acting early and to scale, as well as addressing this with integrated health and nutrition and water together, is that we really need, as we have heard from both of you, Senators, but also from the panelists today about addressing the root causes.

The root causes are primarily conflict. In all of these terrible emergencies is conflict.

I was in northern South Sudan not so long ago in Bentiu, and I landed after a 3-hour ride in a helicopter in a remote area, which is one of the areas where famine was declared. I went to a UNICEF-supported clinic, and it had been completely looted. There were no beds, let alone any medicines or facilities.

So the conflict is very important. But there are other factors as well. There is climate change, environmental degradation.

If you ask the elders of northern Kenya sitting on the Somalia border how it used to be 30 years ago, they would say that they used to have a bad drought like this every 15 years. They are now having this every year, nearly every year in this part of the world.

So that has to do with overpopulation. It has to do with many factors. But there is also a dramatic rise in temperature, which is causing a big impact on the food situation.

So as my colleagues have said, I think the action we need from the international community is, firstly, scale and speed. I think the U.S. has to be commended for the scale of response, for the speed of the response, and that has saved lives.

But the scale of the crisis means we need even more than we currently have, and we need to keep delivering on the ground. Then we need the diplomatic action to solve the root causes of the conflict. And we also need to be doing development work even in emergency situations to address some of those wider development causes of the conflict situation and of the humanitarian situation.

Thank you.

[Mr. Forsyth's prepared statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF JUSTIN FORSYTH

##### *Introduction*

Children are paying a disproportionate toll as famine looms across Somalia, South Sudan, north-east Nigeria and Yemen. Nearly 1.4 million children face imminent risk of death, and more than five million children face malnourishment this year.

As we work to keep children alive, we must not forget that if children are subjected to malnutrition at a very young age, the long term impact on stunting brain development can be devastating. Stunting hampers not only the future ability of a child to learn and earn, but also has an impact on the social and economic progress of the countries in which they live. It cuts school performance, translating into a reduction in adult income by 22 per cent on average. It also leads to increased risk of health problems in adult life. As we work to save lives, this is also a struggle for the long term future of millions of children—a generation—and indeed the future of their countries.

The joint international effort to support national and local authorities and communities respond to this crisis is making a difference. Together we are saving lives. Humanitarian actors including UNICEF, other parts of the United Nations and non-governmental organisations are reaching at least 10 million people each month in the four countries with life-saving assistance. More concretely, in the first half of 2017 UNICEF treated more than 300,000 children suffering severe acute malnutrition. Along with our partners we have vaccinated 6.4 million children against measles. Over four million of those reached were in north-east Nigeria where we doubled our initial target due to increased access. More than 2.3 million people in the four countries have been provided with safe water.

But the threat of famine has not passed. Unless we sustain and further scale up our collective efforts, there is the risk that many more millions of children will die of hunger or be permanently stunted. And the longer these crises go on, the greater the risk of new emergencies within these emergencies—like the cholera outbreak in Yemen.

We must re-double our efforts to deliver at scale, to find ways to address the obstacles that so far are preventing us reaching some of the most vulnerable children and communities, avert new emergencies and help put millions of families on a path to sustainable recovery. And much more needs to be done to address the root causes of these crises, bringing an end to protracted conflicts and human rights violations and linking our emergency humanitarian response to effective development support which addresses the underlying vulnerabilities of communities.

##### *The Scale of the Crisis for Children*

Conflict, drought, displacement and disease are combining to threaten children and families across the four countries, as well as the sub-regions of the Horn of Africa and the Lake Chad Basin.

In South Sudan, more than 1.1 million children are estimated to be facing acute malnourishment, with almost 276,000 severely malnourished at imminent risk of death. In Nigeria, some 450,000 children are estimated to face severe acute malnutrition in the conflict-affected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. In Somalia, the projected number of children who are or will be acutely malnourished is 1.4 million—including 275,000 who have or will suffer from severe acute malnutrition. And

in Yemen, about 1.8 million children are threatened with acute malnutrition, 385,000 of them with severe acute malnutrition.

Malnutrition is compounded by the increasing threat of water borne diseases. Cholera has become a deadly factor in each of the four countries, and our response to this threat is increasingly critical to saving many thousands of children's lives.

The cholera outbreak in Yemen has spread rapidly since April. Children under the age of 15 account for 41 per cent of the more than 300,000 reported cases of suspected cholera/acute watery diarrhoea, and more than a quarter of the more than 1,700 deaths have been children.

The health crisis in Yemen is a result of two years of heavy conflict—collapsing health, water and sanitation systems have cut off 14.5 million people from regular access to clean water and sanitation, increasing the ability of diseases to spread. There are no longer any doctors present in 49 of the country's 333 districts, health workers in Yemen have not been paid for months, and there are only two functioning laboratories in the country.

In Somalia, prolonged drought has led to the largest outbreak of cholera in the last five years, with more than 53,000 cases of suspected cholera—close to half of them children under five—and 795 deaths. South Sudan is experiencing a protracted, widespread cholera outbreak, with nearly 7,000 cases reported this year, the highest since 2014.

Investing in safe water, sanitation and better hygiene practices is a critical step to saving children and families threatened by famine.

Forced displacement is a factor which compounds all the other drivers of this crisis. Whether fleeing the threat of fighting and attacks or in desperate search of food and water in drought-stricken areas, families who are forced to leave their homes also lose access to essential services like health clinics and water sources as well as livelihoods. Uprooted children and families are much more vulnerable, both to famine and disease as well as human rights abuses. Children on the move are at greater risk, especially when they are unaccompanied or separated from families. In contexts of conflict and displacements, women and girls face greater risk of sexual and gender based violence, and boys are increasingly vulnerable to forced recruitment into armed groups and other forms of violence.

#### *Applying the Lessons of the 2011 Somalia and East Africa Famine*

In 2011, Somalia faced a devastating famine that led to the tragic loss of more than 260,000 lives—around half children under five years old—we learned three vital lessons about what needs to be done better to save children's lives.

1. We need to act early for children and to scale. Children cannot wait, even if famine is not declared or is averted in some areas. We know from the Somalia that by the time famine was declared in 2011, untold numbers of children had already died. Around half of all child deaths occurred before the declaration of famine, before funding started to pour in.
2. We learned that the threat of famine is more than a food and nutrition crisis. Water, sanitation and health services are critical to saving lives. In 2011, diarrhoea and measles were the major killers, especially among children on the move or in displacement camps. Waterborne diseases like cholera threaten children's lives on a massive scale.

Severe acute malnutrition and diarrheal disease run in a vicious cycle, each making the other more severe and more likely to occur. Diarrhoea deprives the child of the nutrition necessary for growth and as a result is a major cause of malnutrition, while malnourished children are more likely to fall ill from diarrhoea due to their weaker immune systems. If a child is malnourished, it is much harder to diagnose and treat her for cholera: her risk of death is much higher. Our food and nutrition response needs to be fully integrated if we are to be effective in saving lives and helping communities build resilience and a path to sustainable recovery.

And protecting children in the midst of the turmoil of these crises from abuse and exploitation is critical, especially those made more vulnerable by displacement.

3. We learned that in order to address the recurrent threat of famine, more must be done to address the root causes. The deadly combination of drought, malnutrition and conflict pushes people passed their capacity to cope. And droughts recur. Protracted conflict in 2011 had left large parts of the Somalia population vulnerable, lacking basic social services and infrastructure which could help them cope. Humanitarian access in the conflict context was a significant obstacle. And when the famine passed, continuing conflict posed critical challenges to establishing governance and services to communities. These are bitter lessons which we know, but in 2017 communities and the humanitarian response is fac-

ing the same and even greater challenges across four conflict-affected countries simultaneously.

More needs to be done to bring an end to these protracted conflicts and to create the conditions for recovery and development. Political will and longer term investment from development actors are critical to find durable solutions and build resilience of the affected communities. Our efforts and investments must strengthen the long-term resilience of communities, making them better prepared prepared and able to withstand the shocks of any future crises.

#### *Response in 2017*

In responding to the 2017 crises we have applied many of the lessons of the 2011 famine, and despite the enormous challenges in each of these conflict-affected countries we are achieving results and saving many thousands of lives. But there are challenges.

On the upside, the humanitarian system responded early to the threat of famine. In each country, UNICEF and humanitarian partners were already on the ground delivering before the full-scale threat of famine developed. Our situational awareness was good. We had developed innovative programmes to address humanitarian needs in extraordinarily challenging conflict-affected conditions. And the whole humanitarian system was in a good position to shift gear when the United Nations Secretary-General issued an urgent call to action in February this year.

But despite our preparedness, however, our ability to respond at scale in all areas has been mixed, in large part to funding gaps. Overall, and despite the fast and generous initial response of donors, the humanitarian response to this famine crisis is funded at approximately only 40 per cent, with a gap of around \$3.82 billion for 2017.

Humanitarian organizations have made definite progress in running integrated humanitarian responses to famine-like conditions—delivering together health services, food and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene. And even in harsh and often dangerous conditions, our teams on the ground continually find innovative ways to reach people in need.

In South Sudan, UNICEF with partners has established a Rapid Response Mechanism which enables it to move fast with humanitarian assistance when conflict affected areas become accessible, even for only brief windows of time. These fast missions deliver integrated assistance including WASH, health, nutrition, education and child protection. In 2017, UNICEF and WFP have conducted 26 rapid response missions to hard-to-reach communities in South Sudan, reaching more than 530,000 people, including over 100,000 children under five years old. A similar Rapid Response Mechanism is functioning in Yemen and one is being established in north-east Nigeria.

In Somalia, UNICEF with partners have treated nearly 99,000 children with severe acute malnutrition, more than double the number of admissions in the same period in 2016. This has been possible through the scale up in treatment services with UNICEF supporting over 750 nutrition facilities.

In north-east Nigeria, UNICEF and our partners are increasingly using mobile services to reach people displaced by the conflict, with an integrated approach to deliver nutrition including treatment for severe acute malnutrition, promotion of infant and child feeding, provision of micronutrient supplements and primary healthcare. This mobile approach is also especially important to allow us to reach newly accessible communities. To prevent cholera, with partners we are chlorinating and monitoring 680 water points in Borno State to bring safe drinking water for more than 300,000 displaced people living in camps or host communities.

In Yemen, WHO and UNICEF with support from the World Bank and other donors have rapidly scaled up response to try to bring the cholera outbreak under control. Together we are supporting 626 diarrhoea treatment centres and oral rehydration therapy centres in the worst affected districts across the country, and we plan to scale this up to a total of 1,156 centres. We have trained 16,000 community mobilisers, who are going house-to-house to give families information about how to protect themselves by cleaning and storing drinking water safely, good hygiene and hand washing, keeping food safe and how to handle a sick family member. We know from our response to the terrible Ebola crisis of 2014-16 how critical this kind of mass community outreach is to bringing such health crises under control.

In each country, UNICEF and our international and national partners are showing that when we have resources and access we are able to save lives even in the most challenging situations.

One of the greatest challenges confronting our humanitarian response is conflict and being able to access areas where fighting is underway. Unimpeded access to all people in need continues to be one of the greatest challenges confronting our hu-

humanitarian response. Parties to conflicts routinely deny access for life-saving humanitarian assistance, against all precepts of international humanitarian law. Our teams on the ground face this every day, in each of these countries. We know from our experience so far in 2017, that even in the harshest and most dire conditions when we get safe access to civilians we can save lives. In these conflict-affected countries, humanitarian workers are often blocked from reaching many hundreds of thousands of desperate people. Equally, the closure of Sana'a airport and the threat of attacks on Hudaydah port in Yemen for delivery of urgent humanitarian supplies are costing lives and causing preventable suffering. Humanitarian workers themselves have been targeted and killed—exacerbating the denial of assistance to civilians.

Just as the situation of humanitarian access is an area where insufficient progress has been made, our overall ability to address the root causes of these crises has so far proven limited.

#### *Addressing the Root Causes of These Crises*

Conflict, extreme climate events like drought, environmental degradation, climate change, loss of livelihoods and poverty all underpin these looming famines and crises. Unless we address these causes we will continue to get recurrent crises.

Civilians caught up in conflict need the United Nations Security Council and influential international actors to do more to require parties to these conflicts to meet their obligations under international norms and laws. Better protection for civilians caught up in conflicts and unimpeded access for every person in need, wherever they are, would rapidly reduce human suffering. A renewed diplomatic push is needed to end these protracted conflicts. The diplomatic efforts of the United States are needed more than ever.

This also means that countries, regions and the international community need to do more to prepare for and build resilience against environmental and climate-related crisis such as recurring drought.

For example, in Somalia in 2011 we saw a deadly combination of drought, conflict affecting humanitarian access to communities in need, and lack of governance over a long period resulting in lack of basic essential services like health, water and sanitation. Somalia remains vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including rising temperatures and the frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as drought. What makes Somalia even more vulnerable is its dependence on agriculture for livelihoods and food. People's livelihoods are being destroyed by the erratic climate conditions, which destroy critical infrastructure and alter local ecosystems. During the 2011 famine, the largest number of deaths were among those forced to leave their homes in search of food and water.

Addressing the root causes behind these complex crises requires the international community to better integrate its humanitarian, development, human rights, peace and security approaches. Each aspect of our support must reinforce the other and the ultimate goal of supporting people and countries to return to a path of sustainable peace and development.

#### *U.S. Assistance*

We thank the United States for its leadership and generosity for life-saving humanitarian assistance to the world's most vulnerable children.

The United States has played a leading role in support, providing not only cash, but also in-kind food and nutrition assistance to maintain the life-saving pipelines in the four famine areas. The additional \$990 million in funding provided by Congress in May for humanitarian relief was an example of American leadership to help those in need and something for Americans to be proud of.

UNICEF has collaborated with a host of U.S. based agencies such as USAID OFDA, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), Food for Peace, and the State Department's Refugee Bureau to address the needs in countries affected by famine. The U.S. resources, expertise and diplomatic efforts are saving lives and setting an example for the world to follow.

#### *What More Needs to be Done?*

If we return to our lessons from the 2011 famine crisis, and apply our experience of the past six months, our priorities in the coming months are clear.

1. We must keep scaling up our humanitarian assistance so that we are able to reach the most vulnerable people and so that we prevent and control new emergencies such as the cholera outbreak in Yemen. This means more funding and sources of finance to close the gap from the current level of approximately 40 per cent.

2. We ask that the United States also use its diplomatic strength to convince parties to conflicts and those with influence over them to respect international humanitarian law, to protect children and respect their rights, and to allow UNICEF and our partners safe and unimpeded access to deliver lifesaving assistance to every child who needs it, whoever controls the area they are in.
3. And it is crucial that the United States continue to do all it can to lead a concerted effort to find solutions which lead to the end of each of these protracted conflicts which lie behind this catastrophe. Bringing about an end to the suffering requires not only humanitarian and resilience interventions, but political solutions, as well as sustained leadership and investment to help build sustained peace and stability, restore basic services, protect rights and rebuild lives.
4. The link from humanitarian response to recovery and development phases presents the international system with a critical opportunity to implement a more integrated and effective approach. UNICEF, as an agency that is on the ground before, during and after these crises is committed to helping lead this new way of working.
5. Very practically, the outbreak of cholera and malnutrition in Yemen are compounded by the collapse of the public systems, in particular the water, sanitation and health sectors. Frontline health personnel and sanitation workers have not been paid for more than 10 months. As much as we invest in supplies and infrastructure, we need to find a concrete solution to this issue and advocate with the parties and key stakeholders to prioritize the payment of salaries.
6. As we advocate for full unimpeded humanitarian access to every person in need, there are specific challenges which the international community could help solve now. For example, UNICEF and our partners face challenges obtaining visas to deploy to Yemen. This creates a major bottleneck to scaling up our response. We need support in targeted advocacy and outreach to authorities to lift such restrictive visa requirements.

The stakes for children across these four countries and their sub-regions could not be higher. Nearly 1.4 million children are at imminent risk of death, and many more millions of children are at risk unless we turn these crises around and build sustainable recovery. The longer we wait to address these children's needs, the more we jeopardize their future. Children and families facing the gravest threats count on the leadership and generosity of the people of the United States to stand with them, to help them survive this crisis and go on to build a brighter future for themselves and their countries.

Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you for your insightful comments.

Executive Director Beasley, based on the World Food Programme's activities in Yemen, where you will be traveling next week, do you agree with Mr. Nims regarding the importance of the Port of Hodeidah to humanitarian relief efforts?

Mr. BEASLEY. I try to agree with Mr. Nims on everything he says, Senator. [Laughter.]

Senator YOUNG. Can you tell us why, from your perspective, and based on what you have been hearing from your advisers, why that port is so important?

Mr. BEASLEY. Yes, sir.

Ninety percent of all food for Yemen is imported, and 70 percent, give or take, if not more, of all products come in through Hodeidah port. Approximately 90 percent of the people that we are dealing with in this critical situation are in this area.

So this port is absolutely essential to the well-being of the Yemeni people.

Senator YOUNG. Director Beasley, your staff provided this picture of the World Food Programme warehouse from Yemen. It does not appear to be a fully intact warehouse, based on my observation. What happened to that warehouse, to your knowledge?

Mr. BEASLEY. This warehouse was bombed in 2015, I believe.

Senator YOUNG. Who bombed that warehouse?

Mr. BEASLEY. To our understanding and knowledge, Saudi-led forces.

Senator YOUNG. Director Beasley, I asked Mr. Nims about what happened with the cranes that the World Food Programme tried to deliver earlier this year. Can you provide more details?

Mr. BEASLEY. Well, in the same bombing, many of the cranes were knocked out, which severely impedes and impairs the ability to deliver food on a humanitarian basis to the innocent victims and people within Yemen.

The cranes, almost all the cranes were bombed and knocked out. And so the United States, operating through USAID, provided the funds, \$3.8 million or \$3.9 million for the World Food Programme to buy new cranes.

We purchased the cranes. We put them on the ships, and we sent them to Yemen only to have the ships not allowed passage. Therefore, the ships sat—

Senator YOUNG. I am sorry to interject, sir, which is a euphemism here in Washington for interrupt. [Laughter.]

Senator YOUNG. But who refused to allow these cranes to have passage?

Mr. BEASLEY. The blockade was a Saudi-led blockade.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. Thank you. Please continue.

Mr. BEASLEY. So the blockade is still in place to this day. We still have not been able to get access to bring in the cranes, which will substantially improve and increase our opportunities and abilities to be able to provide not just food but medical supplies and other things that are necessary to provide a healthy population, which we know is a disaster right now.

So we have been making ongoing requests. I have been making ongoing requests. Our office, in a variety of different ways, has been making ongoing requests to the Saudis, who are in control of the airspace and the water space, so to speak. And it is a disaster.

Senator YOUNG. So in just roughly 90 seconds, I heard from you that it was your belief that the Saudi-led coalition bombed this warehouse full of food that was supposed to be delivered to people in the conflict zone, paid for in part by U.S. taxpayers. I also heard that it is your belief that the Saudi-led coalition bombed the cranes that would offload food and medical supplies for the worst humanitarian crisis in the world to help out people in a conflict zone. And then after U.S.-funded cranes were on a ship, courtesy of the World Food Programme, it was a Saudi-led coalition that caused those cranes to turn around and not be delivered, thus exacerbating, to Mr. Nims' earlier testimony, the humanitarian crisis.

Are all of those things correct?

Mr. BEASLEY. Yes, sir.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. Am I incorrect—you always have to be careful in drawing inferences here. But is there a pattern, perhaps, that I am picking up on with respect to some of the challenges that are being experienced in Yemen and the efforts to address those humanitarian challenges?

Mr. BEASLEY. Senator, we may debate all day long why this war is taking place, but we cannot debate clearly the World Food Programme and other humanitarian agencies do not have the access

that they need to achieve the objectives of feeding and providing the assistance needed to innocent victims of combat.

Senator YOUNG. Director Beasley, on June 27, the World Food Programme Yemen country director sent a letter, this letter, to the Saudi Government, asking for approval to once again try to deliver the four Tadano cranes to the Port of Hodeidah.

Without objection, I would like to enter this letter into the record, and so it is.

[The information referred to is located at the end of this hearing transcript.]

Senator YOUNG. I think it is important to read a few excerpts from this letter. In the letter, the World Food Programme says that, "Given that all five gantry cranes in Hodeidah port are not operational, the mobile cranes will be critical to partially address the limited port capacity that severely impedes timely offloading of humanitarian supplies."

The letter continues, "The cranes are expected to ease port congestion, thus allowing for more rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance into the country."

The letter states that the primary purpose of the cranes would be to ensure "humanitarian relief items, such as food, nutrition, and medical supplies, reach the Yemeni population in need."

The letter continues, "Now more than ever, as the food security situation is deteriorating and the recent cholera outbreak is spreading across the country, the humanitarian community needs your support"—this, again, a letter to the Saudi Government—"in order to be able to timely deliver lifesaving assistance to the most vulnerable."

Director Beasley, do you stand by that WFP request and the statements in this letter?

Mr. BEASLEY. Senator, I certainly do, and I have made a personal request to the Saudi King and the Crown Prince, to personally appeal to them to allow these cranes in, number one; number two, to do what they can to resolve this conflict; and number three, to fund the humanitarian disaster on the ground.

Senator YOUNG. Have you received a response yet from the Saudi Government?

Mr. BEASLEY. As of this moment, I have not. I am hopeful. But I hope we do not receive the same response that the BBC received, because the BBC was going to be flying in with us next week, into Yemen. Unfortunately, no reporters are allowed to fly in with us, because we do think it is necessary that the people around the world, particularly the donor countries like the United States and others who are funding the humanitarian crisis of this nature, they have a right to see that their taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely.

Senator YOUNG. I am staring at an article that is courtesy of Reuters, "Saudi-led coalition blocks U.N. aid staff flight carrying journalists to Yemen."

Is this what you were alluding to?

Mr. BEASLEY. Yes, sir.

Senator YOUNG. I would like to enter this article into the record, without objection.

[The information referred to is located at the end of this hearing transcript.]

Senator YOUNG. Now, I recognize the cranes are not a panacea to the horrible humanitarian crisis. However, permitting their delivery is a tangible, specific step that can be taken to improve or save thousands or millions of lives by facilitating the more expeditious flow of humanitarian supplies.

Director Beasley, will you inform me promptly when you receive a response from the Saudi Government?

Mr. BEASLEY. I certainly will, Senator.

Senator YOUNG. Well, I will want to ensure the Saudis get all the public credit or shame they deserve, depending on their decision.

Just a bit more, Director Beasley. I thank you for your patience here.

Whether it is in Yemen or elsewhere, do you believe that deliberately impeding the flow of humanitarian supplies, including food or medicine, in order to gain political leverage is morally reprehensible and worthy of universal condemnation?

Mr. BEASLEY. I think it is an abhorrent activity in violation of not just humanitarian and international laws, but it is morally just a terrible thing.

Senator YOUNG. Yes. Are you referencing a violation of Customary International Humanitarian Law Rule 55? We can have the lawyers check on that, if you like.

Mr. BEASLEY. I will let the lawyers do the details.

Senator YOUNG. Sure.

Mr. BEASLEY. But, Senator, we are facing many, many impediments to achieving the objectives, based upon humanitarian principles.

Senator YOUNG. Okay.

Let me read a passage from that law. It may have been what you are referencing.

Customary International Humanitarian Law Rule 55 says, "The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control."

Now this Rule 55 is reinforced, as I understand it, by Article 14 of the additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions, which states that, "Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited."

I would note that the Saudi Government ratified the additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions in 2001.

Mr. Merkley, I will turn it over to you.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

It was, I believe, May 20th when President Trump met with King Salman in Saudi Arabia, and they have what was reported to be very friendly conversations.

Director Beasley, should we be asking our President to weigh in directly with the King of Saudi Arabia to get access for aid into Yemen?

Mr. BEASLEY. Yes, sir. I am hopeful that the President of the United States and other leaders of the United States Government will weigh in, in every way possible, so that we can receive not just

the access for the cranes to be where they need to be, but also, I think, that the leaders in the United States and other governments ought to challenge the Saudis to fund the humanitarian crisis, if they are not going to resolve the conflict.

Senator MERKLEY. Mr. Forsyth, you referred, in a complimentary way, to the U.S. moving quickly. Thank you for the compliment. But do you feel we could do even more? Do you have suggestions for how we could be more effective, either in terms of the type of aid, the ways we are delivering it, the speed with which we are delivering it? Or should we ask our President—to give you each a presidential question here—should we ask our President to get on a conference call with a key group of leaders around the world and say we need to amp up our response in a very significant way to these famines?

Mr. FORSYTH. Thank you, Senator.

The first thing I wanted to say in reply to your question, and I will answer it directly, too, but just indirectly, is that I think we should not underestimate in this very serious humanitarian situation in four countries, we are making a difference.

I mean, just one example, in Yemen, WHO and UNICEF are running 626 diarrhea treatment centers for cholera and severe diarrhea. In South Sudan, WFP and UNICEF, even in the Unity state where some of the worst fighting is happening, we have done these rapid response missions, which have reached 530,000 people, including 100,000 children.

And those are just two examples on the ground where very brave humanitarian workers, international, but a lot of them local, are doing heroic work to save people's lives and the most vulnerable children in these very difficult situations. We will hear from some of the NGOs that are part of that effort in a minute.

So I think that would be the first point.

The second point is, as we have heard, we are in a race against time to stop this emergency from getting worse. In places like Yemen, it is getting worse because cholera, or suspected cholera and diarrhea, is complicating malnutrition and famine-type situations.

So we have to really move even quicker at even greater scale to address this before it gets even worse.

And we know as well as the 20 million, there is another 10 million people at risk who could fall into the very severe situation, which will need extra aid. So we have to move even quicker and faster.

Now I think within that context, the U.S. has been very generous. I think your point is very valid, which is, could the U.S. do even more to convene some other donors to do even better and to do even more, including, as we say, some of the governments in the region, for example, in the gulf region, but also in Europe and other parts of the world? But also, could the U.S. really put its shoulder to the mill in terms of diplomatic efforts to deal with the root causes? And not just in Yemen, although Yemen is the worst, but also in South Sudan, also in Somalia, we need progress, not on the diplomatic side, but in terms of dealing with some of the root causes.

Malala is visiting northern Nigeria today, and she has asked the President to declare it an education emergency, because what we have seen is not a nutrition crisis and a health crisis, but we have seen the destruction of over 3,000 schools by Boko Haram, because they want to destroy education for the generation of future children.

The best response to that type of extremism is to invest more in education even in these emergency situations. I think the U.S. leadership could be on all of those different levels, Senator.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

I am very concerned about the reports of Boko Haram also sending in suicide bombers into these settings, which is another form of absolute chaos complicating every effort to make things better.

Recently, UNICEF released a report showing that the cases of rape and sexual violence against women have increased significantly in drought-affected areas of Somalia. Between November and March, UNICEF and partners responded to about 300 cases of rape, sexual assault, gender-related violence, on average, each month. In June, that tripled to 909 reported cases.

Can you just, in a modest number of words, because I have one more question I want to get in before my time is up, what is the disproportionate impact of famine on women? And can the U.S. do more to better protect women from violence in these settings?

Mr. FORSYTH. Well, very briefly, when people are displaced, women walk further to get water. They are also displaced to refugee camps.

When I visited the only rape center in Mogadishu, most of the women are raped as they go to the toilet or when they go and get water. So they are much more vulnerable in these humanitarian situations.

Secondly, linked to David's point earlier, nearly all the women, and I have been on an Italian ship off the coast of Libya with these migrants being picked out of the sea and rescued, nearly all the girls from West Africa and Somalia that have come through Libya have been raped—nearly every one of them. One girl I met was 8 months in underground prison in Libya, raped every day before being sold into prostitution in Italy.

So children on the move, young women on the move, even boys on the move, are very vulnerable to sexual violence.

Senator MERKLEY. Particularly in the refugee camps, it seems like we could somehow provide more security to diminish this.

Mr. FORSYTH. Very much so. Basic security, including lighting, makes a huge difference, also having toilets near where women are, run by the community. Very basic things make a big difference, in terms of rape in refugee camps, in terms of looking at it from a gender perspective.

Senator MERKLEY. Are we going to have another round on this or are we going to the next panel?

Senator YOUNG. Another round.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay. Then I will hold my next question until the next round. Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Director Beasley, in your prepared remarks, you note the World Food Programme has identified 6.8 million people in Yemen who

are severely food insecure and require emergency food assistance. You write that, given funding shortfalls, full emergency rations reached only 3.9 million people in June.

So am I correct here? If I do the Naval Academy math, with more funding, the World Food Programme could help almost 3 million more people in Yemen?

Mr. BEASLEY. Yes, sir. In fact, the 3.9 million that we fed with regards to full rations, there was another 1.5 million that we fed with part rations. So the problem is complicated by the fact that we do not have resources, and we do not have access, both of those together.

But if we receive the funds we need—for example, after the United States announced—thank goodness the United States House and Senate—and I have been saying this to my friends all over the world, that, in spite of the fact that Republicans and Democrats seem to be tearing each other apart in Washington, D.C., today, when it comes to hungry children, they are together. It has been amazing to watch the Republicans and Democrats come together in helping these innocent children all over the world.

So when the United States sent a very clear message that the United States was going to continue to provide the moral leadership with regard to humanitarian assistance around the world in passing the \$990 million on the supplemental appropriations bill, it was an amazing message to the world that the United States leadership was not backing down. And then, when the President announced \$639 million, it was a tremendous coup, so to speak, to see that the United States Democrats and Republicans were standing firm.

Now, having said that, we need, for Yemen alone, an additional \$343 million, and this is after the President's announcement. Once we receive those funds, we still need another 350 some odd million dollars for the rest of the year for Yemen alone.

Senator YOUNG. So I am proud we have come together around this issue here, as you indicated, Republicans and Democrats, Congress, the administration. And I have a measure of confidence that we will continue to see that those monies are received.

You named a number of countries earlier, which you indicated should do more, Saudi Arabia notably being one of them, but there were others within the GCC and beyond.

Now we have seen, some have indicated, a pattern of some countries making bold announcements with respect to pledges, and then the money is really slow to actually arrive, or it never arrives. Can I verify that that has been happening?

Mr. BEASLEY. Yes, sir, you can verify that. We are not here to pick on anybody, but this is a conflict that innocent children are dying from, innocent people are suffering from.

So we ask particularly those that reside and live in this area, the Gulf States, the Saudis, to please step up and fund the humanitarian free-for-all, the consequences of the conflict. So the United States has been stepping up, and has done admirably so. I think the United States now has the moral authority to demand of the other nations around the world to do more. As I said earlier, Germany, the U.K., the EU, and other countries have been stepping up.

But countries, in my opinion, like Saudi Arabia and other gulf states, I think they need to shoulder some of this burden, if not all of the burden.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. I think it is really important in the wake of flashy press conferences and the distribution of glossy brochures around Washington, D.C., among our opinion leaders that pledges are fulfilled. And if they are not fulfilled, we need to shine a light on that. It creates some perverse incentives, if we do not ensure that feedback loop is there.

Mr. Forsyth, you mentioned funding shortfalls in your testimony. Perhaps there is something you would like to add? I want to give you the opportunity, sir.

Mr. FORSYTH. I think the United Nations, as a whole, is about 40 percent to 45 percent funded properly, in terms of this, which allows us to do a lot of the things I mentioned before, but that is still a huge shortfall. And as I mentioned, we are in a race against time, particularly in Yemen because of the health crisis combining with the nutrition crisis. So we do need others to step up to the mark.

What is interesting, and it is worth noting, just to add to the points that have been made, that there are some new actors beginning to do even more, for example the World Bank.

The World Bank is funding now big health and nutrition programs in Yemen. It is also getting involved in responses in other fragile states. The U.S. is a big backer of the World Bank. That is also an important part of now what the World Bank is doing in fragile states.

But I would agree with the executive director from WFP. There are some governments that need to do more. Some in Europe are not very generous, for example. Some are generous, like Germany and the U.K., Sweden. But other European countries have mixed performance. The European Union as a whole is a big donor and is in the forefront of this.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

I have spent a disproportionate amount of time discussing the situation in Yemen. I would like to quickly move on to Nigeria.

The World Bank estimates that the size of the Nigerian economy was over \$400 billion in 2016. That made Nigeria the 26th largest economy in the world, and the largest in Africa. We know Nigeria is one of the so-called four famine countries.

While the international community does all it can to address the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria, it is important the Nigerian Government carries its fair share of the financial burden.

Director Beasley, has the World Food Programme received any funding—any funding—from Nigeria to help the humanitarian crisis in their own country?

Mr. BEASLEY. Senator, I met with the Foreign Minister of Nigeria just a few weeks ago and made the request that, based on my opinion and economic analysis, that Nigeria should be stepping up and funding so much of this problem.

And I do believe we are going to receive some positive results, maybe not as much as we would anticipate, but I do think this is where nations like the United States and others can have friendly conversations with the Nigerian leadership in stepping up. Because

we have 1.9 million people displaced. We are feeding approximately 1.1 million people in Nigeria. And Nigeria is compounded, of course, not just by Boko Haram but also issues of climate and drought in the northeast sector.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

We will continue to follow that situation with your and your staff's assistance.

Just a couple more questions, and then I will yield to Mr. Merkley for a second round.

Director Beasley, in an article a few days ago, you were cited as saying the following, "If a family cannot feed their children after 2 or 3 weeks, they will turn to any available resource they can, and that usually is extremism."

Some may not appreciate the security implications of these humanitarian crises. What do you see as the security implications for the United States and our allies, if we continue to allow the impediment of humanitarian aid and continue to see an insufficient global financial response?

Mr. BEASLEY. The United States is a leader in humanitarian assistance. I have said to many of my friends in the United States, and I have said this to many countries that are substantially providing major funds to the World Food Programme, that it is in your national security interests.

What we are facing today is different from what it was 30 years ago. The frontlines where the World Food Programme is, as well as other organizations, humanitarian organizations, it is a difficult situation today compared to any other time period in world history.

Whether you are dealing with extremist groups or terrorist groups, when mothers and fathers and families cannot feed their children in these extremist areas, and they do not have the access or the opportunity to leave, then they have no choice but to turn to what is available to them.

So when the United States provides the leadership to make certain that these families, mothers and fathers, can feed their children, they do not turn to extremism, they do not turn and yield to terrorism. And if we are not there, terrorism, extremism will proliferate, and the problems that we are facing around the world will only be exacerbated and compounded.

Then, of course, we are dealing with military and other operations that are very costly after the fact.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir.

My last question of you, Mr. Beasley, pertains to South Sudan. You recently visited South Sudan neighboring Uganda. How would you describe the current situation there? And if you could specifically indicate whether you would characterize the situation as another potential genocide, I would be grateful for that.

Mr. BEASLEY. Senator, I think the atrocities are occurring on a daily basis, perhaps bordering on genocide.

I have been on the ground in South Sudan. I have been in the refugee operations in the bordering countries like Uganda and the settlements. And I have talked to witnesses firsthand and heard their horror stories.

It is not one isolated incident. It is over and over and over and over. And it is heartbreaking to hear these children talk about

watching their mothers and their fathers being macheted to death right in front of their very own eyes.

It is my opinion that the United States and other nations of influence should bring to bear all influence and pressure they can, not just on the South Sudanese Government, but all parties involved in that conflict, as well as all nations in the surrounding area that yield some degree of influence within that region, whether you are talking about Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, the list goes on.

I think there needs to be a comprehensive approach. I think that nations need to come together and pressure all governments in that region to bring the conflict to an end.

But my observation, personally, is that the atrocities are astounding. And, Senator, we are not talking about what happened 10 years ago, 5 years ago, 3 years ago, and 2 years ago. We are talking about what happened 2 weeks ago and ongoing.

And so as we are witnessing literally 2,000, give or take, South Sudanese children, mothers, and fathers are still continuing to be beaten or killed, and are fleeing and leaving on a daily basis that many people as we speak right here today.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you for your testimony.

Senator Merkley, you are recognized.

Senator MERKLEY. Director Forsyth, you commented some on the challenges facing women during the chaotic conditions surrounding drought and refugee situations and refugee camps. Famine locations and hunger can also affect maternal health care, which increases the risk of complications during pregnancy delivery, putting the health and lives of women and infants in danger.

The U.N. Population Fund, given its mandate on reproductive health and gender-based violence, plays a key role in assisting pregnant women and new mothers amidst these famines.

Our current executive branch, the Trump administration, has cut all funding to UNFPA, drastically reducing the assistance available for responding to women in these situations. For example, I understand that our reduction in funding will cut in half the ability of the U.N. Population Fund to assist women in Syria.

Meanwhile, in next-door Jordan, the fund has assisted 7,500 maternal births—I guess that is redundant—7,500 births without a single woman dying in the course of that, out of these very difficult circumstances.

What will be the impact of the United States cutting these resources?

Mr. FORSYTH. Senator, you are right to say the impact on women in terms of these drought, famine, and also refugee situations is very stark. What we see is that women are very vulnerable not just to rape, as you rightly point out, but also to not having basic services available to just a trained health worker, not a full nurse or midwife or doctor, in these more extreme situations, which means if they have any complication in birth, it leads to a maternal death or a child death in that situation.

I have seen, in these situations, without those services, if you have a breech birth or anything like that, it leads to maybe both the baby and mother dying. And we know that despite the overall progress in maternal mortality in the world, and it has been dramatic, that the area that we have made least progress with is dur-

ing that first few hours and then the first month after a baby is born. That is when you most need a trained health worker. And in a drought or a refugee situation, that is when you have the least amount of support.

So I think the support for UNFPA, the support for other U.N. agencies—and we work with UNFPA and U.N. Women, providing a lot of health support to women. We also work with them on things like female genital mutilation, early marriage, those types of issues. It is very critical in terms of addressing women's and girls' rights, but also then living or dying in these very dramatic situations.

So I hope that we can find a way that we keep that type of life-saving support to that very important work that UNFPA and others do on health in these very difficult situations.

Senator MERKLEY. To summarize, thousands of women will be far better off, but also, thousands of babies will enter the world on a far healthier basis if we were to restore this funding.

Mr. FORSYTH. It is hard for me to get involved directly in an issue to do with the U.S. administration, as you will appreciate.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay. Let's do this then. I will say, that is my summary of your statement. [Laughter.]

Mr. FORSYTH. Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Recently, UNICEF released this report, "Thirsting for a Future." And in this report, it goes through the critical role of water in the world. It notes, page 13, "For children, water is life," and on page 19 that 600 million children are projected to be living in areas with extraordinarily high water stress by the year 20-something.

Mr. FORSYTH. 2040.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, 2040.

And it details the science behind how greater heat both reduces water in the ground, water in aquifers, but also how it produces more water in the air, leading to more sudden downpours and, therefore, flooding—an irony, really, to have both greater drought and greater floods produced.

On page 31, if I can find it quickly, it says, over the past 50 years, the average global temperature has increased at the fastest rate in recorded history and that the trend is continuing, and all but one of the 16 hottest years have occurred since 2000.

We also had a circumstance in 2015 and 2016 where each month was the single hottest month in the last 50 years. That is, May was the hottest month of all Mays in the previous 50 years, and then June and then July.

I did the math on this. To have this happen by accident for 16 months in a row is less than 1 out of 1 trillion times 1 trillion. In other words, there is nothing accidental about this.

So here we are talking about trying to address the fundamentals of reducing these types of crisis situations in the future—famine and violence that often spawns from scarcity.

Is it essential, as this UNICEF report points out, that we aggressively, as an international community, take on what is often called global warming, which I refer to as climate disruption?

Mr. FORSYTH. Senator, I think you are right. There is a big connection between climate change and drought and human suffering.

Whether these exact four famines are consequences, it is too early to know. And most scientists would say that, even though the evidence already points to that, that you will only know in future years whether these famines are a consequence of that situation.

But you are right. The change in rainfall patterns, the increased evaporation, the more extreme weather, the drying up of aquifers, all of these factors are becoming extreme in all of these different places.

And it is interesting, if you look at northern Nigeria, northern Kenya, Somalia, but also the Sahel, Yemen, where there is desertification, where there is more drought, but it is also where, going to the point you made, where there is more extremism, where there is more resource scarcity, there is more division. So there is a connection between all of these different issues.

Now, it is not a direct connection. The major cause of these famines now is manmade conflict.

In South Sudan and other places, probably two men in South Sudan could stop the conflict, if their heads were banged together and there was action that addressed some of the causes, and we should be honest about that. But the complementary factors, which then lead to scarcity, as you say, which then lead to people moving that lead to some of the conflicts, for example, around where cattle are allowed—I mean, there are these cattle raids in South Sudan that have to do with scarcity and resources.

So there is a big connection between what is happening with the environment and some of the underlying factors in terms of conflict.

My view, and the view of UNICEF, is that we have to address not just the symptoms, but the causes, and the causes include environment, not just climate change but other environmental factors, like desertification.

But we also have to address issues around poverty and development, even in the midst of emergencies, if we are going to stop this cycle of permanent emergency.

It feels like, in the Sahel, Somalia, parts of northern Nigeria, the Chad basin, it is like a permanent emergency now because of all of these factors of conflict, environmental degradation, poverty coming together again and again, as well as poor governance.

Senator MERKLEY. Well, thank you for laying that out and for saying I am right when I am quoting from a document from your organization. [Laughter.]

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. FORSYTH. Thank you, Senator.

Senator YOUNG. This concludes our second panel. I want to thank you, Mr. Forsyth, Mr. Beasley, for your willingness to share your expertise with us here today.

We will now take just a few minutes to allow the members of the third panel to take their places at the table.

I welcome the panelists for our panel number three. I will say from the outset that Mr. Merkley has a hard stop at half past the hour, and I accept full responsibility if this panel runs a bit longer than that. We have just been able to elicit such interesting testimony from our other two panels, so I thank them again.

Well, I welcome all of you, and I would like to introduce you briefly.

Dr. Dominik Stillhart, the director of operations for the International Committee of the Red Cross; Dr. Deepmala Mahla, South Sudan director for Mercy Corps; and the Honorable Eric Schwartz, President of Refugees International.

As with the others, your full written statements will be included in the record, and I welcome each of you to summarize your written statements in about 5 minutes.

Let's go in the order that I announced you.

Mr. Stillhart?

**STATEMENT OF DOMINIK STILLHART, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

Mr. STILLHART. Mr. Chairman Senator Young, Ranking Member Senator Merkley, first of all, thank you very much for inviting us back to Capitol Hill after we have already testified on the 22nd of March with the full committee.

I will base my testimony very much from the ground up. We have people in all these four contexts, working on the frontlines of these famines, and I have also had the opportunity in the past few weeks to visit Yemen and Somalia, and I will draw from this experience.

My first message today is one of thanks. Your leadership, the leadership of this committee, as well as the U.S. Government and the American people, has saved hundreds of thousands of lives and has helped us to address the crisis, which is, as many of my predecessors said here, one of the worst since the Second World War, and has probably taken up the worst of the famine. And this is thanks to your leadership, and we really are grateful for this.

My second message is, keep it up. Keep it up, because we are not out of the woods. Progress is uneven. We have probably seen significant progress in Somalia. We are getting on the right side of things, although the situation remains critical.

The situation in South Sudan remains extremely critical. We have seen new rounds of violence that have displaced tens of thousands of people in this country. And what we have seen in South Sudan, and this is really important, with the displacement of people into Uganda as well as into Ethiopia, once again, we see these crises are not contained in the country that are affected by conflict. These are regional crises. Therefore, they need regional solutions. They cannot just be resolved within one single country.

Northern Nigeria, we have significantly stepped up as the humanitarian community. But we have also seen new needs as more areas become accessible, and, therefore, more emergency assistance is going to be required.

The one context that I am really extremely worried about is Yemen. I happened to be there just at the beginning of the cholera outbreak. I visited two hospitals in Sana'a, and I have never seen scenes like the ones that I saw in my 27 years with the International Committee of the Red Cross, hospitals completely overwhelmed by hundreds of families streaming into these hospitals. Within just 24 hours, these hospitals were totally overwhelmed, up

to four patients in one single hospital bed, patients under hospital beds, others in the courtyards of the hospital with IV drips hanging from trees. Unbelievable scenes.

And by now we have heard 350,000 people affected by cholera, nearly 1,800 people died. And this is all the direct result of brutal conflict that has affected this country for the past more than 2 years.

David Beasley was talking about Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Looking at health indicators in Yemen, they look more like 1830 than 2030 today.

My third message is, it is not just about emergency aid. It is also about livelihoods.

In Somalia, 70 percent of livestock has perished, and it will take up to 5 years to restock and provide livelihoods for the people that are living in rural Somalia. Sixty percent of Somalia people, they are depending on livestock.

This will require multiyear flexible funding over time. Again, your leadership will be required on this aspect.

It is not just about humanitarian organizations, though. If I look at the situation in Nigeria, in Nigeria, people are suffering from severe restrictions of movement, which deprives them from accessing livelihoods, from accessing their fields, from accessing markets.

And here, again, you and your people on the ground, you can do something that is not just about access for humanitarian organizations. It is access for the very people that are living in villages today in Nigeria that are not allowed to move out of very restricted camps and can, therefore, not plan, cannot access markets. And we are just going to plant the seeds for the next round of marginalization and exclusion in Nigeria. This is something that you can also address with the Nigerian Government on the ground in Nigeria.

My last message, and this is the one that I am really most concerned with, it is about the behavior of the warring parties, the behavior of the warring parties, including some of those that you are partnering with. All my predecessors have talked about all the atrocities that we have seen, not repeating them.

What is important is that the failure to respect international humanitarian law today is a major cause of human suffering.

And during our last testimony, we asked you for a diplomatic surge. We continue to ask for a diplomatic surge.

U.S. leadership is important and will remain important when it comes to conflict resolution. Your leadership, however, is also important right now because you can make a difference right now in influencing the behavior of the warring parties, which need to change. And here, you have leverage, especially with your partners, and we are telling you there should be no support without compliance to international humanitarian law.

Thank you.

[Mr. Stillhart's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOMINIK STILLHART

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, distinguished subcommittee members, thank you for inviting the ICRC back to Capitol Hill to update you on the humanitarian situation in each of these four contexts, and to recommend concrete and

actionable next steps for the U.S. Government and the wider international community. We will do so with general recommendations across the four countries and specific country recommendations.

### **1. Main Messages**

Our message to you today is firstly one of thanks. The ICRC is extremely grateful to this committee and to the U.S. Government for taking this crisis so seriously and responding to it early. U.S. leadership has helped to turn the tide of famine and U.S. support remains mission critical to the success of ICRC operations in each country. American values and American money are saving hundreds of thousands of human lives in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Northern Nigeria.

Early action across all four countries in the last four months means that a major food emergency like the one in Somalia of 2011 has been avoided. Our operations on the ground—often in hard to reach areas—confirms the general view that terrible famines have been averted but food insecurity remains extremely high. Progress has been uneven and survival for many people is not certain. The cholera epidemic in Yemen is a major reversal affecting hundreds of thousands of people. Cholera's re-appearance as endemic in Somali and South Sudan is also serious cause for concern.

Armed conflict and climate are still the drivers of these crises and create a terrible double vulnerability for people. In March, when we addressed the full committee, we asked you for a “diplomatic surge.” We thank the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the letter its members wrote to the Secretary of State on 23 March 2017 underscoring the urgent need for such a surge. This certainly helped galvanize attention. In turn, we committed to scale-up our operations.

Today we are asking the U.S. Government and others for a “protection surge” to improve the behaviour of the parties to conflict in these countries and enable a major push for people's safe access to livelihoods and services. Without this, people's lives will still hang in the balance.

We urge your subcommittee and the U.S. Government to focus on four survival imperatives for people in the next phase of this crisis.

#### *Improve the conduct of hostilities*

Failures to respect International Humanitarian Law (IHL) continue to be a major cause of human suffering. All parties to conflict must ensure that civilians and civilian objects are protected against the effect of hostilities. This is often not happening and the consequence of violence, destruction, displacement and restricted movement is impoverishment, destitution, disease and death.

This situation can and must be changed by political, legal and military policies that insist on greater respect of IHL and create a new environment in which millions of people can return home safely and recover their own means of survival.

We ask your subcommittee and the U.S. Government to do everything in your power to bring about a change in the way these wars are fought to ensure greater respect for IHL and secure broad based protection for the civilian population in all four countries.

#### *Invest in health and water services*

Most people die from infectious diseases in food emergencies. Cholera, measles and respiratory infections are the deadly accomplices of hunger and destitution. People's health must remain a major priority. People need IV fluids and medicines now but they also need functioning health and water services to keep them healthy throughout these protracted conflicts. We ask the U.S. Government to hold its course and be a strategic investor in health and water services.

#### *Support rural livelihoods and reinvigorate urban markets*

The last four months confirm that the U.S. and other governments must focus their aid simultaneously on short and long-term livelihood needs to ensure people's means of survival. The challenge is resilience. People need food now and they need land, seeds and safe access to plant and harvest for the future. People need cash transfers now but they also need markets, imports and safe and open trading routes.

The U.S. Government must continue to meet immediate needs but also develop its humanitarian policy to meet people's deeper survival needs in these four countries. We ask you to continue to support humanitarian aid in each country and deepen your strategy to give people a hand-up by enabling their safe access to livelihoods and services.

#### *Enable flexible multiyear funding*

This short-long strategy requires flexible funding to respond to people's different needs across the humanitarian-development nexus. Investing in health and water

services, and in rural and urban livelihood regeneration requires multiyear planning and financing.

Budgets also need geographical flexibility. These four countries sit within wider regional conflict and climate systems. People regularly move across borders to survive. New crises flare up in different countries. Funding should be free to follow people's needs across the region, and not be trapped in single States.

## 2. Situation Overview

It has been four months since we last addressed you. During this time there has been important progress and regrettable reversals.

Early action has so far averted a terrible famine. Timely funding from the U.S. Government and others has enabled the ICRC to scale-up in all four countries. We have been able to expand our humanitarian action in food security, water and health.

For example, in Somalia, working closely with the Somalia Red Crescent, we have reached 178,032 people with food and 263,116 people with cash since January. Our health support means 170,222 people have been treated in health facilities and 25,472 malnourished children have had special feeding. In hard to reach parts of Nigeria, we have provided 405,000 people with food and 20,000 with cash.

This is a lot of human life saved because of timely funding. The capacity to scale-up fast has kept us one step ahead of famine in each country. People are suffering deeply but they are not dying en masse. Humanitarian aid is working.

During these four months we have also seen major new reversals. At a time when global development policy is focused on a 2030 Agenda, health indicators in large parts of these four countries are more like 1830 than 2030. There is a dramatic deterioration in health because of cholera in three of the four countries. Cholera is still spreading fast in Yemen and is endemic in South Sudan and Somalia too.

The surge in funding since March has helped us to scale up in Yemen. We have been able to support 17 health facilities in difficult areas and treated 60,000 people with cholera—some 19 percent of all cases. We have also been able to ensure safe water for 2.23 million people in seven towns and cities. The spread of disease in and from prisons remains a serious concern. We have carried out deep cleaning in several prisons.

Animal health has deteriorated too. Livestock are dying in very large numbers even if people are not. Pastoralists have lost 70 percent of their livestock in Somalia which will take five years to replace. Rural livelihoods are being devastated by drought, insecurity, displacement and impoverishment. New and repeated displacement keeps happening because of drought and new cycles of violence. Rapid unplanned urbanization is taking place in Nigeria and Somalia. Urban centres are often overwhelmed by people who are internally displaced (IDPs) and by high levels of destitution and disease.

In short, people are alive but greatly weakened. Millions are cut off from their homes, jobs and livelihoods—dependent on humanitarian aid and the generosity of host families. Humanitarian aid is working and must continue but this crisis runs deep.

### *The Same Root Causes*

There is, we regret, no major progress on the twin causes of these four crises: armed conflict and climate risk. People in each country remain the victims of an extreme “double vulnerability” to the simultaneous effects of armed conflict and climate.

Patterns of conflict and the conduct of hostilities continue to be the single biggest factor shaping people's suffering and limiting the options for humanitarian response. The way wars are being fought in each country leads to repeated forced displacement, destruction of civilian objects, scorched earth policies, restricted movement, looting and pillage. This continues to destroy people's assets and livelihoods, and their access to basic health and education services on which they depend.

Cruel patterns of gender based violence see many women and girls (and men and boys) become victims of horrific acts of sexual violence and abuse—nearly always perpetrated by men. Men and boys disproportionately face high levels of forced conscription and severe conditions in detention. Girls and boys may also be victims of abduction and exploitation.

Extreme and volatile climate—the second cause—is also putting great pressures on people. This, too, is responsible for livelihood collapse and asset depletion. There has been some rain but not enough. Drought continues to destroy crops or means they are never planted. Livestock—cattle, goats and sheep—have died in huge numbers or been sold off cheap in distress selling across all four countries.

Our Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre—based between The Hague and Boston—analyses climate data in humanitarian crises. They report the following on Somalia:

In some parts rainfall from September to December 2016 was extremely scarce—the kind of drought expected once in a hundred years. Elsewhere, the rains were scarce but not extremely so—a drought expected every 15 years—not enough to cause extensive food insecurity on its own but tipping people into disaster when added to conflict. We are deeply concerned about the future for communities in conflict areas where climate shocks and changing rainfall and temperature conditions will make conditions worse, and where violence destroys natural resources and infrastructure to make people even more vulnerable to climate risk.

The double vulnerability of people in each one of these four countries leaves little room for traditional coping mechanisms which have often collapsed in the double squeeze from conflict and climate.

*A Deeper Approach to Protection and Livelihoods*

The safety-net function of aid is still profoundly important in each country where peace may not be quick. Humanitarian aid must continue to go to scale so that it can reach people as they become sick, deprived of their livelihoods and continuously displaced in these protracted crises. But aid policy must not only think about supplying food, water and medicine. A major push on safe access to livelihoods and health services is fundamental to maintain the level of success that has already been achieved.

What people need most is peace. If they cannot have peace then the U.S. and others must use their influence and their role in military coalitions to improve the conduct of hostilities by all parties to conflict so that people are better protected and have safe access to their land, their businesses and basic services.

The daily challenge in each country remains access: people's safe access to the land, resources, markets and health services they need to survive and thrive, and access by local authorities and humanitarian agencies to maintain the basic services which people need.

Focusing on people's access to survival resources will move humanitarian policy beyond ensuring people's immediate survival to helping them recover the means of survival. This shift is essential in all four countries where conflict and food insecurity look set to continue.

This next phase approach means thinking about people's safety and dignity beyond humanitarian camps and the generosity of host families. It means safe planting and harvesting; safe grazing and well-timed livestock replenishment; small business development; the protection and effective supply of water and health care facilities, and important efforts to ensure the protection and continuity of education for children whose life chances will be greatly reduced without school.

### **3. Updates on Each Country**

The subcommittee also asked for short updates and actionable next steps on each country.

*Yemen*

The resilience of ordinary Yemenis is not at breaking point—it has been broken. Today 1 percent of the population has contracted cholera—320,199 people to date. This will rise to half a million very sick people, more if it rains. 1742 people have died from the disease.

The health system has collapsed. Only 45 percent of health facilities are functioning. Most have been stopped by a combination of attacks and a lack of power and supplies. The situation is getting worse by the day. Thanks to urgent humanitarian aid and the dedication of Yemeni health workers, many unpaid for 10 months, the death rates in the cholera epidemic have not been dramatically higher. IV fluids are saving lives and we need to import a further 400,000 liters now.

In the capital of Sana'a and other cities, the average citizen can no longer afford clean water, basic hygiene and electricity. Nor can they afford basic commodities and lifesaving drugs. Without ICRC and other organizations support for dialysis and insulin, thousands of people with chronic diseases would die from diabetes and kidney failure.

War creates and shapes the suffering in Yemen. Conflict is the ultimate cause of cholera, hunger, the collapse of basic services and widespread impoverishment. The ICRC is relieved that there has been no direct attack on Hodeida port. This would have had an even more catastrophic effect on the humanitarian situation.

All those who play a part in this conflict directly, or in support, bear a share of responsibility for this catastrophe and must act fast to improve conditions.

Humanitarian aid alone cannot cope and hold back Yemen's near total collapse. It is impossible to bridge the gap between the exponentially growing needs of Yemenis and humanitarian response. We will keep trying night and day to reach as many people as we can. We need U.S. Government support for three practical measures:

- Ensure that goods, which are essential to the survival of the civilian population, are allowed into and across Yemen. This applies not only to food but also to other basic commodities needed by the civilian population like drugs and soap.
- Every effort must be made urgently to mobilize all countries of influence around the conflict to ensure that IHL is better respected across the multiple divides and fault lines in Yemen, in the region and beyond. Collective responsibility should be taken by all parties concerned in the conflict to ensure greater respect for one another and for the Yemeni population in such extreme need.
- It is high time to get the political process back on track.

The U.S. has an important role to play in Yemen beyond its direct contribution to humanitarian aid and can exert positive influence on each of these measures.

#### *Somalia*

There has been progress in Somalia. International response in Somalia has been earlier and quicker than in 2011. This has prevented the worst. Some rain has given limited relief to pastoralists and farmers but it is not enough yet to launch a recovery. We have been able to scale-up effectively and work widely across Somalia in places under the control of different parties to the conflict. Lessons learnt from 2011 are in place. There is a more engaged donor community, a more joined-up reading of the situation and a strong system to scale-up cash programming.

But the situation remains precarious. The conflict is still dynamic. The armed opposition is agile and strong, and a major offensive is building up from the government side. The level of violence remains high and continues to impact the civilian population. Widespread displacement and very high levels of livestock death means destitution for millions of Somalis. Cholera is endemic and taking hold. We have helped treat 7,000 cholera patients to date. Food insecurity and destitution means that disease may kill people before starvation.

We suggest the following next steps:

- Development actors need to be more involved to support basic services and infrastructure. Recent World Bank engagement is a very positive step.
- IDPs in and around urban areas will need continued support because rains are not yet sufficient for them to return home.

#### *South Sudan*

It is harder to report progress in South Sudan. The immediate risk of famine has been averted in Unity State by the humanitarian assistance that has been delivered since March. This is good news. But the new violence in Equatoria Region has created a major exodus of people fleeing the "bread basket" of South Sudan with major knock-on effects for food insecurity and deepening crisis. Productive land is abandoned leaving crops unattended and the August harvest is grim because farmers have fled.

The conflict is still entrenched in repeated rounds of violence in many parts of the country. The security situation for millions of people is deteriorating, and shifting front lines since March have generated new displaced people, especially in Jongley and Upper Nile where people have fled deep into opposition territory. Violence has also caused massive forced displacement into neighbouring countries since we briefed you last. People who have stayed in their homes are fearful and need protection.

Recurring violence and displacement makes it impossible for people to settle, plant and recover. Many are still on the run and hiding in marshes, essentially destitute. And cholera is endemic in South Sudan too. Cholera continues to spread at the same time as access to adequate sanitation and health care has been severely reduced because of the ongoing fighting. A major epidemic across the country would be extremely hard to control and could see much higher mortality rates than in Yemen—not least because health facilities have been routinely destroyed and looted in recent years.

As we meet, South Sudan is in the middle of its annual lean season which makes people's condition more precarious still. We may see a slight upturn with the coming harvest but food aid will remain a priority, and we are still delivering 65 percent

of our assistance by air which is extremely costly. We recommend four practical measures:

- Food aid must be continued during the lean season and beyond.
- The pattern of violence must stop or conform to greater respect for IHL if vulnerable people stand a chance of recovering their livelihoods and accessing health services.
- Health services and water systems must be protected and health access must increase to prepare for a cholera epidemic.
- Deadlock on the political process to stop and resolve the conflict needs to be broken.

#### *Nigeria*

In Northern Nigeria, humanitarian aid has increased since March but so too have needs. The region's two million IDPs have often been repeatedly displaced and their 1.5 million hosts are in an increasingly precarious condition. But humanitarian aid, including our own into the most hard to reach areas like Mobbar, Kukawa and Kala Balge, has taken the worst off the situation although we remain in no doubt that the risk of severe food insecurity persists.

Conflict continues through hit-and-run attacks which keep people fearful and displaced. In Nigeria, too, conflict is stopping people from planting, harvesting and returning home. Security measures designed by State authorities often contribute to people's confinement and isolate them further from their land and livelihoods, and from health and education services. This is hindering child vaccinations and the early treatment of malnutrition. Access to health services is increasing and this needs to be sustained.

Security restrictions on crop types and fertilizers also limit cultivation. If some of these restrictions could be eased, people could be more easily supported to recover the livelihoods and access to services. We have already registered 180,000 farmers for agricultural inputs.

We suggest the following next steps:

- Ease import restrictions for food aid and agricultural inputs until local purchase procedure is cheaper and speeded up. Local procurement is slow and twice the cost.
- Ease restrictions on the affected civilian population to give them more access to farming fields, markets, health care and education services.

#### **Finally**

Thank you for giving the ICRC this second opportunity to address the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The ICRC relies on the generous support of the American people.

American aid and compassion are saving hundreds of thousands of lives across these four countries. We ask you to continue to do this, and to go further. We ask you to use America's humanitarian influence to create a more protective environment for the civilian population, and we ask you to invest American money more deeply in programs that help people recover their health, their livelihoods and their homes.

Senator YOUNG. Be assured, I will pick up on that topic when question time comes.

Dr. Mahla, your summary testimony please.

#### **STATEMENT OF DEEPMALA MAHLA, PH.D., SOUTH SUDAN DIRECTOR, MERCY CORPS, JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN**

Dr. MAHLA. Good afternoon, Chairman Young and Ranking Member Merkley. Thank you for this important and timely hearing. I am honored to testify to this subcommittee that has fought so hard for additional funding to prevent famine, saving lives, and finding diplomatic solutions.

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization specializing in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programs, working in more than 40 countries, including South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, and Yemen.

So Mercy Corps has joined forces with seven other leading U.S.-based NGOs to form a global emergency response coalition, the first of its kind U.S. humanitarian alliance. It is a 2-week campaign targeting the American public from July 17 to the 28th to raise awareness and funds to respond to the massive hunger crisis.

As we have heard throughout, these massive humanitarian crises in these four countries will have far-reaching impacts on the security in Africa and the Middle East. Although Mercy Corps is actively responding to famine in all four threatened countries, I am going to keep my oral brief testimony focused on the context I am most familiar with, South Sudan.

After decades of conflict, South Sudan experienced a brief moment of stability post-independence in 2011, before conflict broke out once again in December 2013.

Since then, tens of thousands of the South Sudanese have been killed, and 4 million had to flee their homes, including nearly 2 million refugees in neighboring countries. People flee with what? Almost nothing, maybe most of their children.

We are deeply concerned about the pace at which the conditions are deteriorating. Currently, 6 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from. That is half of the country, the greatest ever recorded for South Sudan. 1.7 million are on the brink of starvation, and 45 percent still experience famine.

We have met women who train their kids to eat alternate days. We have met women and families who work for days, sometimes weeks, to get food aid.

And there is no shadow of doubt the famine condition in South Sudan, or near-famine condition, is the direct result of the conflict.

In South Sudan, we are working to quickly deliver lifesaving assistance and also working on solutions to address the heart of the problem, which is by interventions like training farmers, psychological and social support to children, income generation, cash assistance, and revitalizing local markets.

Our teams live in tents in deep field locations, walk through swamps for days to reach with aid.

Since the declaration of the famine, we have scaled up our response in the countries in the counties with high famine risk in order to not miss this last chance to save lives. Yet, we are only barely scratching the surface, because often our efforts to save lives are impeded.

Since December 2013, 84 aid workers have been killed, mostly on duty. NGO compounds have been looted, staff members assaulted and robbed, vehicles ambushed. And as the guns fall silent, the humanitarian situation will only deteriorate.

In addition, conflict has made it impossible for farmers to tend their fields. Militia have been accused of destroying crops and vital water sources, looting, and burning homes and villages.

A 23-year-old woman once, when I asked her where her home was, she told me, "Which home? Since the last 2 years, all I remember is running and crying."

I met a woman who walked through the swamps for 4 and a half days with a baby on her back. She was hungry, malnourished. After 4 and a half days, she decided to let her baby go.

Tackling complex crises and hunger ultimately means we need to address the root causes, and this has to happen now, and we cannot wait for humanitarian crises to end. To me, this work must be humanitarian-plus—more investments in addition to build social cohesion and livelihoods.

Let me stress that we can address food security crises if we act urgently, especially when we see the first signs. Such resilience programming is extremely cost-effective. A study estimates that every \$1 invested in resilience will result in almost \$3 in reduced humanitarian spending.

While the immediate priority has to be saving lives, building resilience cannot wait any longer. We urge that the Congress consider providing urgently needed assistance and remove obstacles to humanitarian access, invest in building resilience, and address the root causes of conflict and violence.

Looking down the road toward fiscal year 2018, Congress should consider fully funding the international affairs account at no less than \$60 billion and, within that, fully fund humanitarian and development accounts.

Finally, why does Mercy Corps stay committed to working in these environments? We cannot say that our programs will not be interrupted. Perhaps they will be. But should this mean that we give up on rebuilding communities? No. It means we adapt. It means that donors become flexible and understand that, when there is an uptick in violence, we shift from recovery to urgent relief. Then when we can, back again.

Globally, we implement programs with such nimbleness, but it can only happen with trust and commitment from donors.

Chairman Young and Ranking Member Merkley, for each smile that we are able to bring on the faces in South Sudan, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to responding to your questions.

[Dr. Mahla's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. DEEPMALA MAHLA

**Introduction**

Good afternoon. Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding this important, timely hearing. I appreciate the opportunity to join this panel and hope that my testimony helps bring more attention to the increasingly dire situations in the four famine-threatened countries, the impacts on neighboring countries, and the need for urgent action. I'm particularly honored to testify in front of this subcommittee and both Senators Young and Merkley who have both fought so hard for additional funding to prevent famine and save lives and find diplomatic solutions to end these crises.

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization that specializes in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programs. We operate in more than 40 countries around the world, including throughout the East Africa region and in all four countries considered at risk of famine in 2017. At Mercy Corps, we believe that a better world is possible. Our team of almost 5,000 people around the world work to put bold solutions into action, help people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within.

**Famine Warnings**

*Global Context*

At the start of 2017, 70 million people were projected to need emergency assistance based on known threats to food insecurity. Particularly disturbing was that the threat of famine was the highest it has been in decades. Unfortunately, the early

warnings did not trigger enough urgent funding and action, and now at the halfway mark of the year the situation continues to devolve.

FEWS NET revised its Global Food Security Alert on June 21, estimating that 81 million people will need emergency food assistance in 2017. A few of the reasons cited for the additional 11 million people at risk include a drier rainy season in the Horn of Africa; ongoing conflict in South Sudan, Yemen, northeast Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and increasingly severe outbreaks of cholera in Somalia, Yemen, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Nigeria.

A credible threat of famine continues to jeopardize the lives of an estimated 20 million people—approximately the populations of Indiana, Oregon, Arizona and New Mexico combined. Approximately 2.5 million children are at imminent risk of death from severe malnutrition without immediate action by the international community.

That is why Mercy Corps has joined forces with seven other leading U.S.-based international nonprofits to form the Global Emergency Response Coalition, a first-of-its-kind U.S. humanitarian alliance. The coalition launched a two-week campaign targeting the American public from July 17 through July 28 to raise awareness and funds to respond to the massive hunger crises threatening the lives of 20 million people in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and neighboring countries.

By combining our efforts into a joint, two-week appeal, members of the coalition hope to amplify the urgency and scale of need and raise unprecedented funds, which will be split evenly across all eight participating organizations (CARE, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children and World Vision). We are stronger together, and we believe our organizations, alongside the American people, can bring new attention and resources to reverse this looming catastrophe.

In all four countries, man-made causes are driving famine and food insecurity, including a deadly mix of conflict, marginalization, displacement, violent extremism, and climate change. Moreover, insufficient investment in conflict prevention and management, resilience and sustainable development activities allows these problems to fester, extending these crises unnecessarily. Within each of these contexts, the capacity and ability of the individuals countries to respond varies. While still overwhelmed due to lack of rain, it is also important to note that the pro-active governments of Kenya and Ethiopia are in far better positions to respond because they took action and have been responding to early warnings and current needs.

These massive multi-country humanitarian crises will have far-reaching impacts on security and stability in already volatile regions of Africa and the Middle East. Besides the tragic human costs, refugee flows are increasing. As members of this committee have seen on a recent trip to the region, Uganda is now home to the largest refugee camp in the world. Approximately 1.8 million refugees have fled from South Sudan alone since the conflict erupted at the end of 2013, half of whom were in Uganda by mid-June. These crises are stretching an already overwhelmed humanitarian system, almost to the breaking point.

But this is not “new” news. In 2014, international agencies warned that South Sudan could fall into famine. And, we knew in 2015 that 2016 would be a bad year for food security. We knew in 2016 that 2017 was going to be worse. And I’m sad to say that current end of year projections indicate that 2018 will likely start out with emergency levels of assistance (IPC Phase 4) still necessary.

While the immediate priority must be continuing to save lives, building resilience and addressing conflict and violence cannot wait any longer. As the international community, national governments and local responders mobilize to respond, we ask that the U.S. Congress simultaneously:

- Provide urgently needed assistance and remove obstacles to humanitarians accessing populations in need—especially diplomatic obstacles;
- Invest in building the resilience of vulnerable communities to prepare for, withstand and recover from shocks and stresses; and,
- Address the root causes of conflict and violence.

#### *South Sudan*

South Sudan is a prime example of how, when left unaddressed, long-term conflict can produce devastating consequences. After decades of conflict, South Sudan experienced a brief moment of stability post-independence before conflict broke out once again in December 2013. Since then, tens of thousands of South Sudanese civilians have been killed and the ongoing civil war has forced nearly 4 million people to flee their homes. Nearly 2 million people have fled to neighboring countries (63 percent of whom are children), including to Uganda (which is now hosting the largest refugee population on the continent), Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, the DRC, and CAR, with the latter two countries managing displacements from internal conflict as well. After

more than three years of war and repeated warnings about the deepening of the crisis in South Sudan, we now have one final chance to prevent a famine from spreading and engulfing more than one million people.

Of the many humanitarian needs within the country, the magnitude of food insecurity and malnutrition experienced by South Sudanese is unprecedented. Despite fertile land, conflict has made it impossible for farmers to tend their fields. To make matters worse, militias have been accused of intentionally destroying crops, looting cattle, burning homes and villages, and damaging vital water sources. Currently, 6 million people are without enough food (IPC Phases 3-5), and of that some 45,000 people are experiencing famine. This is 500,000 more people in need of emergency assistance in the country than had been originally projected at the start of the year.

We are deeply concerned about the speed at which conditions are deteriorating for the people of South Sudan. In just four short months, the number of people on the brink of starvation has risen from 700,000 to 1.7 million. Despite the levels of need in two areas of South Sudan in Unity State being reduced from outright famine, the overall situation in the country is rapidly worsening, with 50 percent of the population now being recognised as food insecure, the greatest number ever recorded in South Sudan. Sadly this has happened while the world has been watching.

What we know is that we have a very short window of time between someone being very hungry, to being on the brink of starvation, to actually dying from hunger. We cannot wait for people to be starving to act.

#### *Somalia*

Somalia has been ravaged by decades of conflict and insecurity, making access to many parts of the country difficult. When overlaid by multiple years of failed rains, the effect is catastrophic—as we saw in the 2011 famine that killed nearly 260,000 people. This year, rains have failed again—and we have seen the tripling of water prices, the wiping out of crops and the death of livestock.

The Government of Somalia declared the drought a natural disaster at the start of March after 110 people died within 48 hours within the Bay region. This ongoing drought shows how climate change risks further exacerbating food insecurity in this region in the future as communities struggle to cope with increasingly frequent and unpredictable extreme weather patterns causing flooding and droughts or the outbreak of new pests and diseases that threaten crops.

In addition to the food needs, 4.5 million people are in need of water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH) and nearly half of the populations are in need of food security assistance. A severe cholera outbreak is ongoing in East Africa and over 50,000 cases have been reported in Somalia alone since January 2017. Since the beginning of this year, risk of acute malnourishment for Somali children has increased 50 percent. In 2017, an estimated 1.4 million children have or will face acute malnourishment, including hundreds of thousands whose condition is life threatening. Any significant interruptions in ongoing food assistance activities risk triggering a famine, and additional assistance is needed especially to address disease outbreaks and health and sanitation needs.

Over the last two years, Somalia has seen increased refugee returns (both UNHCR supported and spontaneous returns) from the neighboring countries, primarily from Kenya (Dadaab). As of May 31, 66,647 Somali refugees had returned home from Kenya since December 8, 2014, when UNHCR first started supporting voluntary return of Somali refugees in Kenya. UNHCR supported 26,759 in 2017 alone. The conditions in many parts of Somalia are not conducive to mass refugee returns due to ongoing conflict, insecurity, and humanitarian conditions that have now been exacerbated by the worsening drought and possible famine, leading to further internal and external displacement of the local communities and returnees.

#### *Nigeria*

Ongoing conflict and instability in North East Nigeria, including the presence of violent extremist group Boko Haram, has destroyed markets and agriculture, and kept millions of people trapped in poverty and insecurity. Some 1.9 million people are displaced after fleeing their homes—including 1.7 million in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe—and approximately 8.5 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Many of them live in dangerous and hard-to-reach places, and a disproportionate number are children. Almost half a million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Famine likely occurred at the end of last year, but it was not reported until after the fact due to severe constraints on access to these conflict areas. Since then, although the scale of conflict has declined recently, allowing trade to increase and signs of some people returning to homes, many areas continue to remain inaccessible to humanitarian actors, especially in Borno State. As of this March, 50,000 people were projected to experience famine unless food assistance needs were met.

*Yemen*

Due to ongoing conflict between the Houthi rebels and Saudi-backed Hadi Government, approximately 75 percent of households in Yemen need humanitarian assistance. The complexity of the conflict, and its impact on human suffering, is enhanced by the presence of Islamic State affiliated groups with transnational terrorist aims. Of the 20.7 million people living in Yemen, 17.1 million are food insecure and 7.3 million need immediate emergency food assistance. UNICEF reports that nearly 2.2 million children are malnourished including half a million suffering from severe acute malnutrition. The situation in Yemen is now so dire that a child dies every ten minutes of a preventable disease. Parents are forced to make horrific decisions, including whether to pursue medical attention for one sick child over buying food to feed their other children; they are forced to choose which children live and die.

Cholera—a diarrheal disease associated with malnutrition—has killed 1,300 people. With less than half of the country's medical centers functioning, the disease is spreading at an extreme rate. There are more than 96,000 suspected cases of cholera, and the startling rapidity of the spreading outbreak is reflected by the fact that the number of deaths is three times higher since April 27 than was reported between October 2016 to March 2017.

Lack of political will and bureaucratic hurdles impede humanitarian operations. Port Hodeida, through which 80 percent of Yemen's food supply enters the country, is at serious risk of full closure. If this happens, the humanitarian crisis will significantly escalate. In this context, with the economy also on the verge of full collapse, humanitarian assistance alone will not stave off famine in Yemen for long.

**Responding Urgently***Saving Lives Now*

In all four countries, Mercy Corps is working with our local partners to quickly deliver food, water, sanitation supplies, hygiene promotion, health care, and education in emergencies. Our emergency interventions are impacting 350,000 people in South Sudan, Yemen, Nigeria and Somalia. We are also working on solutions that address the heart of the problem: training farmers, educating health workers, managing conflict, and helping people increase their incomes. Our long term interventions are helping millions of people across Africa and in Yemen overcome the chronic threat of hunger and build stronger, healthier lives.

For example, in South Sudan Mercy Corps is providing emergency relief and, where security allows, supporting reviving local markets, traders and families to rebuild farms and livelihoods. In Unity State where Mercy Corps is one of the largest humanitarian actors, we provide clean water and hygiene services (including functioning latrines) to more than 50,000 displaced people and host communities in the Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site. We also provide water and sanitation services to 38,500 people in rural areas of Southern Unity State. In Koch and Panyijar Counties, we have further expanded WASH programming to 74,000 people, and have a ready to respond emergency cholera outbreak response team. In Panyijar and Rubkona Counties, Mercy Corps has begun an urgent school feeding program that gives hot cooked meals to 4,000 children five days a week in seven different schools, increasing school attendance rates so children keep learning even amid conflict.

Our food security and livelihoods project in Panyinjar, the region in South Sudan that continues to receive the majority of people displaced by the ongoing violence, is directly responding to the famine and helping families facing hunger, malnutrition and destitution. We will provide 6,000 households (approximately 36,000 people) with vegetable and fishing kits, and will supply 10,000 crop kits to meet the needs of 60,000 people. The kits offer people a means to catch and grow their own food and are provided to the most vulnerable displaced families, and 60 percent of the households will be women-headed.

Over the next three years Mercy Corps will reach more than 70,000 people and their communities to help them re-establish traditional food production practices, introduce cultivation techniques and promote vegetable gardening to prevent hunger. Where appropriate, we try to provide cash assistance that allows families to buy the items they need most while supporting and stimulating local markets and businesses. Even amid the conflict it is vital that markets remain open and functioning so that in the short term people can access food and supplies and in the long term economies are able to recover and grow. Since the declaration of the famine, we have scaled up our response in the counties that are at heightened risk of famine in order to not miss this last chance to save lives. Yet we are barely scratching the surface of the need.

### *Humanitarian Access*

Part of this is because without safe access to deliver food, water and vital supplies, especially in areas which are on the brink of starvation, our efforts to save lives are severely impeded and sometimes not possible. Safe, uninterrupted humanitarian access in conflict zones continues to be the primary concern as aid workers continue to be killed, injured and harassed and are prevented from reaching the most vulnerable communities in need.

In 2017 alone, there have been 492 reported access incidents in South Sudan. June recorded the highest number in one month so far in 2017 with 100 incidents reported. NGO compounds have been forcibly entered and looted, staff members physically assaulted and robbed, and vehicles ambushed on the roads. Humanitarian aid workers in South Sudan are at greater risk of experiencing physical violence (murder, violence-related injury or kidnapping) than anywhere in the world: between July 2016 and June 2017, there have been 96 incidents of violence against civilian aid workers in South Sudan—that's more than twice as many than have been reported in Syria in the same time period and four times as many reported in Afghanistan. At least 14 aid workers were killed since the start of this year in South Sudan. Unless the guns fall silent and conflict stops, the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate.

Securing access for the humanitarian response not only saves lives, it also brings down the cost of the assistance. It allows for a full suite of tools and resources to bring the best tailored response instead of what has happened in parts of South Sudan where the only option has been one of the most expensive: air dropping assistance.

The difference access makes on mitigating famine risks can be seen when comparing the constraints in South Sudan to the proactive response of the Government of Ethiopia to the drought. The levels of food insecurity and malnutrition in Ethiopia are sobering, but they would be even worse if politics were not allowing the most vulnerable to be reached and contributing their own resources to the response.

### **Humanitarian Plus: Layering and Sequencing for Impact and Sustainability**

#### *Preventing Violence and Resolving Conflict*

Considering the level of need, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. We at Mercy Corps, though, are pushed to action. And we continue to find evidence that our efforts to save lives and reduce poverty are having positive, sustainable impacts.

Conflict directly and indirectly impacts hunger in all four famine threatened countries. Conflict prevents people from accessing land and markets safely or it causes them to flee, separating them from their livelihoods and normal sources of food. It interrupts basic public services—such as healthcare, education and water. Conflict then interacts with other factors to perpetuate complex crises, including weakening governments and eroding social capital and social cohesion.

This is especially true when insecurity due to conflict makes it difficult to respond to natural disasters like drought and floods which are happening more frequently in parts of the world especially vulnerable to climate change. This risks becoming a vicious cycle as conflict weakens governments and then places increased pressure on access to limited resources. A recent study found that during drought times, violence against civilians increases by 41 percent, showing a positive correlation between natural disasters and conflict. But, there are ways to break the cycle. One way is using conflict management skills to reduce the impact of climate-shocks on communities. Mercy Corps' research from Ethiopia during the 2011 drought found that households in communities where we were helping to build conflict management capacities were better able to access key natural resources during the drought and were therefore more food secure than comparison households.

Not only do we need to address conflict where it is happening, but we also need to mitigate potential spillover effects that could further stress resource strapped neighboring countries and further exacerbate food insecurity. This is why Mercy Corps enhances the capacity of people and institutions to prevent and manage conflict.

For example, in one of Mercy Corps' humanitarian programs in Yemen, where tribal conflicts—particularly over land—have existed for centuries, villagers in the Haymah Dakhliyah district of Sana'a Governorate decided to use aid distribution as a way to bring the village together. They agreed to hold distributions and education sessions across lines of division. Even more surprisingly, they agreed to leave their guns at home. The hope is that by rebuilding trust between villagers, local-level outbreaks of violence that prolong suffering and limit the area's development can be

prevented when the larger conflict ends between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition backing the government.

Truly tackling complex crises and hunger ultimately means we need to address the root causes of conflict and violence. This includes investing in effective conflict management skills and systems as well as social cohesion. And my experience in South Sudan has driven me to believe this has to happen now. It is not something that can be programmed down the line after the humanitarian crisis has ended. To me this work must be “humanitarian plus.” Humanitarian and peacebuilding must go hand in hand in these complex environments to truly be effective.

In South Sudan, \$6.66 billion in aid between 2011 and 2015 could not prevent the country from slipping back into conflict. A war which started as a political struggle between two elites has since spread throughout the country. There has been no major drought in South Sudan; the famine that was declared earlier in the year and the ongoing and increasing food insecurity throughout the country is directly caused by the conflict which makes it impossible for people to grow food and next to impossible for humanitarians to access those most in need.

And while some would rather wait for a solution to the larger political conflict, Mercy Corps believes this is missing opportunities to prevent outbreaks in violence that are localized and affect the day to day security of families. In South Sudan, as the war continues, ethnic groups are becoming more polarized and negative perceptions of the other are becoming stronger. This makes it easier for politicians to mobilize youth for violence and makes rebuilding relationships, even if a political settlement is reached, harder. The violence in South Sudan has spread even to the Equatorias, a region of the country normally known as a stable breadbasket. Mercy Corps is now implementing a UNICEF project providing strengthened formal education, life skills and psychosocial support to build resilience and improve the wellbeing of children and young people affected by conflict in Unity State (Rubkona, Panyijiar) and Western Equatoria (Mundri East) State. We are reaching more than 51,000 children (nearly 40 percent of whom are girls) with emergency education in safe and protected environment. The teachers we work with are trained to recognize signs of trauma and lead activities that help children deal with stress and resolve conflict peacefully. Working with youth is an important step in rebuilding social ties in a country where more than 50 percent of the population is under the age of 24, and where a Mercy Corps 2014 assessment showed youth in the country have a high tolerance for violence. But more investment in programs to build social cohesion are needed to address other underlying issues that can lead to local outbreaks of violence, like natural resource disputes.

And this type of programming is important in other famine threatened contexts as well. Our impact evaluation of a multi-year USAID-funded stability program in Somalia demonstrates that development investments can reduce support for and participation in violence. After nearly five years, we carried out a rigorous evaluation to test the impact of increasing access to formal education and civic engagement opportunities on youth participation in and support for political violence. We found that combining secondary education with civic engagement opportunities decreased the likelihood of youth both participating in and supporting violence, by 14 and 20 percent respectively. Giving youth the ability to help their communities through activities such as service projects fulfills a desire to do something positive, meaningful and impactful.

### **Hunger is Complex; Resilient Solutions Must be Multi-Sectoral**

Despite the humanitarian access challenges and increasing levels of violence in South Sudan and around the world, I want to emphasize that we at Mercy Corps continue to find hope in these countries because we are still seeing that our work is impactful.

And that is why I also feel that I must stress to this subcommittee the fact that we can prevent and mitigate food security crises if we act urgently, especially when the warning signs first appear. Mercy Corps has been implementing a variety of programs to strengthen a community’s resilience to drought and other effects of climate change. Resilience programs help communities survive crises and stop the cycle of recurrent humanitarian disasters. And, non-emergency Food for Peace Title II programs are absolutely critical to building the resilience of families and communities to food insecurity. This kind of resilience programming is also extremely cost effective: a study by the British Government in Kenya and Ethiopia estimates that every \$1 invested in resilience will result in \$2.90 in reduced humanitarian spending, avoided losses and development benefits.

In partnership with Food for Peace, Mercy Corps is implementing a five-year \$26 million Food for Peace “Non-Emergency” program in Uganda, called Northern Karamoja Growth, Health and Governance (GHG). The program is addressing the

complex drivers of food insecurity in the region, including through a range of economic, health, governance and peacebuilding initiatives that will build a foundation for broader self-sufficiency, while targeted food aid for pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of two. Mercy Corps works through a 'market-systems' approach that analyzes markets beyond basic supply and demand principles; instead, looking at how they are influenced by behaviors, government regulations and rules, relationships, and the environment to understand why markets do not work for the poor. This approach then facilitates structural or 'system' changes that increase the ability of vulnerable populations to participate in markets and lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

Lessons from this program are helpful for Congress to consider when thinking about breaking the cycle of famine and food insecurity. For example, last year, a drought in the Northern Uganda caused 60 percent of the crops to fail. With poverty rates of 51 percent—74 percent in the North East subregion alone—buying food was already difficult for vulnerable families and their children. While some traders were starting to raise prices on commodities—in effect price gouging—Mercy Corps worked with traders to keep the price of commodities low. Using smart subsidies for transportation and storage, we partnered with traders not interested in price gouging and taking advantage of a drought, and were able to further lower their costs, keeping the price low of commodities they were selling on the open market. Other traders had to follow suit as their commodities were overpriced, causing the price of commodities to stay affordable. Poor families throughout the region were able to continue to purchase food on the market, despite the drought.

These type of interventions are smart, cost-effective and have far reaching effects. Food for Peace has been an essential partner in fostering these types of interventions. Title II non-emergency programs, (especially in conjunction with Community Development Funds that provide cash and limit the need to monetize) have proven time and again that multi-year, flexible funding enables programs to address hunger within complex, interrelated systems effectively.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Even as we respond urgently to the crises in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere, we must continue to invest in opportunities to build communities' abilities to cope with shocks and stresses in the future. By helping these communities deal with risk, we can save lives from future famines and reduce the need for costly humanitarian investments over the long-term.

This innovative resilience approach to food security was also embraced by Congress one year ago when the Global Food Security Act (GFSA) was passed to improve upon the successes already seen in the whole-of-government Feed the Future Initiative. I have to take a moment to thank this committee for their help in passing that important bill into law so that we can continue to build and support more programs that deliver similar, powerful impacts.

#### **Public Awareness and Funding**

With levels of need already alarmingly high and projected to worsen, we deeply appreciate the additional \$990 million appropriated by Congress in FY 2017 for famine response and prevention. President Trump recently pledged part of this funding for the famine response at the G-20 Summit, where world leaders also included a commitment to act urgently in the leader's declaration.

Given this subcommittee's interest in multilateral affairs, in addition to the ongoing fundraising efforts by WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA and others, it is also worth noting that the World Bank, FAO, and other multilateral actors traditionally known more for development work than humanitarian actions are also stepping forward with funding that meets urgent needs and builds resilience to mitigate future vulnerability. For example, this year the World Bank used International Development Association funds for the first time to meet humanitarian needs. In South Sudan, \$50 million in these funds were approved to go to UN agencies to reach 580,000 people with an emergency food, nutrition, and livestock project that also lays the groundwork for crop and livestock recovery when possible. These are positive signs that world leaders recognize the need to do more and do it in a new way.

In addition to government funding, private donations are also essential to fund this response. While Mercy Corps has been responding in all four countries with urgency, there is simply not enough funding to meet the vast level of need Mercy Corps and our peers are facing on the ground. To date, of the four famine threatened countries, only South Sudan has received even half of its requested needs as outlined in the humanitarian response plan. And despite its scope and urgency, the crisis has thus far received little media attention in America, therefore failing to register with the U.S. public.

### **Policy Recommendations**

We can and should do better as a global community in responding now to address the urgent needs. Congress has an integral role to play in helping prevent the spread of famine and create conditions that mitigate food crises from happening in the first place.

#### *Diplomacy and Access*

I want to thank Senators Young, Merkley, and other members of this subcommittee that have written letters and made statements drawing attention to the need for political solutions to resolve conflict in South Sudan, Yemen, Nigeria, and Somalia. Both bottom up and top down diplomatic efforts are urgently needed to stop the man-made threat of famine. The U.S. and key allies should provide high level support to:

- Ensure quick and peaceful resolution to the conflict;
- Guarantee humanitarian access and ensure the safety and security of aid workers; and,
- Address governance, inequality and development issues that drive conflict and violence and support longer-term peacebuilding.

#### *Funding*

Looking ahead, in addition to meeting the immediate needs of the famine threatened countries in FY 2018, we ask that appropriations are also made available to fund resilience and conflict mitigation and management activities out of the Development Assistance and Economic Support Fund accounts.

The U.S. Government should continue to invest in programs that address the root causes of conflict and violence at all levels. The U.S. Government should also utilize a resilience approach to development by enabling interventions to respond and stay relevant to rapidly changing conditions and needs, provide multi-year funding (like the 5 year Title II non-emergency programs), and allow for flexible, iterative program design. FY 2018 budget did include several alarming foreign assistance proposals (including cutting approximately 40 percent of development funding), one thing it got right is it requested an increase of nearly 50 percent in smart investments in peacebuilding programs in the world's most fragile states. Thanks to the administration giving USAID Missions more latitude in their requests, the FY 2018 request more accurately reflected some needs, including a request to increase conflict mitigation and reconciliation funding from \$432 million to \$632 million.

Specifically, as Congress considers the FY 2018 appropriations bills it must:

- Fully fund the International Affairs 150 Account at no less than \$60 billion and ensure the 302b allocations for the State Department and Foreign Operations and Agriculture Appropriations bills are robust enough to respond to these growing crises and continue investments that mitigate against future crises.
- Within the appropriations bills in FY 2018, Congress must provide adequate funding for humanitarian and development accounts, including:
  - \$3.4 billion for International Disaster Assistance;
  - \$1.8 billion for Food for Peace, including no less than \$350 million for non-emergency programs;
  - \$3.6 billion for the Migration and Refugee Assistance; and
  - \$3.3 billion for Development Assistance and \$4.32 billion for Economic Support Fund Accounts which provide funding for conflict mitigation and reconciliation programs and resilience programs, including Feed the Future as well as critical bilateral programs that address climate change. Importantly, protecting Community Development Funds within the ESF and DA accounts will allow for continued creative programming that fights hunger more effectively.

These funding levels will ensure the U.S. can continue to lead the response and works with other donors to make sure they are also adequately contributing.

### **Conclusion**

As I close I want to reflect on South Sudan and why Mercy Corps has remained committed to working in this challenging environment. We cannot say that our programmes will not be interrupted by violence and conflict, but should this mean that we surrender all hope to help the South Sudanese people move forward beyond urgent relief and handouts? No. It means we adapt, we change our way of thinking and working. It means that donors become more flexible in their approach and understand that when there is an uptick in violence we will need to pivot from our recovery programmes to urgent relief, and then when we can, back again. Around the world, Mercy Corps implements programs with such nimbleness to shift between

relief and recovery to fit the context, but it requires trust, partnership, and commitment from our donors.

While we must have a peace deal that is firm, assuring and definite, that ensures the protection of civilians as well as aid workers, we also desperately need donors to reinvest and recommit to the future of South Sudan.

Thank you for your time and attention and I look forward to responding to your questions.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Dr. Mahla.

Mr. Schwartz?

**STATEMENT OF ERIC SCHWARTZ, PRESIDENT, REFUGEES  
INTERNATIONAL, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. SCHWARTZ. Thank you, Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, and members of the subcommittee, for holding this important hearing.

I have had the honor to be involved in efforts to assist vulnerable communities for over 3 decades. I do not think I have ever been more concerned about the international humanitarian challenges confronting the United States and the world. And especially in light of recent budget proposals, I am, frankly, uncertain about the willingness of our government to continue to maintain the mantle of global leadership on these issues.

Of course, my concerns are mitigated by the critically important actions of members of this committee, the Congress, and each of you, stalwart supporters of assistance to vulnerable communities around the world, including women and girls.

Nonetheless, the cuts in humanitarian funding proposed for the fiscal year 2018 budget would severely compromise U.S. capacity to address food security risks, and, as importantly, are already sending a dangerous signal globally. My only hope is that, in negotiations on funding, members avoid splitting the difference between the administration's proposal and what expanding needs really require.

A look at the status of funding appeals for the situations we are considering today reveal the importance of this issue. The 2017 response plans for Somalia, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen are funded respectively at 38 percent, 41 percent, 52 percent, and 40 percent.

Now, while my written testimony addresses the dimensions of the food security challenge, I want to use my time to emphasize something that, thankfully, has already been referenced, that food security is primarily a challenge related to governance.

Where there is an absence of repression and complex, there is also an absence of famine. It is the characteristics of persecution and conflict that create these risks—destruction of crops, the need to flee land, and restrictions on access to information about populations in need, restrictions on freedom of movement, and restrictions on humanitarian access for those who are providing aid.

So what is the lesson from this observation, which has been repeated by other witnesses? It is that investments in prevention are key to improving governance and preventing food insecurity—preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and longer term development and resilience-building, all of which are threatened by the administration's budget proposal.

But it also means something else. It means that the United States must have strong political leadership. There must be, globally, strong political leadership from powerful and respected countries like ours. In South Sudan, it means appointing a special envoy, an empowered special envoy for South Sudan and Sudan. If you have to choose only a small number of crises worthy of the kind of attention that a special envoy can provide, this is certainly one of them.

In Somalia, where our organization, Refugees International, just had a team in-country, it means supporting the political developments underway and encouraging support for Somalia from within the region. For example, it means ensuring that we avoid anything less than safe, voluntary, and informed returns of Somalis from Kenya.

In Yemen, it means that the United States must be taking strong measures to press the Saudis to respect international humanitarian law. U.S. influence with the Saudis is overwhelming, but that is meaningless if the United States does not use it to address what is probably the most dire situation we are considering today, with some 7 million people of Yemen on the verge of famine.

And in Nigeria, it means supporting the development of responsive and responsible government, and better coordination between international agencies, state authorities, and Federal authorities. It also means encouraging Nigerian officials to provide unfettered access for international humanitarian agencies.

So the United States must deal with politics and root causes, and exercise a degree of leadership that has been lacking to address governance and conflict issues, and, therefore, address the risk of famine. And at the same time, we must respond to immediate threats of food shortages with generous provision of resources.

Meeting both challenges keeps faith with our values and our history, and offers a brighter future for millions of people around the world.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[Mr. Schwartz's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ERIC SCHWARTZ

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, and the members of this subcommittee for holding this important and timely hearing today. Refugees International (RI) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people in parts of the world impacted by conflict, persecution and forced displacement. Based here in Washington, we conduct fact-finding missions to research and report on the circumstances of displaced populations in countries such as Somalia, Iraq, Uganda, and Turkey. RI does not accept any government or United Nations funding, which helps ensure that our advocacy is impartial and independent.

I've had the great honor to be involved in efforts to assist vulnerable communities, as a congressional committee staff member, as the senior humanitarian official at the White House during the 1990's, as the U.N.'s Deputy Envoy for Tsunami Recovery between 2005 and 2007, and as Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration some years ago.

In a career spanning more than three decades, I've dealt with many vexing issues. But I have never been more concerned about the international humanitarian challenges confronting the United States and the world. And I have never been more uncertain about the collective willingness within the United States Government to continue to assume the mantle of global leadership that has been so critical over the past many decades.

We have reached the highest global displacement numbers ever recorded, with over 65 million displaced as a result of conflict, persecution, violence or human rights violations. Some 22.5 million of the displaced are refugees. Lack of humanitarian access continues to complicate responses and aid workers are working in both difficult and often very dangerous environments. And new emergencies, combined with protracted crises, are making more demands on the international humanitarian architecture.

Conflict and persecution are primary drivers of displacement, but RI is also deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on desertification and on food production, especially in poor countries with populations that rely on rain-fed agriculture to survive. Unfortunately, these regions are often characterized by poor governance, fragility and conflict, which together with more frequent and severe drought, creates a lethal combination that will put millions more at risk of famine in the coming decades.

As members of this subcommittee know, the United States has a proud history of providing humanitarian and development assistance. The support and leadership of the United States in humanitarian response has never been more essential and I want to thank this Congress for appropriating an additional \$990 million in the FY 2017 omnibus to better support the famine response in Northeast Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, and South Sudan.

In fact, Congress has long been a stalwart supporter of assistance to vulnerable communities around the world, based certainly on an understanding that the United States has security interests in promoting reconciliation and well-being in circumstances where despair and misery threatens stability. But informed by my conversations with Members and staff over many years, it is clear to me that such support also reflects a simple belief in the importance of saving lives and exercising world leadership in doing so.

For this reason, the massive cuts proposed in President Trump's FY 2018 budget, particularly regarding support for international organizations involved in humanitarian response, for the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account and for the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account, are deeply alarming. Proposed cuts would dramatically compromise the capacity of the United States to support friends and allies seeking to address food security and risks of famine as well as broader humanitarian challenges and would send a dangerous signal. While I am heartened by the forceful and bipartisan nature of the pushback on such drastic proposed funding cuts, the effort to maintain funding must continue—as the voices of the world's most vulnerable populations must be heard.

I only hope that in any negotiations on the humanitarian assistance budget, Members of Congress avoid splitting the difference between what has been proposed and what expanding needs require. Splitting the difference, for example, between current U.S. humanitarian assistance levels and the administration's proposal would still mean draconian cuts at a time of extraordinary humanitarian challenges, and at a time in which, at current levels, our humanitarian assistance constitutes far less than one percent of the federal budget.

#### *Conflict, Persecution and Displacement—and Risks of Famine*

To be sure, food security is an economic development challenge which is being exacerbated by the effects of climate change. But it is also, to a much larger extent, a challenge related to governance. In short, where there is an absence of repression and an absence of conflict, there is also an absence of famine. In places like Somalia, Northeast Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen, it is the very characteristics of persecution and conflict that create the risks of severe food insecurity or famine: destruction of crops, the need to flee land that has provided livelihoods, and restrictions on access to information about populations in need, restrictions on freedom of movement for the displaced and restrictions on humanitarian access for those providing aid. Where those characteristics are not present, such risks recede dramatically.

So what is the general lesson from this observation? It is that investments in prevention are critical to improving governance and thereby preventing food insecurity and famine. Some twenty years ago, the Carnegie Commission on the Prevention of Deadly Conflict identified two kinds of prevention: operational prevention, or "measures applicable in the face of immediate crisis," and structural prevention, or "measures that ensure that crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, they do not recur."

The tools of the first kind of prevention—operational prevention—are largely reflected in measures such as early warning and response, preventive diplomacy, United Nations peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance, among others. Unfortunately, the administration's proposed budget cuts will have a dramatic impact on the United States ability to support these kinds of measures.

And the tools of the second kind of prevention—structural prevention—are reflected, for example, in the longer term development and resilience building efforts of the U.S. Agency for International Development. And here too, the administration's proposed budget cuts will severely impact USAID's capacities in this area.

Thus, at the risk of repeating myself, we must be very aware that cuts in budgets for development, including climate change adaptation, for peacekeeping, for humanitarian response, and for refugee aid will only mean greater risks of food insecurity and famine, and greater needs for food aid.

### *Somalia*

*Overview:* A report from the Famine Early Warning System earlier this month paints a very troubling picture, indicating that a food security emergency is expected in the Horn of Africa through early 2018, resulting from poor rains and attendant challenges. This is expected to result in “a continuation of Emergency (IPC Phase 4) acute food insecurity in southeastern Ethiopia and Somalia,” with a risk of famine. By some estimates, more than six million are acutely food insecure. Separately, OCHA has reported some 3.5 million in stress and 3.2 million in crisis and emergency, as well as 353,000 acutely malnourished children under the age of five.

Principle obstacles to addressing this need, which increases the risks of famine, are access to affected populations, especially those who may be in areas under militant control, and adequate aid resources. To date, a humanitarian response plan of \$1.5 billion has a gap of some \$952 million. RI recommends that the United States lead efforts to ensure that funding gaps are effectively addressed.

*RI Field Mission and Observations:* A team from RI was in Somalia just last week. Recurrent drought, combined with ongoing conflict and weak governance, has forced over 760,000 Somalis to flee from their homes. Most have fled from rural areas, controlled by Al-Shabab and/or clan militias, to urban centers with limited or nominal government control—including the cities of Mogadishu and Baidoa.

Despite significant and generous funding from the United States, the United Kingdom and other donors at the onset of the crisis, the humanitarian situation in Somalia remains urgent. The newly elected Somali Government, the United Nations and humanitarian agencies deserve credit for raising the alarm of pre-famine conditions back in November 2016 and, with the support of donor governments, rapidly pushing out food aid to the worst-affected areas. Their efforts avoided what undoubtedly would have been massive loss of life and an even larger level of displacement. The early injection of humanitarian funding, combined with increased areas of government control/access, contributed to limited cross-border movement.

While the return home of some internally displaced persons (IDPs) in April 2017 to plant crops offered some hope the situation might stabilize, the underperformance of the latest rains sent many back to IDP camps. More than 22,000 people were displaced in the first three weeks of June alone. In May, UNICEF said that 1.4 million children in Somalia are projected to suffer acute malnutrition in 2017.

Many of Baidoa's new arrivals have come on foot, some walking for over three weeks. Some did not make it. Earlier this month, one local aid worker told RI, “It really affects me when I hear some of the stories, how they had to leave their parents—even their own children—on the road when they could go no further. But they had no choice if they were to survive.”

Many of the IDP sites—especially for the newest arrivals—lack basic services, including durable shelters, latrines, and lighting. Incidents of gender-based violence are rampant and the unsanitary conditions have contributed to a widespread cholera epidemic among IDPs and host communities alike. The gap in the protection response is particularly significant. Protection interventions remain minimal in some IDP sites and non-existent in others. And it should be noted that some locations for possible return often remain unsafe for IDPs.

RI is recommending better coordination among operational agencies providing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), shelter, and protection at the field level; better planning for local integration in urban areas and support for access to existing local services where available; and support of local government capacity to respond in key IDP locations, such as Baidoa.

Cooperation with Somali authorities and focus on resilience: While capacity is limited, the national and local governments have demonstrated an intention to respond to the emergency and to work collaboratively with international donors and aid organizations. At the federal level, the government established a new ministry—the Ministry of Humanitarian and Disaster Preparedness. At the state level, the Interim South West Administration is developing an IDP policy that focuses on durable solutions. Government cooperation and partnership with international actors on the drought response is an encouraging story amidst all of the challenges. The focus on resilience—the capacity to withstand and adapt to shocks and to recover—by hu-

manitarian agencies and in the National Development Plan must be supported and scaled up. Resilience measures vary, but can include, for example, improved technologies and management practices.

In fact, efforts by the United States, the UK and the European Union (EU) to focus on building the resilience of climate vulnerable pastoralist and agro-pastoral populations to more extreme weather have shown some success in the current drought, as some of the communities that received resilience-building support fared better. The challenge now will be to continue to scale up and improve the transformative impacts, combined with support for improved and expanded governance across Somalia.

But that, of course, does not address the requirements of immediate or imminent food crisis conditions, which have caused severe damage to rural populations. Entirely dependent on rain-fed agriculture to survive, they are chronically malnourished even in a good year. The government and humanitarian agencies must act with greater urgency to scale up the urgent food, water, shelter and protection needs of the displaced.

In this respect, the flexible nature of U.S. funding is critical and allowed agencies that had been working to build the longer-term resilience of communities to avoid a worsening of the situation.

A word on returns: I also want to mention the issue of Somali refugee returns from Kenya. Despite the severe crisis inside Somalia, UNHCR, supported by donor governments and urged on by the Kenyan Government, is continuing to facilitate refugee returns from the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya to some of the areas hit hardest by the drought. Around 30,000 Somalis have been returned in the first half of 2017. Of course, any refugee who genuinely wishes to voluntarily repatriate can and should do so. However, the consistent threat of the Kenyan Government to shut down Dadaab, combined with a monetary inducement from UNHCR for returnees, brings into question the voluntary nature of the return program. Further, the situation inside Somalia threatens the viability of sustainable returns. Indeed, when RI staff visited Dadaab in late 2016, they met a number of refugees who had returned to Somalia only to flee back to Kenya in the face of violence and hunger. There have been new arrivals into Dadaab due to the drought but we do not know how many because the government does not provide refugee registration for them. Moreover, large numbers of refugee returns adds additional stress to fledgling local governments that are attempting to respond to the drought crisis. We would encourage members of Congress to raise these issues of relating to return with the Governments of Kenya and Somalia, as well as UNHCR.

#### *Northeast Nigeria*

There are increasing concerns about food insecurity in Northeast Nigeria. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), “farmers have been unable to return to the land for planting season, further aggravating the food insecurity situation,” and “an estimated 450,000 children under five are suffering from severe acute malnutrition in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe.” According to the World Food Programme (WFP), “[t]he food security situation is expected to deteriorate in July-August due to the ongoing insecurity compounded by the lean season.” With respect to Nigeria’s most crisis-impacted states—Borno, Adamawa and Yobe—WFP expects that some 5.2 million people will confront food insecurity during the lean season, and will include “more than 50,000 people who could face famine-like conditions across the three states.”

RI visited Northeast Nigeria in the spring of 2016 to examine the issue of women and girls displaced due to Boko Haram. Women and children—the majority of internally-displaced persons in Northeastern Nigeria—are disproportionately affected by the crisis, and its attendant impacts on food security. The Nigerian Government has placed serious roadblocks on the humanitarian community, restricting ways in which they can access and help people in need. This has undoubtedly increased malnutrition risks. Further, the Nigerian government has categorically refused to permit United Nations agencies and/or other humanitarian actors from co-managing displacement camps in the northeast. An international presence would be extremely valuable in these camps, especially as the federal (NEMA) and state (SEMA) emergency agencies that are responsible for delivering food and other types of aid into the camps have been accused of sexual exploitation of IDPs. Note that these are IDPs who have already escaped the horrors of Boko Haram—many of them having been subjected to forced labor and sexual slavery. The Nigerian Government must provide unfettered access to humanitarian agencies to deliver food assistance and ensure the protection of IDPs. And while we recognize the challenges of reaching vulnerable populations in such an insecure environment, all efforts must be made to strengthen responses to those populations that are accessible.

### *South Sudan*

The awful violence in South Sudan is directly related to the risk of famine in the country. Nearly two million South Sudanese are internally displaced, and a similar number are refugees who have fled South Sudan. OCHA just reported that some six million South Sudanese, about one-half the population, were expected to be “severely food insecure” this month, with 1.7 million “on the brink of famine.” OCHA also reports that 45,000 people are facing “catastrophic food insecurity,” and that South Sudan is now confronting the largest, most widespread and most deadly cholera outbreak since independence.

Humanitarian assistance needs in South Sudan are outstripping available resources. Moreover, the exodus of South Sudanese has created huge challenges for neighboring countries in general, and Uganda in particular. Uganda is now hosting nearly one million South Sudanese refugees, with an average of more than 2000 arriving each day, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees regional response plan is severely underfunded.

The United States continues to provide substantial humanitarian assistance, and we welcomed a new announcement of an additional \$199 million for the people of South Sudan and South Sudanese refugees. The humanitarian funding from USAID and the State Department for the South Sudan response has so far reached \$728 million for FY 2017.

But the needs of this vulnerable population are escalating with no end in sight.

The United States can and should do much more. In particular, given the role of the United States in promoting self-determination of the people of South Sudan, it is discouraging and baffling that the current administration has not sought to play a stronger role in efforts to end the political conflict in South Sudan. To date, the administration has yet to appoint a Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, and has not appeared to demonstrate interest in a serious and sustained effort to seek a political solution to the crisis in the country. In fact, the President has yet to nominate an Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Although the prospects for success of renewed efforts at negotiations are limited at best, the terrible suffering of the people of South Sudan is not likely to end without it.

### *Yemen*

Yemen may be the most dire of the four situations we are discussing today. About 75 percent of the population—more than 20 million people—need humanitarian aid to survive. Seventeen million people countrywide are food insecure with 6.8 million severely food insecure. There are 2.3 million malnourished children under the age of five, with 500,000 of those severely malnourished.

The U.S. Government is by far the largest donor and must continue to bring other donors to the table, as the Yemen response plan is significantly underfunded. Only one third of the required \$2.1 billion has been received. There are indeed aid agencies working inside the country, but there are far fewer and they have far less capacity than is necessary for a crisis of the scale we are finding in Yemen. Medical care and WASH programming need more support, and funding must be more flexible to address the most urgent needs.

As of July 12th there are 320,199 cases of cholera and there have been 1,742 associated deaths in the country. The cholera outbreak cannot be effectively managed with the health system that is currently in place, but the destruction of healthcare infrastructure and the severe limitations on imports of most kinds have restricted aid groups’ ability to carry out a large-scale response. Most healthcare workers have not been paid in almost a year, and ongoing stipends are not a sustainable solution.

The cholera epidemic is only the most recent development in a multi-faceted crisis in Yemen that combines a humanitarian disaster with a public health emergency and ongoing diplomatic failure. More than three million people have been forced to flee their homes, food insecurity is worsening by the day and the medical care system is rapidly failing.

Respected human rights organizations have expressed serious concerns about violations of international humanitarian law by the Saudi-led military coalition operating in Yemen, and, especially in light of United States military sales to Saudi Arabia, the Trump administration should press the Saudis on these issues. As part of this effort, the administration should urge the Saudis to permit the delivery of essential items. In this respect, we note that the port at Hodeidah is one of the only functioning food and humanitarian aid channels into Yemen, and the Saudi-led coalition should be strongly urged to ensure that the port is permitted to play that role. There is thus far no evidence that there has been any diversion of aid by the Houthis at the port.

*Conclusion*

As I've emphasized, we will not end the risk of famine until we deal with issues of governance that play such a critical role in creating the conditions of food insecurity. And, as I've mentioned, there is much the United States can do to address root causes.

At the same time, we also have to respond to immediate threats of food shortages with generous provision of resources. And at this moment in time, funding appeals, both specific to the famine and to broader humanitarian needs, are not close to being met. The 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for Nigeria is currently 41 percent funded. The 2017 Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan is 38 percent funded. The appeal for Yemen is 40 percent funded and the appeal for South Sudan is at 52 percent. We know that funding resources are very stretched, but if the United States does not lead in humanitarian response, others will not fill that gap. With our active engagement and participation, we bring other donors to the table.

We can only do so, however, if we sustain and even augment annual budgetary resources aimed at supporting the most vulnerable of the world's population. Not to do so would be to walk away from an historic U.S. commitment to humanitarian leadership. On the other hand, meeting this challenge keeps faith with our values and our history, and offers a brighter future for millions of people around the world.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Mr. Stillhart, I promised you that I would pick up on the theme of compliance with international humanitarian law, something you spoke to in your opening remarks. So my first round of questions will focus exclusively on that and on you. I will give you an opportunity to offer your thoughts, sir.

Mr. Stillhart, what is the Red Cross role with respect to Customary International Humanitarian Law?

Mr. STILLHART. The International Committee of the Red Cross has received a mandate from the international community to promote international humanitarian law, and we are also the guardian of this particular body of law and the Customary International Humanitarian Law study comes out of the ICRC.

Senator YOUNG. And you, no doubt, know, even if you were not present earlier, what Rule 55 states—it is something I invoked earlier—that parties to a conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control.

When this rule, Rule 55, uses the word “impartial,” what is meant by that? Specifically, does this word “impartial” mean that it would be a violation of humanitarian law for a warring party to impede humanitarian assistance solely because that aid is going into a port or a region controlled by their enemies?

Mr. STILLHART. Senator, “impartial” essentially means to provide aid based on needs and not based on political, ethnic, religious, or party affiliation. That is what the word “impartial” means.

Now with regards to Rule 55, Rule 55 actually draws from two important IHL rules that regulate humanitarian relief. One is that humanitarian activities can be undertaken by impartial humanitarian organizations, subject to the consent of the parties to the conflict concerned. And the other one is that, once these humanitarian activities have to be agreed to, the parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of relief.

What I can tell you is that this rule applies in the context of Yemen, and all parties are bound by customary Rule 55, and it pro-

vides, therefore, a strong legal basis for the safe and rapid and unimpeded passage of relief goods into the country.

Senator YOUNG. So you mentioned Yemen. Do you believe all warring parties in Yemen are allowing and facilitating the rapid, unimpeded, and impartial passage of humanitarian relief?

Mr. STILLHART. We are facing significant challenges. Some of them have been mentioned before, with regards to the Port of Hodeidah. But challenges go further than the Port of Hodeidah. It is also challenging today to transport relief across the country once the goods are inside.

And I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that there is an effective air blockade on Sana'a, where only the UNMSF and ICC are allowed to fly in. There is zero commercial flight going into Sana'a, the capital, which amounts to an effective air blockade.

Senator YOUNG. Has the Red Cross expressed private concerns to the warring parties in Yemen about the respect for humanitarian law, including allowing and facilitating rapid, unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need?

Mr. STILLHART. Yes.

Senator YOUNG. And what sort of response, if you are willing to share, have you received in response to expression of those concerns?

Mr. STILLHART. Well, normally, this takes place within the framework of our confidential dialogue. What I can tell you, Senator, is that we have addressed these issues not only in Yemen, with the different parties in Yemen. We have addressed them with all states that are directly involved in the conflict in Yemen, including with Saudi Arabia in Riyadh.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. Is it fair to say that the expression of private concerns has not addressed the violation of international humanitarian law?

Mr. STILLHART. Excuse me?

Senator YOUNG. Is it fair to indicate that your private expressions of concerns have not addressed the violations of international humanitarian law, has not led to a solution?

Mr. STILLHART. All our interventions are based, of course, on international humanitarian law. But so far, we continue to see challenges with regards to unimpeded access and passage of humanitarian aid in Yemen.

Senator YOUNG. I know that you need to continue to operate in these regions. This is why you have these private and confidential conversations. So I certainly will not ask you to publicly condemn warring parties in Yemen.

However, I will just reveal that I believe, based on today's testimony from earlier panels, from things I have heard here today, and in my consultation with experts in the field, that a case can definitely be made that the Saudis are, in fact, violating Customary International Humanitarian Law Rule 55.

The Saudi-led coalition deliberately and precisely bombed the cranes, as we have seen, in the Port of Hodeidah that were used to offload humanitarian supplies. The Saudi-led coalition also bombed a World Food Programme warehouse in Hodeidah.

Despite the establishment of the U.N. Verification and Inspection Mechanism, or UNVIM, created to obviate the need for Saudi-led coalition inspections, the Saudi-led coalition continues to delay shipments going into Hodeidah for days as vulnerable Yemenis cling to life waiting for food and medicine. According to the U.N., the Saudi-led coalition caused, on average, 5.5 additional days of delay in June for commercial vessels going into Yemen's Red Sea ports. This statistic excludes weekends, public holidays, and inspection times, to be precise.

In January, when the World Food Programme tried to deliver the four USAID—that is, U.S. taxpayer-funded—cranes to Hodeidah to offload humanitarian supplies to replace the capacity destroyed by the Saudi-led coalition, the Saudis would not permit the replacement cranes to be delivered, literally forcing the vessel carrying the cranes to turn around.

The Saudi-led coalition has diverted on several occasions vessels to ports they or their allies control, more concerned about who controls the port than which Yemenis most need the aid.

And as we have discussed, on June 27, the World Food Programme asked the Saudis again for permission to deliver the four cranes.

As Dr. Mahla writes in her prepared statement, the situation in Yemen is now so dire that a child dies every 10 minutes of a preventable disease. Yet, 3 weeks have elapsed since the June 27 letter, and the Saudis have not granted the approval to the World Food Programme.

In those 3 weeks, if that statistic is correct, as we have waited for the Saudi response, 3,024 children have died in Yemen of preventable diseases. All the while, the Saudi Government has delayed and obfuscated, floating red herrings related to the large-scale theft of humanitarian aid at Hodeidah and the supposed lack of safety at the port that precludes the delivery of the cranes. The Department of State, USAID, the World Food Programme, multiple NGOs on the ground in Yemen have repeatedly said these Saudi assertions are false.

I believe those Saudi arguments have today, yet again, been thoroughly and publicly discredited.

So I think we are seeing a disturbing pattern of behavior from the Saudi-led coalition. Just one U.S. Senator with a strong opinion based on months of studying the facts in some level of detail.

If the Saudis want to make clear their compliance with international humanitarian laws, among other steps, they should grant approval to the World Food Programme to deliver the cranes to Hodeidah, stop imposing delays on shipments into Hodeidah, and stop restricting the movement of journalists, humanitarian workers, and U.N. officials in Yemen.

Mr. Stillhart, your question. You indicated the U.S. has leverage to affect change. Mr. Schwartz said the U.S. influence with Saudi Arabia is overwhelming. How can the U.S. affect change and incentivize compliance with international humanitarian law? I am going to ask you to explain your assertion about the U.S. having leverage in this area.

And then I will recognize Mr. Merkley, if time permits. I have gone over. I apologize, sir.

Mr. Stillhart?

Mr. STILLHART. Thank you, Senator.

As I said in my opening remarks, the U.S. is working with a number of partners in the region, providing support to partners, and this support definitely offers opportunities for influence.

We have recently submitted a letter signed by our president to all states that are either directly or indirectly involved in the various conflicts in the Middle East—this is not only in Yemen; this includes Syria and Iraq—to seize the opportunities that supporting partners offer. And our request is really that there should be no support. There should be no support without compliance of the partners that you are working with.

This is the area where we believe there is influence not only by the United States but by all states that are either directly or indirectly supporting partners in that region and elsewhere, by the way.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Mr. Merkley?

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Stillhart.

You mentioned a diplomatic surge, and you have elaborated some on that. Do you believe it would make a difference if President Trump was to directly connect with King Salman of Saudi Arabia, in terms of addressing the situation in Yemen?

Mr. STILLHART. I believe that U.S. leadership, in whatever shape or form it comes, is key and can make a difference, yes.

Senator MERKLEY. And would it makes sense for the United States, at the highest levels of the executive branch, to convene, if you will, an urgent council or meeting of leaders to really amplify and accelerate the response to the four famines?

Mr. STILLHART. I think anything that you can do, not only in terms of responding directly to the famine in providing more funds, which is extremely important and will remain important, but as I said before, I strongly believe, and we at the ICRC strongly believe that states, especially those that are directly or indirectly involved, and supporting partners, can exercise their leverage over the warring parties on the ground.

So if this meeting is not just about mobilizing more funds that are, as I said, extremely necessary, but also about influencing warring parties' behaviors, I would really welcome that.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you for that collaboration.

Dr. Mahla, you mentioned, in 2011, there was a brief period of stability. What ended that stability? And is there a way to reclaim it?

Dr. MAHLA. After independence in July 2011, there was a brief period of stability. And we understand that, in December 2013, there were tensions within the ruling government. It initially started as a brutal power struggle between the President and the Vice President. Actually, the fighting started in Juba on the 13th December in 2013, and it took an ethnic dimension and spread to all parts of the country.

And since 2014, 2015, 2016, we have seen it deteriorating. There was relatively less violence, let's say, in some periods of the year 2015. But then again, after the December 2013 fight, the July 2016

violent clashes again totally amplified the violence, and it spread almost to all parts of the country.

Senator MERKLEY. Underneath or as a foundation to the struggle between the President and the Vice President, was this an issue of who would carry the most weight? Or were there tribal differences or other fundamental differences that the President and Vice President represented?

Dr. MAHLA. So what we understand from being on the ground is, initially, it was about power, because both of them were the same party fighting with Sudan to gain independence. So they work together until 2011 or 2012. So it was about power, as we understand, but it took an ethnic dimension very quickly, because they are from different tribes.

Senator MERKLEY. You testified that 84 humanitarian workers have been killed since 2013. Are some of these Mercy Corps workers?

Dr. MAHLA. Fortunately, as yet, we have not had any Mercy Corps staff members killed. We have had examples of harassment, my team members being on gunpoint, and some of them even being abducted. But many of my peer agencies have suffered.

Senator MERKLEY. Has it made it extremely difficult for Mercy Corps and other organizations to recruit humanitarian workers, because of this record of casualties?

Dr. MAHLA. It is very difficult to recruit as well as very difficult to retain, especially recruiting female staff members who are willing to come work in South Sudan from other countries is extremely difficult.

Senator MERKLEY. Were most of these 84 workers from South Sudan or were they workers from other countries?

Dr. MAHLA. Over 90 percent are South Sudanese.

Senator MERKLEY. In this power struggle that became a tribal conflict, is there a way to put the pieces back together? And if so, how?

Dr. MAHLA. There are ways to put it together, and it will need a huge effort, which has to be a combination of lifesaving efforts as of now, because if Mercy Corps and other agencies stop today, people are going to die. I believe that there are ways in which regional pressure can somehow result in the South Sudan leaders taking peace more seriously.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Mr. Schwartz, you mentioned the need for a special envoy for South Sudan. In terms of diplomatic offensive, diplomatic surge, if you will, to try to address some of these conditions, are there other key posts that need to be filled or other key actions?

You heard me ask the question about the President's team attempting to both influence Saudi Arabia and help lead a council of nations to respond in a more vigorous manner. What role would this special envoy play? And how would it fit into the other diplomatic pieces?

Mr. SCHWARTZ. Let me make a preliminary point, which is that deep U.S. involvement never guarantees success in these kinds of situations, but U.S. absence has traditionally guaranteed failure, and that is my concern here.

On the specific question you asked, let's take South Sudan. We do not have a senior director for African affairs at the White House. We do not have an Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the State Department. We do not have a special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. We have an IGAD arrangement, a negotiation arrangement, which is not really going anywhere, based in part on the fact that regional actors have very conflicting interests.

I had a very interesting conversation with Senator Young yesterday, and he, understandably, questioned how many special envoys we need. My personal view is, if there is a case for a special envoy, South Sudan and Sudan is a good one. If you are taking the position that the numbers have to be smaller, I would say this would rise to the top.

But I think the more fundamental point is that there is no apparent strategy coming from the administration on how to address this. There is no indication that this is an important political issue for the administration. And as long as that is the case, frankly, I think the prospects for a political solution are negligible. They are not great even with U.S. engagement, but I think they are negligible without it.

Now let me make a point about Yemen, which I think was sort of obvious, but I think it is important for us to state, which is there is no indication that the administration has raised the issues that Senator Young has talked about. There is no indication. In fact, there is indication that the administration has not.

I speak with some degree of confidence. And I think, given what is going on in Yemen, no matter what this administration's perspective is on human rights policy, it is astonishing to me that it does not seem to have been the subject of any discussion with the Saudis.

Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps the information we have been getting on this is inaccurate. But I do not believe it has been the subject of any discussion. And that, to me, is baffling.

Senator MERKLEY. If you were advising our President's team, would you say, "Look, not only apply pressure to Saudi Arabia, but if it is an issue of escorting a ship with the cranes that Senator Young has been advocating for, we should do so and get those cranes into place"?

Mr. SCHWARTZ. Of course. Of course. But I think this problem could be solved with a phone call between the President and the Saudi leadership, or even at a level much lower than the President. This is a solvable problem.

The administration has, I think with some merit, boasted about its relationship with the Saudis. The potential influence is overwhelming. So I just have to say, again, it is kind of baffling to me why—this is an easy win. And it is so morally compelled, that I just do not quite understand it.

Senator MERKLEY. Security risks often flow with an influx of refugees. For example, Jordan has a huge refugee population from Syria. Uganda has a very large refugee population, now exceeding a million individuals from South Sudan.

What kinds of stability issues is that creating that may cause further challenges?

Mr. SCHWARTZ. I think the refugee flight—I mean, right now, the level of numbers of displaced persons is not simply the largest number since World War II. It is the largest number in recorded history. And the potential implications for instability are significant and substantial.

Thankfully, governments like Uganda and others have begun conversations about making the lives for refugees in these places more livable. And there is a very valuable and important conversation going on in the international community about education for refugees, about access to employment.

So it is not completely bleak, but if the numbers continue at the rate they have, then these problems are going to be insurmountable. So efforts to address root causes are absolutely critical.

Senator MERKLEY. I have a final yes/no question for each of you, and then I am going to dash out of here, and I apologize about that.

There is a proposal to move the State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to the Department of Homeland Security. Good idea, bad idea? Good idea, yes or no? Each of you, if you could, with just one sentence or one word.

Mr. Schwartz?

Mr. SCHWARTZ. Bad idea.

Senator MERKLEY. Dr. Mahla?

Dr. MAHLA. Not suited to the current times.

Senator MERKLEY. What was that?

Dr. MAHLA. Not suited to the current times.

Senator MERKLEY. Not suited to the current times. Thank you.

Mr. Stillhart?

Mr. STILLHART. I think it is difficult, today, to separate questions of migration and resettlement from the conflicts that are taking place, because it is the conflicts that are actually creating displacement, migration, and refugees. And, therefore, it seems to me that PRM is better left at State.

Senator MERKLEY. I appreciate that, in your careers, you are all, every day, getting up and working to make the world a better place. Thank you for sharing your expertise with us.

Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. Well, blessedly, for some of you, this panel, this hearing is coming to a close. Each of you have provided constructive, insightful testimony, and, more importantly, recommendations regarding steps that this committee should take in the future in each of these countries.

Before we conclude, in addition to the issues in Yemen that I have raised, I am interested in hearing from each of you the most important suggestion you have for any of the three other famine countries where Congress should focus, aside from recommendations you might have already made to us here today. In Nigeria, Somalia, or South Sudan, can each of you suggest one area of focus where you believe congressional attention or action can yield the most positive results?

I will allow any of you to begin.

Mr. Stillhart?

Mr. STILLHART. Thank you, Senator.

I would like to come back to the situation in Nigeria, in the northeast of Nigeria. I visited the region several times, and it is extremely important not just to think about and push for humanitarian access for humanitarian organizations, but it is about livelihoods for people and freedom of movement for people so that they can rebuild their livelihoods.

And for now, it is my assessment that the cursor in Nigeria between what are legitimate security concerns of the government, they are entirely legitimate given what is happening in the northeast of this country, the cursor between these legitimate security concerns and opportunities to rebuild livelihoods for people is not in the right place. And the cursor needs to shift further toward providing and creating a more conducive environment for livelihoods, because otherwise, what is going to happen in the northeast of Nigeria, which has regional consequences, we are just going to see a new round of exclusion and marginalization of the people in this region, which is the very basis for the conflict that has been raging in this region for 8 years.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

My staff and I will look forward to following up with you about this matter.

It appears Mr. Schwartz is prepared to offer a recommendation, based on the eye contact. Is that correct, sir?

Mr. SCHWARTZ. Yes. The tagline here is human capital.

The wonkish term is that we have this Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which the UNHCR in the context of these summits last September pulled together on refugees, but what it is about is it recognizes the reality that with more than 22 million refugees outside their countries of origin, many if not most of whom are not going back quickly, we have to get out of the mindset that these are very, very temporary situations.

And governments like Uganda have taken seriously the charge that they need to think about—and the World Bank is involved in this—education, employment, the development of human capital for these people who are outside their countries of origin.

And it is a very promising effort, but it is underfunded. So Uganda is hosting over a million refugees, nearly a million South Sudanese. We are not raising enough money to support that effort, so to ask them to be in the lead in this effort to develop human capital becomes very challenging.

So I think an initiative from the Congress to support this effort, this Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, human capital, would be extremely valuable.

Senator YOUNG. I look forward to working with you to learn more about this challenge, and perhaps review the evidence to ensure that that investment is really going to improve the circumstances of those who need it.

Dr. Mahla?

Dr. MAHLA. My first of the two recommendations would be consistent, safe, secure, and swift humanitarian access, because if you talk about South Sudan, Nigeria, and Somalia, oftentimes, the case is that the people who are most vulnerable, they are the most difficult to access. And when we talk about humanitarian access, I

also want to bring your attention to the ability of people to access the services, not only aid workers being able to access them.

And the second one is on addressing the root causes of violence and conflict, as discussed earlier this afternoon. The only reason for which people resort to arms or join armed groups is not poverty always, studies and experience have shown. One study done recently by Mercy Corps also says it is a sense of being treated unjustly.

So if we invest early on and work on community-level social cohesion and livelihoods, in addition to humanitarian and lifesaving services, rather than waiting for emergency or catastrophe to be declared, it will save money, it will be cost-effective, and probably less people and, let me say, less humanitarians will be killed.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Doctor.

Thank you again, all, for your compelling and thoughtful testimony. My hope is that this hearing will build some momentum and result in some tangible, additional steps being taken on the backend to alleviate the horrible suffering in each of these four countries.

For the information of members, the record will remain open until the close of business on Thursday, including for members to submit questions for the record.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you again to each of you, and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:54 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

## Additional Material Submitted for the Record

WORLD NEWS / JULY 18, 2017 / 10:33 AM

### SAUDI-LED COALITION BLOCKS U.N. AID STAFF FLIGHT CARRYING JOURNALISTS TO YEMEN

3 MIN READ

DUBAI (Reuters)—The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen prevented a U.N. flight carrying aid agency staff from traveling to the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa on Tuesday because three international journalists were also aboard, aviation sources said.

The coalition, which intervened in the Yemen conflict in 2015 in support of the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, controls the airspace over Yemen and can prevent any flights made without prior permission.

Aviation sources said the flight was prevented from taking off from Djibouti to Sanaa because three BBC journalists were on it.

A United Nations spokesman confirmed the report.

“The coalition claimed that the security of the journalists could not be guaranteed in rebel-controlled areas and advised the three journalists to travel on commercial flights,” said Ahmed Ben Lassoued, a spokesman for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Yemen.

“It’s unfortunate and partially explains why Yemen, which is one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises, is not getting enough attention in international media,” he added.

A source in the coalition said that the Yemeni Government was the only party entitled to issue visas for foreigners and that entry must be made via commercial flights through Aden airport, which is under its control.

“The United Nations is not concerned with transporting journalists, except those who are coming to cover its own activities,” a source in the coalition said, adding that the U.N. must ensure the journalists safety and make sure they do not carry out any other activity.

U.S.-based humanitarian agency CARE International said its Secretary-General Wolfgang Jamann was scheduled to fly to Sanaa for a first-hand look at a cholera outbreak that has killed nearly 1,800 people since April.

“This is the only way in and out of Sanaa,” said Wael Ibrahim, CARE country director in Yemen said.

The impoverished Arab country has been devastated by the war, which has killed more than 10,000 people and displaced more than 3 million.

“The lack of coverage is also hindering humanitarians’ effort to draw the attention of the international community and donors to the humanitarian catastrophe the country is experiencing,” Ben Lassoued said.

*Reporting by Sami Aboudi; Editing by Hugh Lawson*

## WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME LETTER SUBMITTED BY SENATOR YOUNG

Fighting Hunger Worldwide



**World Food  
Programme**

**Programme  
Alimentaire  
Mondial**

**Programa  
Mundial de  
Alimentos**

**برنامج الأغذية  
العالمي**

wfp.org

27 June 2017

Ref : 501

Mr Mohamed Al Mahboob  
Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Committee  
Malaz-King Abdulaziz road  
Ministry of Defence  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Dear Mr Mohamed Al Mahboob,

On behalf of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Yemen, I would like to seek your kind approval for the shipment of four Tadano cranes from Jebel Ali port, UAE (United Arab Emirates) to Hudaydah port, Yemen.

These cranes were originally purchased through USAID contribution with an aim to augment the discharge capacity of Hudaydah port. Given that all five gantry cranes in Hudaydah port are not operational, the mobile cranes would be critical to partially address the limited port capacity that severely impedes timely offloading of humanitarian supplies. The cranes are expected to ease port congestion thus allowing for more rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance into the country.

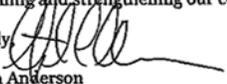
While the cranes will also be available for commercial use at the port of Hudaydah, their primary purpose is to facilitate humanitarian efforts in ensuring that humanitarian relief items such as food, nutrition, and medical supplies reach the Yemeni population in need.

Now more than ever, as the food security situation is deteriorating and the recent cholera outbreak is spreading across the country, the humanitarian community needs your support in order to be able to timely deliver life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable.

In this context, and as Hudaydah represents one of the most important gateways to access the populations in the northern governorates, WFP would be grateful if you could provide your support in processing the required clearances to ensure that the cranes are delivered to Hudaydah port, Yemen.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you personally for your continued work and dedication towards supporting WFP's operations in Yemen. I look forward to maintaining and strengthening our collaboration.

Sincerely,

  
Stephen Anderson  
Representative and Country Director  
WFP Yemen