

**STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED  
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL  
YEAR 2021**

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**TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020**

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met at 2:00 p.m., in room SD-124, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lindsey Graham (Chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Graham, Boozman, Leahy, Shaheen, Coons, Udall, Sullivan, and Whitehouse.

**REVIEW U.S. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO ADDRESS OCEAN  
PLASTIC POLLUTION**

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM**

Senator GRAHAM. Good afternoon. Hello, Senator Leahy. Sorry I'm late.

So the day has arrived that we're talking about plastics in the ocean. Why are we having this hearing? So Senators Sullivan and Whitehouse will leave me alone.

[Laughter.]

Senator GRAHAM. I'm telling you if we ever clean up plastics in the ocean, it will be because of these two folks and Senator Leahy and I will be willing co-conspirators.

I'm just astounded by the problem mankind has created for the oceans. We can be better stewards of God's creation. What we're going to do is have a hearing today about some solutions, and Senator Leahy and myself are going to sit down and find a way to create some kind of fund that people can contribute to.

I know they're doing it at the World Bank, but I like the Global Fund idea where the world comes together under American leadership to solve the problem.

So to our two colleagues, thank you very much for your leadership.

Senator Leahy.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY**

Senator LEAHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and with all the joking that goes back and forth, I think it's safe to say that the Chairman and I feel very strongly about this and we do want to help.

Senator Whitehouse and I were in Vietnam last year. We met with Vietnamese officials and scientists to discuss ocean plastic pollution. We had a good meeting, and Dr. Whitehouse, who is a marine biologist, was a star. Ocean plastic pollution is a serious problem for a country with a 2,000-mile coastline, and we—by that I mean all human beings—are causing potentially irreparable harm to the oceans and marine wildlife, which is the primary source of protein for billions of people in this world.

Acidification from carbon emissions, oil spills, untreated sewage, and millions of tons of plastic waste are destroying life in the oceans. Rivers are emptying into the ocean with discarded plastic, beaches are littered with it, and the coral reefs are dying. From a personal point of view, my wife Marcelle and I are avid scuba divers and over the last 25 years, we have seen more and more the damage such pollution has caused.

We have seen a dead sea turtle choked to death by a piece of plastic—literally hanged by the plastic. We've seen reefs and other marine life disappearing, which, of course, harms the whole ecological system.

They've found enough plastic debris to cover half a tennis court in the body of a single dead whale. Seals and sea birds are ingesting plastic.

Even plankton are ingesting it. A lot of people say recycling is the answer and, of course, we wish that were true, but less than 10 percent of the world's plastic is recycled. Part of it is a lack of infrastructure and regulation, but some plastic, like plastic bags, can't be recycled. Even plastic that's recycled is only reused a couple times, then it's discarded.

It is for these reasons that I co-sponsored Senator Udall's Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act. In my State of Vermont, we have a new law limiting plastic bags, foam food containers, and straws. We've also had a bottle deposit program since 1973, before you were born, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Let the record reflect that.

[Laughter.]

Senator LEAHY. And a whole year before I was in the Senate. I've also supported passage and enactment of the Microbead-Free Waters Act, to phase out the use of microbeads that were polluting, among other waters, Vermont's Lake Champlain.

I don't want to go into all the things that I know Senator Sullivan and Senator Whitehouse can talk about in their States about coastlines, so I'll put my whole statement in the record. We often talk about the next generation, and I think of our children and grandchildren. This is not the world they should be inheriting. We need to do whatever we can to address this issue. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Thank you. Thank you for having this hearing.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY

Mr. Chairman, this is an extremely important issue and we have excellent witnesses here to discuss it. Senator Whitehouse and I were in Vietnam last year where we met with Vietnamese officials and scientists to discuss ocean plastic pollution, which is a serious problem for that country with a 2,000 mile coastline.

We—and by that I mean human beings—are causing potentially irreparable harm to the oceans and marine wildlife, which are the primary source of protein for billions of the world’s people.

Acidification from carbon emissions, oil spills, untreated sewage, and millions of tons of plastic waste are destroying life in the oceans. Rivers that empty into the oceans carry enormous quantities of discarded plastic. Beaches are littered with it. Coral reefs are dying.

Virtually every marine creature is ingesting plastic, from tiny particles to plastic bottles, bags, and other containers. Enough plastic debris to cover half a tennis court has been found in the body of a single dead whale. Seals and sea birds are ingesting plastic. Even plankton, so it makes its way up the food chain to the fish we eat.

Many people assume recycling is the answer, and that is what the chemical companies and the companies that produce plastic containers want us to think. I wish it were true. Less than 10 percent of the world’s plastic is recycled.

Part of the reason is lack of infrastructure and regulations, but some plastic, like plastic bags, cannot be recycled. And even plastic that can be recycled can only be reused a few times. Then it is discarded.

It is for these reasons that I have cosponsored Senator Udall’s “Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act”, which, among other things, limits certain single-use plastics and requires manufacturers of plastic products to finance and organize the recycling of their products after consumer use.

In my State of Vermont, a new law limiting plastic bags, foam food containers, and straws has recently taken effect. Vermont has also had a bottle deposit program since 1973 and former Senator Jim Jeffords repeatedly called for a nationwide bottle deposit bill.

And I supported passage and enactment of the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015, to phase out the use of microbeads that were polluting Lake Champlain and other waters. But more must be done—in Vermont, and in every State and country.

Not only have we been far too lax about this problem, it is projected to get exponentially worse if we and other countries don’t act with a greater sense of urgency.

One can cite many causes. The greed of corporations that are doing whatever they can to produce and sell more plastic, while they pay lip service to the environment and public health. The failure of governments to treat this problem with the gravity it deserves. The complacency of consumers, who by following some simple steps could significantly reduce the use of single use plastic bags, bottles, and other containers.

And we cannot ignore the fact that a lot of the plastic that is in the rivers and littering the beaches and coast lines of other countries, and that ends up in the ocean, came from the United States and China. We have been producing and using more and more plastic bags, bottles, wrapping, and other items, and shipping our plastic waste and other garbage overseas for decades, with no regard to what was done with it.

So it’s no surprise that the Plastics Industry Association says 95 percent of plastic in the ocean comes from 10 rivers in Asia and Africa. That purposefully obscures the fact that it didn’t just miraculously end up in Asian and African rivers. A lot of it came from here.

I hope our witnesses will give us concrete recommendations for what we can and should do to help other countries reduce plastic pollution and protect the oceans for all of us.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, thank you. Well said, Senator Leahy, we’re going to do something about this.

I mean, I know the average American thinks we’ve all lost our mind up here, but there’s a lot we do agree upon and getting plastics out of the oceans should be something we can come together on.

With that, I’ll turn it over to Senator Sullivan.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Leahy, for the opportunity to talk about this important issue.

I want to say, as always, it’s great to be here with my fellow friend and colleague, Senator Whitehouse. He and I have spent a

lot of time on this issue together and the good news is we're making progress.

I'm not going to brag too much about Alaska, but when we're talking about coastlines, we're particularly aware of this challenge. Some of you might know the statistic that my State has more coastline than the rest of the Lower 48 States combined and we, unfortunately, have—when we have beach cleanups, which is often, it's a mix of plastic pollution, ghost fishing gear trash, that it's so much that it's measured in tons, not in pounds.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the vast majority of this actually comes from overseas. We're not perfect in our country, but this is a problem that really demands an international element to address it.

Senator Whitehouse and I worked on the Safe our Seas Act in the last Congress, was passed, and we had a very useful signing ceremony with the President, who is quite motivated on these issues. That led to our Save Our Seas Act 2.0, which passed the Senate in January and is under consideration in the House. Senator Murphy, who's here, and Senator Coons, Van Hollen, Merkley, they were all co-sponsors. Mr. Chairman, you were, as well, of that bill.

It's not a silver bullet, but CRS did call that the most comprehensive ocean cleanup legislation ever to pass the United States Senate and so we're proud of that bill, doesn't solve everything but, as I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, that has a lot of provisions, the Save Our Seas Act 2.0, to tackle this problem globally.

I won't go through all the elements of it, but it's working internationally. It prioritizes State Department, USAID, I know you're going to hear from them today, on the United States being the leader in marine debris efforts globally.

I think you're starting to see that, Mr. Chairman. You saw in the USMCA, for example, there's a provision on ocean debris. There's an entire chapter on sustainable fisheries that I had a little bit to do with, but this is, I think, it's a challenge, but at the end of the day, this is a good news story.

Why is it a good news story? Because it's an environmental issue that we can target and we can solve. The estimates are some 70 percent of all the world's global plastics marine debris comes from 10 rivers in Asia and Africa. We can solve this and here's the other good news element about it.

You are seeing all the key stakeholders, Democrats, Republicans, in the Congress, the Trump administration, which I think really wants to play an important constructive and leadership role, the key ocean environmental groups, industry. Senator Whitehouse and I were at the launch of the Alliance to End Plastic Waste. This is a group of nearly 50 of the top companies in our country that have pledged over 1.5 billion to clean up the oceans and that's the key, Mr. Chairman.

Key stakeholders all working together on an environmental issue we can solve and that's why this hearing is important. That's why our work together, we think, has made progress and we're very honored, Mr. Chairman, Senator Leahy, that you are holding this hearing to continue our leadership efforts, bipartisan, with the

United States leading on an issue that people are coming together on and we can solve.

So we want to thank you for holding this hearing.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you for all you've done to bring this to my attention and to work with Senator Whitehouse.

Senator Whitehouse.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SHELDON WHITEHOUSE

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Chairman Graham, for hosting this. It is, first of all, a treat to be here and see you and Ranking Member Leahy, who work together so well on so many issues. It's a good sign for the Senate, the relationship that you two have, and it gives me confidence that we will make real progress as a result of this hearing.

It's also a great privilege to be here with my compadre on all things ocean plastics, Dan Sullivan. As he said, we do beach cleanups with trash bags. He does beach cleanups with frontend loaders, dumpsters, and barges. So it's a real problem for Alaska but it's a problem for the entire world because plastic pollution and marine debris befoul all our oceans and hurt global coastal communities.

About 8 million metric tons of this trash goes into the sea every year. If you stack grocery bags full of plastic trash on every square foot of shoreline in the world and kick it into the ocean, that's the scale of what we're doing every year and at this rate, there will be more plastic by weight in the ocean than fish by weight in the ocean by 2050.

It's a health issue, an unexplained health issue because plastic breaks down into teeny-tiny microscopic pieces and infiltrates the marine food chain with harm we still need to understand to fish, wildlife, and human health.

So we are not doing a very good job at handling this as a country and as a world. We only manage a fraction of the plastic waste that we produce. Much of what we fail to manage goes into the ocean.

International efforts will help us combat this ocean plastic pollution and we can make positive changes here at home because our waste and water infrastructure needs improving as does our recycling system. But we must reduce new plastic waste and create economic incentives to clean up the plastic waste already befouling our seas.

Save Our Seas, mentioned by Dan, and Save Our Seas 2.0 show bipartisan support to address marine debris and ocean plastic pollution. Save Our Seas is already law and this year, the Senate passed Save Our Seas 2.0 by unanimous consent and we hope for House action to pass it into law in this Congress. These bills do the two basic things we need to do: boost international engagement to clean up ocean plastics and strengthen our domestic response.

So what's out there right now? PROBLUE, an Ocean Trust Fund at the World Bank, already helps address the threat of marine pollution and ocean plastics, and it raises awareness. It integrates international efforts. It promotes public and private sector investment.

The United States should step up on combating ocean plastic pollution as we traditionally have in fisheries management and in ocean conservation, both by contributing to this fund and perhaps

by establishing our own to support it and vindicate our own policies.

We should strengthen the Department of State and USAID's ocean plastic pollution work. They support international efforts to address marine debris. There's no reason for the U.S. to be laggards in this space.

Studies already underway at the National Academy of Science to evaluate the types, sources, and geographic distribution of our own plastic waste, where we export it, whether there's adequate waste management infrastructure there, and what environmental conditions result. Supporting a global fund can help us build on this research and act on its findings.

Ocean plastic pollution is a global problem with bipartisan support for action in Congress and strong statements, as Senator Sullivan said, from the President, the Secretary of State, and our Trade Representative. There's no reason not to move forward. It will take an international response because so much of the problem is overseas. Powering up the Department of State and USAID's work and launching funding for global ocean plastic reduction through PROBLUE or through our own or both would ensure that the United States is an acknowledged leader in this space.

There's no reason not to move forward, Mr. Chairman, and there's every reason to move forward for the sake of our coastal communities and blue economies, for the sake of human health, and for the sake of a healthy, beautiful, and clean ocean.

I know you are an advocate for the Atlantic shore of South Carolina, as I am for our beautiful, sparkling shore and bay in Rhode Island, and I appreciate very much that you and that famous scuba diver, our Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, are such enthusiasts. So I appreciate it.

Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Jacques Cousteau over here.

Senator LEAHY. Marcelle is the better diver.

Senator GRAHAM [continuing]. Before you leave, I know you're busy, thank you both. I'm not joking. I did not realize the scope of the problem. It's just mind-boggling that we've done this to our oceans and the good news is there's a way out of this mess. There is a way. We've just got to follow your leadership and where money helps, we'll put money. So thank you both.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Our other two witnesses are USAID Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment, Michelle Bekkering. Good to see you. Thank you. And Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, you must have a big door, Jonathan Moore.

Mr. Moore, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JONATHAN MOORE, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF OCEANS AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Thank you for the opportunity and the invitation. Ranking Member Leahy and other esteemed Members of the subcommittee.

It's an honor to be here with you today, together with my distinguished colleague from USAID, Michelle Bekkering, to discuss our role in addressing the important issue of marine debris.

While working on and through the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Department continues to address marine debris and many other issues around the world, collaborating with the interagency to leverage American resources and expertise.

As we just heard from Senators Sullivan and Whitehouse, marine debris does not respect borders. It is a global problem with global consequences. It results from mismanaged waste, usually starting on land and then entering the ocean.

The American people see this on the coasts of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans, and on the shores of lakes and rivers. It's estimated that the direct economic impact of marine debris on APEC economies, and that includes our economy, is over \$10 billion a year. It harms ecosystems and fishing industries through economic losses due to abandoned or lost fishing gear, known as ghost gear. Floating debris also poses navigational hazards.

Though marine debris includes glass, metal, cloth, and rubber, one of the most common materials is plastic. Exactly as Senator Whitehouse noted, current estimates indicate that there are more than 150 million tons of plastic waste in the ocean with another 8 million tons added each year. To use a different way of describing that, that works out to a full garbage truck's worth of plastic entering the ocean every minute.

I must note, Mr. Chairman that the People's Republic of China is the biggest offender, responsible for nearly 30 percent of plastic waste, far more than any other country. The PRC must address its own waste management issues, both land-based and sea-based, and do so with its own resources.

Marine debris affects environmental and food security, economic stability, resource management, and potentially human health. The challenge is immense.

Our approach focuses on promoting environmentally-sound waste management, recycling, sustainable materials management, innovation to prevent waste from entering the environment, and debris removal efforts.

The United States has a wide array of means to help. The State Department, EPA, National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy are highlighting U.S. expertise and innovation to combat marine debris through new technologies, materials research, and other cutting edge solutions.

We are dedicating to supporting and highlighting the best available scientific information and data collection methods necessary to inform policymakers and private industry about the economic, environmental, and health implications and identify hot spots.

The bipartisan Save Our Seas Act of 2018 directed the State Department to take a comprehensive approach on marine debris. The department, through our Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, is working with interagency, private sector, academic, industry, and non-governmental stakeholders, in addition to Congress, to engage multilaterally, regionally, and bilaterally around the world.

We also partner with EPA, NOAA, USAID, the National Science Foundation, Commerce, Energy, the Coast Guard, and the U.S. Trade Representative to work with international stakeholders and underscore the importance of public and private cooperation.

We are engaging with private sector-led initiatives, including the Alliance to End Plastic Waste and Circulate Capital, mobilizing billions of dollars to help countries improve their waste management and recycling systems, and to create a value chain for recycled plastics.

In international fora, contrasting the balanced approaches, we face calls for bans on single-use plastics, legally-binding agreements on plastics, and measures that would inhibit the market for recycled goods.

Barriers, bans, and trade restrictions often do not consider negative environmental and economic trade-offs and could actually reduce recycling by lowering the value of commodities, risking even more waste entering the environment.

Instead, we need innovation in materials and design, changes in behavior, and significant improvements in waste management systems to reduce the amount of marine debris and plastic pollution. These solutions should reflect regional and national contexts as well as local practices and realities.

Importantly, the challenge of tackling marine debris presents opportunities for U.S. business. The American waste and recycling industry generates an estimated \$100 billion in annual revenue. The global waste management market is expected to reach over \$530 billion by the year 2025.

Broadening markets would yield benefits to American companies as well as for countries with undeveloped waste management infrastructure, a win all around.

Our embassies are vital in helping U.S. business navigate ever-changing national and local conditions and identifying potential opportunities.

Over the past 5 years, the State Department has managed over \$5.8 million in grants. For example, we gave a nearly \$1 million grant to the Ocean Conservancy to aid the implementation of Vietnam's National Action Plan on Marine Debris and worked with local NGOs there.

Senator Leahy, thank you very much for mentioning our cooperation with Vietnam.

We promote behavior change, including through demonstration projects, workshops, and public awareness campaigns. We also plan to combat sea-based sources, particularly of ghost gear. These are just a few examples of what we're doing.

As the Save Our Seas Act recognizes, addressing marine debris is impossible without close domestic and international coordination.

Congress has been an invaluable partner for this and we greatly appreciate your support and interest.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.

[The statement follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JONATHAN M. MOORE

## INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon Chairman Graham, Vice Chairman Leahy, and other esteemed Members of the subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. It is a pleasure to be here with you today and I very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss the State Department's role in addressing the increasingly important issue of marine debris. Even during this time of incredible uncertainty, we continue to address this complex challenge around the world. The State Department works closely with our interagency partners to leverage our combined resources and expertise in our global marine debris engagement.

Marine debris is a global problem with global consequences. Marine debris originates from mismanaged waste leaking into the environment, usually starting on land and then entering the ocean. The American people see this on the coasts of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans, and on the shores of lakes and rivers. Reliable estimates put the direct economic impact of marine debris on Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) economies (including the United States) at over \$10 billion annually. A component of the tourism sector is hit particularly hard by lost revenue from tourists who choose to spend their vacations away from polluted marine environments, forcing local, State, and national governments to spend millions of dollars cleaning beaches. Marine debris also harms marine ecosystems and fishing industries through economic losses due to abandoned or lost fishing gear, commonly referred to as "ghost gear." Ghost gear continues to capture fish and other marine life for as long as it drifts, depleting seafood stocks and ultimately reducing regional food security. Floating debris also poses major navigational hazards for ocean-going vessels, for example by entangling ship drives.

Though marine debris includes various materials, such as glass, metal, cloth, and rubber, one of the most common materials comprising marine debris is plastic. Current estimates indicate that there are more than 150 million tons of plastic waste in the ocean with another 8 million tons added each year; that works out to a full garbage truck's worth of plastic entering the ocean every minute. By 2050, there could be more plastic than fish (by weight) in the ocean.

Plastics are a vital societal asset and tradable commodity in the global economy. Their durability and non-biodegradable properties that are so valuable for food safety and other applications, can also lead to plastic accumulation on land and in the marine environment when plastic waste is not managed in an environmentally sound manner. Plastic can take hundreds of years to decompose naturally, if it decomposes at all. In many cases, plastic degrades into smaller harmful "micro and nano-plastic" fragments that are impossible to retrieve, but which enter the food chain when consumed by sea life. Moreover, micro and nano-plastic are transported across the globe, including by ocean currents and jet streams, and can now be found from the deepest parts of our oceans to the ice and snow of our highest mountains.

Marine debris does not respect international boundaries and the problem cannot be solved by one country alone. Combatting marine debris, including marine plastic litter, requires collaborative efforts from all stakeholders, public and private. We welcome and actively support efforts by all U.S. stakeholders to work with governments and other actors globally to address this problem.

## GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Marine debris is a far-reaching issue that impacts environmental and food security, economic stability, resource management, and potentially human health. The size and complexity of the challenge is immense, especially in developing economies that may not have the appropriate infrastructure or policy apparatus to take effective action. Our international approach focuses on promoting environmentally sound waste management, supporting recycling and recycling markets, promoting sustainable materials management, encouraging innovation to prevent mismanaged waste from entering the environment, and supporting debris removal efforts. The United States has a wide array of technology and expertise to assist countries in improving their waste management and recycling systems. We are working closely with colleagues from the Environmental Protection Agency, National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy to highlight U.S. expertise and innovation to combat marine debris through new waste management technologies, materials research, and other cutting-edge solutions. We also engage with countries to understand the scale and scope of the problem, supporting efforts to combat land and sea-based sources of marine debris, promoting government and stakeholder outreach to positively influence cultural and societal norms, encouraging a more sustainable approach to plastic use and disposal, and fostering dialogue to expand research into

more recyclable materials and alternatives. We are dedicated to supporting and highlighting the best available scientific information and data collection methods necessary to inform policy makers and private industry about the economic, environmental, and health implications of marine debris and identify pollution hot spots.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the biggest offender, responsible for 30 percent of waste, far more than any other country. Our approach to the PRC is to hold it accountable for addressing its own waste management issues, both land-based and sea-based, and to do so with their own resources. Prioritizing our efforts on improving waste management infrastructure and practices in other major source countries will yield results, but cultural norms also need to shift to effect permanent change and solve the longer-term issue. Increased efforts to curb ghost gear, enhance cross-sectoral collaboration (e.g., connecting financial institutions with innovators and entrepreneurs), and promote innovation throughout product lifecycles will also aid in solving the marine debris and plastic pollution problem.

As you know, the bipartisan Save our Seas Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-265) directed the State Department to take a comprehensive approach to its international engagement on marine debris. The Department of State, through the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, is working with interagency, private sector, academic, industry, and non-governmental stakeholders to engage multilaterally, regionally, and bilaterally with partners around the world to address marine debris.

The Department of State works with interagency partners in the EPA, NOAA, USAID, NSF, DOC, DOE, USCG, and USTR to bring together diverse international stakeholders and underscore the importance of global cooperation—from the public and private sectors—to prevent and reduce marine debris. The United Nations has increased its focus on marine debris in recent years as we have worked extensively to elevate the issue in bilateral and multilateral fora. In June 2012, U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) launched the Global Partnership on Marine Litter. Since then, nations, including the United States, have worked in concert to prevent and reduce marine debris worldwide, while mitigating its impact on economies and human and animal health. The Department of State leads interagency engagement as contributing members of the U.N. Environment Program's Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics where we promote the United States' holistic vision for combatting marine debris. The outputs from the Expert Group will provide key inputs to policy discussions at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, planned for February 2021.

We have also advocated for solution that recognize the important role of the private sector as a key stakeholder that can contribute towards pragmatic solutions. We continue to engage with private sector-led initiatives, including the Alliance to End Plastic Waste and Circulate Capital, which are mobilizing billions of dollars to assist countries to improve their waste management and recycling systems and to create a value chain for recycled plastics.

We also work in the G7 and G20 fora to tackle marine debris. In the G7, we promote better coordination of various country-level initiatives supporting additional research on microplastics and their impact on human health, improved scientific monitoring, and advocating for better use of resources to recover, reduce, recycle and repurpose waste. In 2019 at the G20 Leaders meeting, we worked closely with Japan's G20 Presidency to help develop the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision 2050, which aims to reduce additional marine plastic litter pollution to zero by 2050. We also supported the development and adoption of the G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter and the G20 Resource Efficiency Dialogue aimed at increasing mutual understanding regarding activities and best practices on marine plastic litter.

We also support working through the existing Regional Seas Programs and other regional initiatives to address marine debris and marine plastic litter. The United States is a member of two Regional Seas Programs that engage neighboring countries to collaborate on preventing pollution from entering the ocean. Through the Caribbean Environment Program, created in connection with the Cartagena Convention, we led an effort to make marine debris reduction a priority. We worked jointly with EPA launching an initiative in partnership with U.N. Environment Programme and the Peace Corps to develop community-based trash reduction projects and create effective solid waste management policies. Projects in Jamaica and Panama helped those countries to advance their efforts to keep waste from entering the Caribbean.

Our work in APEC has yielded significant public and private action. For example, following the success of several workshops in meetings held in the Asia-Pacific region over the last several years, the Department of State and our interagency partners at NOAA spearheaded the establishment of a marine debris sub-fund with

nearly a million dollars in seed funding for projects to combat land-based sources of marine debris in the APEC region. The estimate of direct economic costs that I cited earlier—exceeding \$10 billion annually in the APEC region alone—is from a report<sup>1</sup> that the United States commissioned to enhance regional and global understanding of the true cost of the problem. We were also successful in leading an inter-agency effort with the Republic of Korea to establish an APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris that now serves as the guiding document for the organization's efforts.

In the Pacific Islands, we provide financial and technical support under the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, also known as the Noumea Convention. The Department of State is partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard to enhance Pacific Islands' capacity to combat marine pollution. Our work has also extended to the Arctic Council, OECD, the IMO, the ASEAN Regional Forum, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, and a wide array of other international entities now tasked with working to address marine debris.

The United States leadership on addressing marine debris, specifically ghost gear, is also exemplified by our recent joining of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI). GGGI is the preeminent international initiative working to address the problem of ghost gear and convenes a broad coalition of members, including 15 other countries and 13 U.S.-based fishing and seafood companies. While our membership with GGGI only became official a few weeks ago our close collaboration with GGGI and its parent organization, the Ocean Conservancy, date back years as evident by ongoing Department of State grants in the Indo-Pacific and Caribbean regions.

#### *Supporting U.S. Economic Interests*

In international fora, the Department has seen increasing calls for stopgap solutions to global waste issues, including implementation of bans on single-use plastics, support for negotiating a legally binding international agreement on plastics, and the development of measures that inhibit the global market for recycled goods. Barriers, bans, and trade restrictions can reduce recycling by lowering the value of commodities, and often do not consider negative environmental and economic trade-offs associated with alternative materials.

Beginning in 2018, the PRC implemented its National Sword policy, banning the import of 24 types of solid waste and scrap material, including a variety of plastics and unsorted mixed papers. The policy disrupted a number of the waste management and recycling streams across the United States and elsewhere that were previously structured for export to China. These disruptions in the global movement of recycling commodities continues to reduce market prices and alter trade relationships and markets. There are also concerns that the National Sword Policy and similar restrictions will divert waste to countries, in particular developing countries in Southeast Asia, with comparatively weaker waste management systems and high rates of waste leaking into the environment.

More recently, in May 2019, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal amended the Convention to make most non-hazardous plastic waste and scrap exports subject to the prior informed consent of the importing country. Beginning on January 1, 2021, the new plastic waste amendments will prohibit the 187 Basel parties from trading most plastic waste and scrap with the United States, a non-Party, except under the terms of a separate agreement or arrangement with us that provides for environmentally sound management. We anticipate these amendments will significantly disrupt the global movement of plastic scrap and potentially cut off U.S. exports and imports of certain non-hazardous plastic scrap.

This challenge and the broader issue of tackling marine debris presents opportunities for U.S. businesses. Plastic and other materials that are recovered can generally be recycled and often traded as recyclable commodities, creating sustainable supply chains and green jobs across a diverse set of industrial sectors if we work together to find the solutions. In 2018, the U.S. solid waste management and recycling industry generated an estimated \$100 billion in revenue. The global waste management market size is expected to reach \$530 billion by 2025, with the Asia-Pacific region expected to see the highest compound annual growth rate, at about 6 percent during the period from 2018 to 2025. Expanding overseas markets for U.S. waste management and recycling services and technologies would yield benefits to American companies and countries with underdeveloped waste management infrastructure; a win all around. Our Embassies are vital in helping U.S. businesses navigate ever-changing national and local conditions, including market-enabling en-

<sup>1</sup> Report available at: <https://www.apec.org/Publications/2020/03/Update-of-2009-APEC-Report-on-Economic-Costs-of-Marine-Debris-to-APEC-Economies>

vironmental policies and regulatory developments, and identifying potential opportunities for U.S. waste and recycling firms, and the State Department continues to connect U.S. businesses with our Embassies to provide on-the-ground advice and information.

#### PROGRAMMATIC EFFORTS

We are also working bilaterally with key source countries. For example, the Department of State is working closely with the interagency and civil society partners to support the Indonesian government's recently stated ambitious goal of reducing its marine litter by 70 percent by 2025. As part of that effort, we sponsored a renowned American marine debris expert, Dr. Jenna Jambeck of the University of Georgia, as a U.S. Embassy Speaker. With Embassy support, Dr. Jambeck met with students, academia, civil society, and government officials in South Africa, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, China, and Indonesia. The Department of State has also developed an outreach campaign called Face the Waste to provide educational materials on environmentally sound waste management techniques and technologies and highlight the expertise of agencies like EPA, USAID, the Department of Commerce, USTR, and NOAA. In addition, U.S. Embassy Public Diplomacy sections regularly conduct outreach events to engage and educate the host country's public on marine debris, as well as inform exporters of U.S. environmental technology and services about opportunities in foreign countries.

Over the past 5 years, the Department of State has developed and managed over \$5.8 million dollars in grants to combat marine debris and plastic pollution. We provided a nearly one million-dollar grant to the Ocean Conservancy to aid the implementation of Vietnam's National Action Plan on Marine Debris, to support the informal waste management sector, and advance additional research into waste pathways into the marine environment. We also worked with local NGOs in Vietnam to reduce marine debris via social change in Ly Son Island. The project established a local steering committee on environmental protection, conducted training with community leaders, engaged in coastal clean-ups, and trained households on the proper methods for waste sorting and recycling and provided reusable shopping bags. We continue to support the Ocean Conservancy's annual International Coastal Clean-up activities. We regularly highlight and promote this event, aimed at building awareness and gathering data around the impact of marine debris on coastlines. Our embassies also sponsor coastal clean-ups on Earth Day around the world and participate in the annual International Coastal Clean-up serving to highlight U.S. commitment to the issue.

Our grant work has a global reach to conduct coastal clean-up activities and host community outreach events. We also collaborate with industry to develop and implement alternative materials for fish boxes tested by the fishing industry to reduce polystyrene marine debris. In Panama and Costa Rica, our NGO partner provided technical assistance to six coastal cities that reduced waste, trained municipal officers, developed local government solid waste management plans, and instituted a public information plan to incentivize actions that reduce marine debris. To date, that campaign has reached roughly 1.9 million people. Grants we implemented in Indonesia and the Philippines aim to reduce marine debris by building effective waste management and plastic recycling economies and reduce land-based leakage of plastic waste through engagement with local governments in over 80 cities to promote zero-waste systems and product redesign.

Other grants have included work to curb the prevalence of ghost gear in Peru's coastal waters by collecting and recycling end-of-life fishing gear. This project has managed to collect more than 220 tons of end of life fishing nets for recycling annually. In Jamaica and Grenada, another grant program incentivizes good fisheries management practices through an insurance product and developed innovative fishing gear and gear marking technologies to prevent ghost gear from occurring while facilitating gear recovery.

Currently, the Department is developing a program to support municipalities in West Africa to improve environmentally sound management of plastic waste and encourage innovation along the plastic supply chain to reduce plastic waste leakage into the environment.

As has already been shown, our embassies have been engaged on the issue as well. Embassy Green Teams develop and support environmentally friendly activities ranging from promoting the use of reusable water bottles and packaging at the Embassy to working with host country partners to reduce local waste generation. For example, Embassy Bangkok worked closely with the hospitality industry in Phuket, Thailand to establish a successful waste reduction program in hotels by promoting reusable container use.

We need innovation in materials and design, changes in behavior, and significant improvements in waste management systems to reduce the amount of marine debris and plastic pollution. These solutions should also vary according to regional and national contexts. For example, work by manufacturers on automated, high-throughput sorting technologies to efficiently categorize plastic materials by physical and chemical characteristics is necessary for nations with well-established material recovery facilities. But this solution sometimes does not translate to developing nations where many consumers are forced to use single-use plastic sachets of daily goods like soap and detergent, simply because they cannot afford to buy larger containers. We need different solutions to fit the local realities.

With that in mind, we plan to continue efforts to work in major source countries to combat land-based sources of marine debris via development of improved waste management infrastructure, support recycling and markets for recycled material, encourage innovative product lifecycle design, promote debris removal, and promote behavior change, including through demonstration projects, workshops, and public awareness campaigns. We also plan to combat sea-based sources of marine debris, particularly ghost gear, by promoting gear-making guidelines and workshops to share best practices with key target countries. We will also support the contributions of our interagency partners to international scientific initiatives, studying the environmental and economic impact of marine debris globally through monitoring programs, micro- and nano-plastics research, assessments of land-based sources, as well as workshops and scientific exchanges with U.S. researchers to promote U.S. expertise, methodologies, and technologies.

#### CONCLUSION

These are just a few examples of the State Department's wide-ranging international engagement on marine debris, working together with our interagency colleagues, private sector stakeholders, and international partners. As the Save Our Seas Act of 2018 recognizes, addressing marine debris is impossible without close coordination both domestically and internationally. American leadership is critical to advancing the global effort to combat marine debris by focusing on effective solutions that are grounded in innovation, environmentally sound waste management, sustainable materials management, and support for recycling and recycling markets.

Congress has been an invaluable partner in our efforts and we greatly appreciate your support and interest in this critical topic. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and I would be pleased to answer any questions that you might have.

Senator GRAHAM. Ms. Bekkering.

#### **STATEMENT OF HON. MICHELLE BEKKERING, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT, UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. BEKKERING. Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you so much for this opportunity today to testify about the important role the U.S. Agency for International Development plays in preventing and reducing ocean plastic pollution. It's truly an honor to be with you here today.

I'd really like to thank Congress for your strong bipartisan support and leadership on this issue. I'd also like to specifically express my gratitude that you have held today's hearing to shine a spotlight on this development challenge, one that has been amplified by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

USAID is pleased that the Save Our Seas Act of 2018 set the stage for increased U.S. Government efforts internationally and we have appreciated the close cooperation with Members of this subcommittee and the authors of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act, Senators Whitehouse, Sullivan, and Menendez.

I also want to note my colleague and friend, Jonathan Moore, from the Department of State who is joining me here today.

This topic truly symbolizes the importance of collaboration between State and USAID in recognizing the strong linkages between diplomacy and implementation. The scope, as you've already heard this afternoon, of ocean plastics is profound. Marine debris, it's estimated that 80 percent of this debris is plastic and an estimated 8 million metric tons of plastic enter the ocean every year. Notably, 80 percent of that plastic comes from land-based sources.

Much of this plastic comes from cities and developing countries that lack the capacity to effectively manage their waste. In low-income countries, approximately 90 percent of waste is disposed of in unregulated dumps or just openly burned.

As the world's premier international development agency, USAID is well positioned to support our developing country partners. We focus on locally-led solutions and advance their journey to self-reliance.

Our programs reflect the fact that solving this problem requires involvement and action on the part of all stakeholders with a role in waste management, national, local governments, civil society and the private sector.

USAID's Municipal Waste Recycling Program launched in 2016 has provided grants to 30 locally-led NGO projects with innovative and sustainable solutions in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

In Vietnam, which we are so pleased that you had the chance to visit, our grantees have helped inform a new national action plan on marine plastics debris management. Launched last year, our flagship global program, Clean Cities, Blue Ocean, builds upon our initial set of four partner countries in Asia while expanding to Latin America by adding Maldives, India, Peru, and the Dominican Republic.

In addition to providing grants to these local organizations, Clean Cities, Blue Ocean is providing specialized technical expertise to enable private sector engagement, investment in infrastructure while ensuring greater government transparency and improved local enforcement of regulations.

USAID also recognizes that the resources and innovations of the private sector are needed to achieve greater impact. This year, USAID launched a partnership with the Alliance to End Plastic Waste. This coalition of 47 multinational companies has committed \$1.5 billion to the mission of ending plastic waste in the environment.

USAID also recently launched a blended finance partnership with impact investors Circulate Capital. This leverages more than \$100 million from multinational companies, such as PepsiCo, Dow, Proctor & Gamble, and Coca-Cola, to catalyze investments in the recycling value chain in Southeast Asia.

I'm pleased to report that Circulate Capital recently announced their first investment deal, a loan to a woman-owned recycling startup company in Indonesia.

In closing, while the challenge of preventing ocean plastics is daunting and it is significant, we are seeing success through our programs and our partnerships. To date, our efforts have diverted more than 3,000 metric tons of plastic from entering the environment and with interest and missions all around the world eager to

engage, USAID is well placed to support the U.S. Government in confronting ocean plastic pollution and achieving sustainable results.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MICHELLE BEKKERING

OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, Distinguished Members of this subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the important role the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) plays in preventing and reducing ocean plastic pollution. It is an honor to be here with you today. USAID is grateful for the ongoing collaboration with this subcommittee as we work to align our programming in this area with the scope and complexity of the challenge.

THE PROBLEM OF OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION AND THE DEVELOPING WORLD

The scope of the marine debris challenge is profound. An estimated 80 percent of this debris is plastic, and by 2050 there may be more plastic than fish by weight in the ocean. Dr. Jenna Jambeck's pioneering study from 2015 estimated that eight million metric tons of plastic enter the ocean every year, 80 percent of which comes from land-based sources. This same study highlighted that the developing world is at the heart of this global challenge. Solving this problem requires a strategy that employs a holistic approach to solid waste management that creates a financially sustainable value chain for recyclable materials. Recognizing that plastic is an important and unique component of the waste stream, lasting prevention and reduction of ocean pollution is only accomplished when all components of the solid waste stream are managed effectively.

The speed and scale of population growth, urbanization, and economic expansion in the developing world has led to an unintended consequence: a dramatic increase in waste. By 2050, waste generated in low-income countries alone is expected to triple. Yet while solid-waste management often comprises 20 percent or more of municipal budgets in developing countries, less than half of all waste is collected. The waste-collection that does happen often depends on the urban poor, who serve as "waste-pickers" in the informal sector. In low-income countries, approximately 90 percent of waste is disposed of in unregulated dumps, or is openly burned.

The result is that much of the plastic that enters the ocean each year comes from cities and municipalities in developing countries that lack the systems, policies, infrastructure, and innovations necessary to manage their waste effectively.

Exacerbating an already-challenging situation, these local systems have little resilience to external shocks. The current pandemic, for example, is stressing waste-management systems in many countries. Responding to COVID-19 has resulted in an increase in the amount of waste generated—particularly disposable plastic products like masks and take-out food containers—while simultaneously disrupting the essential services provided by informal waste-collection workers.

Addressing waste-management at the municipal level is also particularly challenging because there is no one-size-fits-all solution—any solution has to be tailored to the local context, and what works in one community might not work in another. It requires convening all stakeholders involved in local waste-management: governments—especially city and municipal ones—as well as civil society; local communities; and, most important, the private sector, including local grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, national and multinational companies in the plastics value-chain, and investors. Governments also often lack capacity: to develop appropriate policies and regulations; to find sustainable financing solutions; to implement the enforcement, transparency and accountability needed to attract the private sector; and to encourage and sustain behavior change in the public.

USAID recognizes that public resources alone will not solve these challenges. Developing countries need the financial resources, technical expertise, and global networks of the private sector to help drive innovation, catalyze investment in needed infrastructure, and create more sustainable business models. To that end, USAID is forging innovative partnerships with businesses—large and small; local and multinational—across waste-management and recycling value-chains around the world.

USAID is pleased with the strong bipartisan support in Congress, especially the Members of this subcommittee, to increase international engagement to prevent

ocean plastic pollution. We also are pleased the Save Our Seas Act of 2018 acknowledged the complexities of addressing this challenge globally. The law set the stage for increased U.S. Government efforts, and encouraged USAID to expand our programming on this issue. USAID appreciates the close cooperation with the Members of this subcommittee and the authors of the Save Our Seas 2.0, which makes it clear that improved capacity underlies a lasting solution to this challenge.

#### USAID’S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION

Waste-management is almost always the responsibility of local governments and communities. So solutions to the challenge of ocean plastics must start at the local level in the cities and towns where most ocean plastic pollution originates.

That is where we typically focus our efforts at USAID:

- Working with local governments to improve waste-management services so that less plastic ends up in the water;
- Working with local schools and community groups to change behavior around recycling and the proper disposal of waste disposal;
- Working with local companies to promote new innovations and business models; and
- Working with informal waste-collectors, who are often women, and form an essential part of the waste-management system in the countries where we work.

In other words, we work on locally led solutions to help communities in target countries solve their own development challenges—what we call the Journey to Self-Reliance, which is our guiding approach as an Agency.

Ocean plastic pollution is an important issue for USAID, because, if not addressed, mismanaged waste can undermine USAID’s core development objectives in the environment, governance, economic growth, and health. In support of the U.S. Government’s efforts to combat marine debris and improve plastic waste management, USAID focuses on three pillars of action:

- Build national capacity for the management of solid waste and the “3Rs” (reduce, reuse, recycle);
- Incentivize recycling in collaboration with the private sector, while empowering women and protecting workers; and
- Promote innovation and investment in locally appropriate business models, technologies, and infrastructure.

Much of our work focuses in Asia, which is home to the top five largest ocean-plastic polluting countries, who collectively produce an estimated 23 percent of the world’s waste. We are also increasingly expanding our efforts in Latin America in countries like the Republic of Perú and the Dominican Republic and exploring programming options in Haiti through an assessment of solid-waste management.

We are implementing this strategy through a suite of programs and collaborations:

#### USAID’S CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN

Launched last year, our flagship, 5-year, \$48 million global program, Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO), has an initial set of eight partner countries in Asia and Latin America: the Dominican Republic; the Republics of India, Indonesia, Maldives, The Philippines, and Perú; the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Implemented by Tetra Tech, CCBO offers state-of-the-art international technical expertise and sustainable, locally led solutions through its local-grants program. CCBO is organized around four primary objectives to achieve between 2019 and 2024:

First, promote reducing, reusing, and recycling—the “3Rs”—and strengthen markets for recycled plastic. The “3Rs” and improved waste-management systems are effective ways of reducing the volume of plastic that flows into our oceans and waterways, but rely on strong, incentivized recycling markets, supportive infrastructure, and a suitable enabling environment. To accomplish this, CCBO works to identify and establish incentives for strengthened markets for reuse and recycling, improve infrastructure through locally relevant innovative technologies, and enhance service-delivery models for increased efficiency and revenues. The program prioritizes locally centered strategies that empower individuals, provide increased economic opportunity for women and men, and address sectoral health and safety challenges.

Second, improve local implementation and enforcement of laws, policies, and regulations. Although many countries have local- and national-level laws to safeguard public health and the environment, regulate the management and reduction of

waste, and even incentivize and strengthen markets for recycling and reuse, implementation and enforcement often suffers from limited support, resources, and systemic complexity. CCBO supports partners in the eight focal countries to develop, implement, and enforce regulatory measures that address local challenges; improve financing options; and enhance the livelihoods of the millions who work in, or are otherwise affected by, the sector.

Third, build social and behavior change for the “3Rs” and sustainable solid-waste management. CCBO works to shift ingrained behaviors around recycling and the disposal of solid waste in households, businesses, and governments. The program uses a participatory approach, by working hand in hand with community members, local organizations, women, youth, and independent waste-collectors, with support from both the public and private sectors.

Fourth, forge new private-sector partnerships for improved impact, sustainability, and forward-looking commitments. Around the world, momentum and interest in combating ocean plastics pollution is rapidly increasing; however, we cannot solve this problem alone. Success depends on strong partnerships, good coordination, and improved evidence about what solutions are most effective, and in which contexts. CCBO works to build sustainable partnerships, increase the capacity and knowledge of those that can offer support, and garner commitments from the public sector, multi-stakeholder alliances, and intergovernmental organizations for continued progress—within and beyond the program’s lifetime.

In collaboration with global, regional, national, and local stakeholders, CCBO will test, scale, and share inclusive and sustainable solutions to promote “3R” practices, improve the management of waste, and combat plastic pollution in key countries at the heart of the crisis of ocean plastic pollution.

CCBO is dedicated to identifying local challenges, opportunities, and practices to develop locally relevant solutions tailored to individual public- and private-sector actors, local realities, community members, and waste value-chains.

#### USAID’S MUNICIPAL-WASTE RECYCLING PROGRAM

The Municipal-Waste Recycling Program (MWRP), launched by USAID in October 2016, has provided grants to 30 locally led projects with innovative and sustainable solutions in Indonesia, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. According to the 2015 Jambeck report, these four nations are the top source countries of ocean plastics after the People’s Republic of China: in total, they contribute more than 3.4 million metric tons of mismanaged plastic waste each year.

Managed by a small business, Development Innovations Group, MWRP’s grants have focused on three key topics:

1. Strengthening local actors and their collaboration to render urban systems more effective in managing solid waste and reducing marine plastics pollution;
2. Applied research to identify locally appropriate technology and improve decisionmaking processes related to the recycling and management of urban solid waste; and
3. Enabling the private sector to develop and implement market-driven solutions to marine plastics pollution and strengthen the recycling value-chain.

MWRP grantees have supported governments, national and local, of the four target countries in reviewing, revising, and strengthening enforcement of existing laws and regulations and introducing new regulations. More than 40 local governments across Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam have committed to combating plastic waste. The accomplishments of the 30 MWRP grantees include creating more than 1,300 jobs in solid-waste management, more than half of which have gone to women; recycling more than 3,100 metric tons of plastic waste; improving working conditions for more than 2,500 independent waste-collectors; and engaging more than 96,000 youth and more than 163,000 households, businesses, and schools on improving their waste-management behaviors.

MWRP is developing valuable lessons learned from these grant projects that inform not just USAID’s broader efforts on this issue, but also those of the global community, including other donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and national governments. USAID is sharing these lessons actively in various national, regional and international fora, such as the Fisheries and Chemical Working Groups of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum. USAID also has shared lessons learned in Asia with other regions, such as with the Workshop on Marine Debris held under the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA–DR).

## PRIVATE-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

USAID firmly believes that private enterprise is the single most-powerful force for lifting lives, strengthening communities, and accelerating self-reliance. As such, working collaboratively with the private sector is central to USAID's approach to combating ocean plastic pollution. USAID's development expertise helps private-sector solutions to flourish by addressing foundational issues, like improving governance, supporting policy and regulatory reforms, and incentivizing innovation and behavior change within host countries.

This year, USAID launched a partnership with the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, a coalition of more than 40 leading companies that have committed to invest \$1.5 billion towards solutions to end plastic waste. This partnership is exciting because it brings together companies from across the globe involved in all stages of the plastics value-chain—including businesses that make, use, sell, process, collect, and recycle plastics, as well as retailers and consumer-goods and waste-management companies. Through CCBO, USAID and the Alliance will deploy innovative, locally appropriate technologies, infrastructure, and business models to improve waste-management and recycling in cities and communities at the heart of the crisis in ocean plastics pollution. Our partnership will also work to improve the livelihoods, health, and safety of waste workers—both formal and informal.

USAID also recently launched a blended-finance partnership with impact investor Circulate Capital to catalyze investment in the recycling value-chain in South and Southeast Asia. To incentivize and de-risk additional lending in this sector, USAID is providing a \$35 million, 50-percent loan-portfolio guarantee through the U.S. International Development Financing Corporation (DFC). The partial loan guarantee is a tool designed to attract private capital to a blended-finance fund and offer protection to investors by lowering the downside risk of loss, which makes investment in developing markets more appealing. As a result, Circulate Capital has been able to raise more than \$100 million from multinational companies such as PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, Dow, Coca-Cola, Chevron Phillips, Danone, and Unilever to invest in much-needed recycling businesses and infrastructure.

I am pleased to note that, in April 2020, Circulate Capital made its first loan backed by this guarantee to Tridi Oasis, an Indonesia-based, women-owned recycling company. Tridi Oasis recycles plastic bottles into new packaging and textiles that are made of recycled plastic. This investment will enable the company to set up a larger recycling facility and expand operations to recycle additional types of plastic, and is particularly meaningful because it aligns with another priority for USAID: women's economic empowerment.

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

While the challenge of ocean plastics is clear, one important aspect of the solution is often overlooked—the role of women. From waste-pickers to recycling entrepreneurs, educators to advocates, women play a crucial role in improving the systems, policies and practices for how we manage plastic waste.

I am proud that all of our programs and partnerships have a strong focus on empowering women as entrepreneurs and decision-makers in the traditionally male-dominated waste-management sector, like the Tridi Oasis investment under Circulate Capital. Women also play an important role in household decisionmaking. For example, in Sri Lanka, our local partner is working with 17 community-based organizations to train women leaders in household waste-management, recycling and composting. These community organizations are, in turn, training thousands of their neighbors in separating waste at the source and linking them to independent waste-collectors that are operating in their communities.

In Vietnam, our local partner collaborated with the Women's Union in Da Nang city to recycle more than 42 metric tons of plastic waste that previously went uncollected. Engagement with female neighborhood leaders helped gain community buy-in to improve the management of solid waste.

## RESULTS FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenge of ocean plastics. Achieving progress requires local solutions tailored to the unique contexts of each country and region. Understanding the unique dynamics, constraints and opportunities in each locality is essential for successful programming. For that reason, I would like to provide some additional detail on promising results from a few key countries of interest.

### *Vietnam*

Vietnam is the fourth-largest source of ocean plastics pollution. Its growing urban populations and demand for consumer goods with increased plastic packaging continue to outpace its waste system's capacities, which has led to environmental leakage. With rapid urbanization, especially in the last decade, Vietnam's urban population is expected to surpass its number of rural residents by 2050.

Vietnam has a coastline of more than 2,100 miles and sits astride the Mekong and Red Rivers, which pick up plastics from communities along their paths and ultimately flow through to the ocean. To address the already crisis levels of plastics in marine and other natural environments and prepare for continued urban growth, Vietnam must shift to a more robust waste-collection, recycling, and disposal system with enhanced infrastructure, more sustainable production and consumption habits, and strengthened or alternative markets for recycled and reusable products.

In Vietnam, USAID's grantees have helped inform a new *National Action Plan on the Management of Marine Plastic Debris*, issued in late 2019. The national plan includes efforts to scale good practices in the collection, separation, transportation, and treatment of plastic waste in coastal and marine areas; facilitate the development of suitable facilities to collect and store solid waste; mobilize international and private-sector partnerships to produce alternative products, increase recycling, and shift to a circular economy and green growth; and research, develop, apply, and transfer technologies and techniques to treat and minimize ocean plastics. USAID's CCBO program will aim to build on MWRP's successes and support Vietnam's National Action Plan. CCBO will focus work in Phu Quoc, Da Nang, Bien Hoa, and Hue City.

MWRP's grantees in Vietnam have engaged in private-sector partnerships to reduce plastic waste, empowered women and independent waste-collectors, created local models of cleaning up cities that can be scaled, and developed effective local and national policies. An MWRP grantee in Ho Chi Minh City improved the livelihoods, health, and working conditions of more than 1,900 independent waste-collectors, including by successfully advocating to double fees paid by households to these collectors. Empowering women and independent waste-collectors helped initiate the segregation of waste in more than 68,000 households and establishments across all MWRP's target cities in Vietnam and diverted more than 1,100 metric tons of plastic waste from the ocean.

### *The Philippines*

The Philippines—composed of more than 7,500 islands—is the world's third-largest plastic polluter of the marine environment. Keeping waste out of the ocean is a challenge because of rising consumer consumption—with the country generating 2.7 million tons of plastic waste annually—and ineffective waste-management systems. Much of the country's solid waste ends up in open dumping sites, which allow leakage to waterways and threaten livelihoods in key sectors such as tourism and fishing.

National laws, such as the Republic Act (RA) 9003/Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, and local regulations around the management of solid waste have been in place in the Philippines for many years. However, local government units that are responsible for waste-management have inadequate financial resources, limited capacities for enforcement, and low public awareness of the harmful impacts of plastics in the environment. Across the Philippines, local governments struggle to keep pace with the volumes of waste being generated, including the more than 163 million single-serving plastic "sachets" bought especially by the urban poor for their daily needs like shampoo, coffee, and oil.

In the Philippines, CCBO seeks to develop, test, and implement new models that promote the "3Rs" and enhance the management of solid waste; facilitate partnerships and investment around key needs, such as infrastructure; and strengthen local systems to build the Philippines' resiliency and self-reliance. CCBO will focus work in Metro Manila, Batangas City, and Iloilo City.

MWRP's grantees in the Philippines worked to support the cleanup of Manila Bay, achieve impact through private-sector partnerships, introduce the innovative delivery and scaling of zero-waste approaches, and develop effective policies and infrastructure. For example, SM Supermalls, which owns and operates 74 malls nationwide that welcome 4.3 million visitors a day and, through social media, reach an additional four million people, worked with an MWRP grantee to carry out information and communication initiatives in 50 malls around Manila Bay. Through exhibits, movies, and social media, millions of mall tenants and customers are learning about the issue of mismanaged plastic waste. In Bacolod City and nearby towns on the Visayan island of Negros in the center of the country, an MWRP grantee is reducing plastic packaging from consumer products by establishing eight zero-waste

convenience stores (called *Wala Usik*—“Nothing Wasted”—in the local language of Hiligaynon) where consumers buy bulk products by using their own reusable containers.

#### *Indonesia*

Research shows that Indonesia contributes as much as 1.29 million metric tons of plastic waste to the ocean annually, which makes it the world’s second-largest polluter by total mass of mismanaged plastic debris. The Government of Indonesia is pursuing national-level strategies and policies for the management of solid waste and is implementing a national action plan to address ocean plastic pollution. Local governments, though, often lack the funding needed to implement city-level initiatives. As the fourth-most populous nation in the world and a nation with a massive coastal population, Indonesia represents a critical opportunity to confront the challenge of ocean plastic pollution.

MWRP’s grantees in Indonesia have focused on establishing partnerships with the private sector, bolstering sustainability and self-reliance in their communities, developing scalable models for effective and inclusive waste-management, and using geospatial data and technology in innovative ways to confront the challenge of ocean plastic pollution. For example, one of the MWRP’s grantees is providing geospatial data to the city government of Denpasar, crowdsourced by youth volunteers through a mobile app that helps the city map transfer points and illegal dumping sites. These data are helping build the capacity of the municipal government and the private sector to improve the collection and recycling of plastic waste. Also, in Semarang in Central Java, an MWRP grantee launched a public-private partnership between local authorities; 54 local waste banks that are serving more than 6,500 households; and companies, including the major food-manufacturing company PT Indofood. The partnership with PT Indofood specifically focuses on increasing the recycling of low-value plastics, such as noodle wrappers, to reduce the leakage of plastic waste into the city’s waterways. In Kepulauan Seribu (the “Thousand Islands”), north of Jakarta, an MWRP grantee is expanding recycling services by connecting the informal sector to recycling companies. The MWRP grantee, with the private sector, is also promoting bulk sales in stores where customers can refill reusable containers with daily household products to reduce plastic packaging waste, which is especially important on small islands where the first step is to reduce the volume of plastic waste to manage.

#### LOOKING FORWARD

Throughout all our activities, USAID identifies and pilots innovative approaches; employs rigorous evaluation and metrics to identify what works and what does not work; and gathers and shares the evidence with partners, other donors, and the private sector to scale up programs that are effective and efficient.

While the challenge is daunting, there are tremendous opportunities. USAID has significantly increased our work to address these challenges, and we will continue to expand our investments in this area using well-designed, sustainable approaches at the national and sub-national levels to make progress on the ground and reduce waste. With Missions around the world eager to engage, USAID is well-placed to support the USG in playing a leading role to confront ocean plastic pollution.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Leahy, you can lead us off. I’ll just go at the end.

Senator LEAHY. I’m worried about the amount of resources USAID allocates for ocean plastic pollution programs. USAID is planning to spend \$12 million on waste recycling and ocean plastic pollution programs in fiscal year 2020. That’s \$12 million for the whole world. We probably spend that much in my small State of Vermont.

If Congress gave you double or triple those resources, how would USAID use them to more effectively address ocean plastic pollution?

Ms. BEKKERING. Well, Senator Leahy, thank you for the question and—

Senator LEAHY. And tell Senator Graham, too, because we’re going to write the bill together.

Ms. BEKKERING. Well, then I'll tell Senator Graham, as well.

No, really, and first of all, I can't overestimate we really are so thankful for the strong support we have gotten from this subcommittee specifically for the resources we have to date.

Senator Graham, you know a gentleman named Mark Green, and I know you have heard this from him in many testimonies over the last couple years. There's never going to be enough money in our public resources to meet all of our development challenges.

What I think we have been very good at doing is being very strategic in targeting our investments specifically to the four biggest offenders of contributing to plastic waste.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, the question was if you had more money, could you wisely use it?

Ms. BEKKERING. Absolutely.

So what we would do is definitely increase our footprint. That will be the biggest challenge.

You heard earlier right now Asia is the largest contributor. Latin America and Africa are close on its heels and by 2050 we're going to see the amount triple. We would increase our footprints, working with our missions and partner countries on this.

We would also increase the amount of work we're doing with local stakeholders. We need to invest more money in working to build the capacity of the local governments to make sure these results are sustainable.

So these investments actually need to cross sectors. We need to look at more of how this affects livelihoods as well as food security and, finally, we need to increase our engagement in partnerships with the private sector to harness their capital.

Senator LEAHY. Well, let's talk about joining with other countries. I'd direct this question to the Ambassador, too.

What kind of international agreements on ocean pollution is the U.S. party to now, and do those international agreements allow us to advocate for stronger controls along the lines of what you just discussed?

Ms. BEKKERING. So I would have to defer that question to my colleague at the State Department.

Before I do that, what I will say is USAID's unique role in that is working with the local and subnational governments on action plans so that (1) they're mobilizing their own resources to invest in waste management systems and, secondly, to make sure they are actually providing regular waste disposal and recycling.

So our work is more focused on individual countries, but I'll defer—

Senator LEAHY. Well, a lot of our waste has been sorted for recycling and sent to poorer countries that don't know how to handle it. There's a lot more we have to be doing here, too, to stop producing so much waste.

But I want to focus on the basic question. What international associations or agreements are we involved in that would give us a voice and a responsibility in reducing ocean pollution?

Mr. MOORE. Well, Senator, thank you for the question. One international agreement that we are tracking closely on this issue and it relates, as well, to the important issue of trade in recycled materials between the United States and its immediate neighbors, in-

cluding Vermont's neighbor to the north, Canada, is the Basel Convention and its amendments on plastic waste that does regulate the matter of trade in plastic waste.

The United States, however, is not a party to the Basel Convention. One direct consequence of that is that as of January 1, 2021, there will be changes that will make it much more difficult for the United States to export plastic scrap. So we do have to deal with the countries who are part of the Basel Convention. Although the Convention dates from about 30 years ago, we're not actually a party to it.

In terms of discussions in different multilateral fora and, of course, with any number of countries bilaterally, we are trying to deal with these issues and we have many embassies actively engaged and, of course, USAID.

Senator LEAHY. Would it help if we were party to the Basel Convention?

Mr. MOORE. The Administration does not have a view on that. That is something that would require a tremendous amount of domestic implementing legislation. We are certainly prepared to be part of that discussion.

Senator LEAHY. Okay. I have follow-up questions, but I'll submit them for the record, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Senator Leahy.

Senator Boozman.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you both for being here. Every one of us here wishes we could wave a magic wand and make the situation better. I know we can't, but I think we all agree that we and the rest of the world need to work together to deal with this.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. I agree.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you, Lindsey.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, sir.

Senator Boozman.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Leahy, for holding this important hearing.

We appreciate you all being here, appreciate all of your hard work.

Myself and Senator Carper are co-chairs of the Recycling Caucus which is very, very active. I'm on lots of caucuses. I think that's probably one of the most active in the Senate and really is doing a lot of good work.

Ms. Bekkering, again, you know, recycling is such a no-brainer. It's a win-win situation. What a lot of people don't realize is that it also creates a lot of good jobs in relation to recycling. So you get the benefit of cleaning up the oceans, cleaning up and so many other things, which we all want, but it also is a big economic engine.

Can you talk a little bit about that?

Ms. BEKKERING. Absolutely. And again thank you for your leadership on the issues specifically with recycling.

So to your point, so when I look at the Municipal Waste Recycling Program, to date we have created 1,300 jobs and 50 percent of those jobs have actually been for women, so offering them, you know, just a vital source of economic empowerment.

But it is primarily an issue. So when we look at the countries in the developing world and we specifically look at where in many local communities and especially rural areas, there is not regulated waste services or management—there we see. We see the informal sector.

So what we have done is (1) provide safety training and livelihood training for what we call these informal waste pickers. We've also worked in countries like Indonesia to create what we call waste banks, so that these informal waste collectors can collect plastics, deposit them at this waste bank and then, much like here where in some States you get a deposit for each piece, they get paid for what they deposit in this waste bank and then we connect that, of course, to a larger facility so there's economy of scale.

So it really can't be overestimated specifically noting how much of this is done by really the urban poor in many countries. This is an area where we really have seen results in supporting this economic livelihoods aspect.

Senator BOOZMAN. Very good. I know another key is industry and Walmart Headquarters is probably about three or four miles from where I live. So I know that in their case, they got very active with wanting to reduce fuel consumption, which is great for the environment, but also wanting to reduce the packaging.

So it turned out that when they looked at what the trucks were hauling, it wasn't weight that was the limiting factor, it was the capacity on the truck, and so they basically said, we sell a lot of your products, make the packages smaller, and as a result that came about and then others followed in with that. So that was certainly a win-win situation.

I know the Every Bottle Back Initiative is a great initiative which has resulted in plastic bottles being 100 percent recyclable, including bottle caps that consumers may still be throwing in the trash, which will give them a little bit of education, which we all need.

But tell us, to your knowledge, how industry can be helpful particularly in places like Asia.

Ms. BEKKERING. It's a great question and it's honestly why we have focused really one of our three pillars under this on working with the private sector and working with industries.

You know, the public sector cannot solve this problem on its own. We really do need to work with the private sector and to your point, using the Walmart example, one of the things we see by working with the private sector is we can really harness not only their resources but their innovations and those innovations are fantastic.

It's working with them as partners. So in a case like that, it's reducing the amount of packaging or it's making sure that we can provide more than, you know, single-use packets of any sort of item.

We recently, as I mentioned earlier, signed an MOU last month with the Alliance to End Plastic Waste and I think what's been such a success story is seeing that a lot of these leading companies in the plastics value chain, they're committed to the same outcomes we are, which is making sure this plastic does not end up in the

ocean, and again by harnessing their innovations and their resources, we're really multiplying our impact.

Senator BOOZMAN. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member.

I just want to thank you for your leadership in addressing issues that are bipartisan, that are global, that have an impact on development and on the human condition, and to Senator Boozman for working so well with my senior Senator on recycling when he was governor. My senior Senator was known for interrupting meetings to get up, walk over and pull a plastic bottle out of the trash can and sort of berate everyone. He is quite passionate about it. I'm glad you are, as well, and your focus on working with a global leader like Walmart on helping them change packaging is just the kind of example of a positive personal engagement with the private sector that it's going to take to make progress on this. So thank you.

To our witnesses today, thank you for what you're doing to deliver engagement and leadership at State and AID on this critical issue.

As I'm sure you both are abundantly aware, this is a global issue that knows no boundaries and is going to require significant increase in American leadership, engagement, and investment in order to bend the curve.

I am the co-sponsor of a bill called The Sustainable Chemistry Research and Development Act. I trained as a chemist. I worked in industry for years. Senator Collins and I have been working on this for awhile and part of the goal is just to do more of the work, coordinate more of the work between Federal, academic, and private sector research around the chemistries that are needed to develop plastics that degrade in the marine environment, among many other changes.

I also think Save Our Seas 2.0, which was addressed by Senators Sullivan and Whitehouse, who were here before I arrived, would be a significant step forward in terms of increasing our investment.

Let me ask two questions of you, if I could. PROBLUE is a World Bank Initiative that supports the sustainable development of coastal resources and my impression is they're emerging as a large player in the fight against ocean plastic pollution.

How important do you think this initiative is or could be to the global effort, and how do you think the U.S. can best support PROBLUE? If you would, Ms. Bekkering, and then Ambassador Moore.

Ms. BEKKERING. Great. Well, again, thank you for your leadership and thank you for your participation in today's hearing.

So the PROBLUE Fund, we know of it. We coordinate with it at USAID, and it is definitely one way to increase donor coordination and pool resources.

I would just mention, though, that USAID has gift authority, which actually allows us to accept and pool funding from other donors as well as other multilateral platforms, and when it comes to something like, let's say, a global fund like this, especially a multilateral fund, the one thing I would say is I think, you know, at USAID, we're really targeted at looking what part of the challenge can be best served by the work we're doing on the ground with our

partners directly, also recognizing, frankly, that it gives us more oversight over how we're spending our taxpayer dollars than if we put it in a pooled fund that's managed by an IFI (International Financial Institution).

So again working with them, but I would say outside of even something like PROBLUE, we are able to do this type of work and we are working and we're constantly in, you know, communications with our other partners, like the U.K., Japan, Norway, to see what more can be done and how we can—

Senator COONS. So if there were a significant increase in U.S. taxpayer investment to create a global fund, would you instead suggest it be housed at USAID in order to accomplish the oversight of the funds, the coordination that you were just referencing?

Ms. BEKKERING. I think in such a fund we could definitely, yes, see maximum impact and a multiplier effect of the great work we're already doing with limited resources.

Senator COONS. Ambassador Moore.

Mr. MOORE. Senator, thank you for the question. From a State Department perspective, the World Bank PROBLUE Fund currently supports a variety of ocean fisheries-related activities and some of them are related exactly to the question we're discussing today.

Sort of an initial thought on this. We're a little concerned with their advocacy to reduce upstream production and use of plastics that could undermine the growing recycling market. We look forward to working with them, though, as we work with the World Bank in a variety of levels.

As a possible alternative, the Global Environmental Facility would be a strong alternative to PROBLUE. The GEF is uniquely positioned to advance U.S. priorities on marine litter pollution and we're a member of the GEF Council. We've had a long history of shaping its programming to advance U.S. interests. So that might be a way of looking at it.

The bottom line is we're in discussions with the World Bank about PROBLUE. There's a little bit of skepticism, including on the issues back and forth about the potential for recycling and what's produced, but we are tracking that initiative.

Senator COONS. Well, as we've worked to address things like global hunger or global pandemics, global funds have often been a tool used and some of them are structured in ways that really ensure American leadership, engagement, and direction. Some of them are engaged in ways that recognize that there are limits to where we can go.

There are certain countries where our engagement in hunger relief isn't welcomed and so it's got to be done through a U.N. entity and we've got our own direct support and there's global partnerships.

In pandemic work, there's also a very constructive, I think, feedback loop between what philanthropy is doing, what the U.S. Government is doing, and what the private sector is doing, and what the world community is doing.

Let me ask specifically, if I could, about ghost gear. My father spent 25 years in the commercial fishing industry and fishing gear that's discarded at sea that keeps having negative impacts, as you

talked about at length, is closely associated with other problems that illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing cause.

I thought it was great that you signed on to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, but I'd be interested in hearing what more you think State and USAID can do with partners in the international fishing community to both address this key part of ocean pollution but also to strengthen our coordination around IUU fishing.

Mr. MOORE. Senator Coons, thank you for that question, as well.

I was very happy to sign on to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative recently on behalf of the State Department and the United States. We are in these early days learning what their best approaches are for dealing with this issue. It's something else that we're learning about, as well.

As you mentioned, it relates to IUU fishing. It creates hazards for navigation. It's a very comprehensive issue. These nets are out there catching fish that are not being consumed and further damaging the environment.

It's an international coalition that we're pleased to be part of and as they develop these ideas, we're working with, of course, our colleagues in the interagency, Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA, as well, to better understand the scope of the problem and the impact that ghost gear is having.

It is something that is sort of new for us to be taking on. So exactly speculating on the scope of how we can best play a role, I'm not in a position to do that today. I'm prepared to follow up with you or your staff after today with further information and to take the question for more detail.

Senator COONS. I just will close, if I could, by saying how pleased I was to see just the range of engagement from UNEP and the Peace Corps doing community-based activities all over the world and littoral communities to what you were testifying about in terms of Circulate Capital and what impact investors are doing, to what some of the largest, most globally-integrated companies that have an American footprint are doing.

So please note my passionate interest in the field and my interest in working with both of you and with your offices to help advance it and with the Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today and for your interest in this important subject.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, thank you. You've been terrific to work with on this.

So, Senator Shaheen, I'll be very quick. Here's my take-away. Is it \$12 million that we allocate for this?

Ms. BEKKERING. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. That's going to end. So we're going to give you a lot more money.

Ms. BEKKERING. Okay.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Ms. BEKKERING. The answer is yes.

Senator GRAHAM. We're going to give you a lot more money.

The Basel Agreement Convention, is that what you said, Mr. Moore?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. How old is that?

Mr. MOORE. It dates from around 1989 or 1990.

Senator GRAHAM. Don't you think we need a new one?

Mr. MOORE. We'd be happy to have a further discussion on that. No Administration since that time has chosen to join the Convention.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, so if we don't like that one, let's create a new one.

Mr. MOORE. I don't want to speculate, Mr. Chairman, but to find a way forward, we're certainly happy to discuss that directly with you.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. It seems to me this would be an issue that the world should come together on. I know there's probably business interests in different countries that feel put upon, but I'd like you to report back to us about why no Administration joined this Convention, you know, give me a page or two, and what would you do to replace it, because being left out is not a good place to be, right? Maybe there's a good reason nobody's joined it, but somebody needs to join something, you know.

We're the biggest like fish in the sea, no pun intended, and we need to get in the game here.

So the global fund idea, I really think the subcommittee is very inclined to put some money in a global fund and we need your feedback as to how we can control it and entice other donors. It's worked, you know, in dealing with AIDS and malaria and I think this is a good place for this subcommittee to lay down a new marker, and put some money in that would entice others.

As to the PROBLUE Multi-Donor Trust Fund, what's the average contribution of Canada, the U.K., Germany, and France? Do you know?

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, I do not.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Mr. MOORE. I can find out.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. If you would, I'd appreciate it.

[The information follows:]

As of July 2020, the PROBLUE fund has secured donor commitments worth \$109,347,387. The U.K. is not a current donor.

Current PROBLUE donors include:

Canada .....	\$46,436,210
Sweden .....	\$31,261,420
Norway .....	\$20,861,385
Germany .....	\$5,472,810
Denmark .....	\$2,956,437
Iceland .....	\$1,400,000
France .....	\$959,125

Senator GRAHAM. What I want to find out is why we're not participating. There may be a good reason, but it seems to me that we need to join something, but we're not joining anything. So we've got \$12 million. I'm not blaming you. This has been going on for a long time. So what I'd like to have happen is for us to start joining things or create new things for others to join that we lead, have the Congress more involved in terms of a global fund that would attract investors, and I want to know why we don't participate in

the PROBLUE Trust Fund. Can you give me a 30-second answer why we don't?

Mr. MOORE. There hasn't been a decision to fully participate because of some of the speculation, as I understand it, that the PROBLUE Fund has focused more on what should or shouldn't be produced rather than dealing with what actually has been produced and constitutes the plastic waste.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, it seems to me you might need to do both, right?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. So I would encourage you to try to join this thing, unless there's just really not a good reason to do it, and I think this subcommittee would put some money in to pay whatever fee it is to join. So my take-aways are that \$12 million's not nearly enough, the problem is global in nature, the global fund would be a good start for this subcommittee, and I think the Congress and the administration should start leading by example, and if you could get back with me as to why we're not in the PROBLUE Trust Fund or the Basel Convention, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. MOORE. I will do that, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. And I'll end with this. I think all of us want to do more and if we can't join these organizations, let's find out why we can't and see if they'll change or create an alternative that we can join, because we need to lead the world on this.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this very important hearing today. Thank you to our witnesses for testifying. I'm sorry I missed much of the questioning.

I do want to follow up a little bit on the Chairman's comments, but first I want to pick up on a comment that you made, Ambassador Moore, that I didn't really understand. You talked about the growing recycling market.

It's my understanding that only about 9 percent of all plastic waste generated has been recycled and that current projections show a dramatic increase in the production of plastic and that many of the markets where we were sending our plastic in the United States have dried up. So that in China and a number of the other Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, have all reduced the markets for recycling.

So I was just curious what you were referring to when you talked about the growing recycling market.

Mr. MOORE. Senator Shaheen, thank you for the question. I had the opportunity in my testimony to talk about this a bit.

It's our understanding, including through the Department of Commerce, that the recycling market is actually expanding. That includes here in the United States, that the global recycling market will have a value of \$530 billion by the year 2025.

Senator SHAHEEN. I'm sorry. Can you give us a little more detail when you say the recycling markets are expanding in the United States? I know that we have had in New Hampshire several recycling operations that are no longer operating now. Can you talk about where that's happening and who's behind it, what's the capital or the companies that are doing that?

Mr. MOORE. Senator, thank you for the question, and I respect your interest in having greater detail. I apologize I don't have greater detail with me. I would be happy to take the question and provide specific information to you, but this relates to, for example, cross-border trade between Canada and the United States in recycled materials.

One of the issues is there's more interest in recycling if it's more economically advantageous to do that. No business seeks the opportunity if the materials to be recycled become priced out of the market either because of transport costs or other economic limitations, then the market does actually reduce and then there's less commercial or economic motivation to recycle.

So those are factors, but with regard to specific information, I recognize that you should have details and I will provide them to you and your staff as a taken question.

Senator SHAHEEN. That would be great. If you could take that for the record, —

Mr. MOORE. Yes.

Senator SHAHEEN [continuing]. I'd appreciate it.

I do want to follow up on Senator Graham's questions about international cooperation because this administration has pulled the United States away from a number of international cooperative efforts and it seems to me that on an issue like how we get rid of plastics worldwide is something that we've got to cooperate with other countries on.

So can you talk about how we are working with other countries or with other multilateral institutions to address plastic?

Mr. MOORE. Senator, thank you for that, as well. I would say there are a number of fora, multilateral, and bilateral. We are very active in the U.N. Environmental Program, based in Nairobi. The head of that, Inger Andersen, is a dual citizen of both the United States and Denmark and is doing a lot to lead UNEP through discussions on topics like this. This is a topic which has come up in sessions of the U.N. Environmental Assembly.

We were anticipating it would be coming up soon when UNEP meets again. That's been postponed because of the pandemic.

Bilaterally, we have seen a lot of successes. We talked quite a bit about, to just give one country as an example, Vietnam that is very keen to partner with us in terms of being more responsible with regard to plastic waste, building its capacity and its approaches. This is something that USAID is deeply involved in, as well, in terms of any number of issues. We see countries like that that are very keen to cooperate with us to look at commercial ways to address this problem.

There was a discussion a little while ago also about packaging. Are there alternatives to plastic? This is a matter which, you know, diplomats in the field are working on directly because what is a suitable package for soap or food or something else in one country is not going to be the same in an economy with more limited means.

Some people, instead of buying a couple of gallons or liters of something, buy it in a little packet, but that's still made out of plastic and still may constitute something which ends up in the oceans.

So we're trying to calibrate with regard to all of this country by country where there are opportunities and in key multilateral fora, including the U.N. Environmental Program.

Senator SHAHEEN. And when you talk about Vietnam being interested in cooperating with us, are they interested in taking plastic from the United States and then recycling it to other uses or exactly how are they interested in working with us?

Mr. MOORE. In my experience, recently they've been very keen to work with us on a variety of multilateral issues if it's commercially viable to recycle in Vietnam. That is something that I believe they would make the decision to do. If it's not, they would look in other areas.

Vietnam currently sits with us on the U.N. Security Council and they also are chairing ASEAN and they've shown a lot of vision on a host of international issues. We have had some discussions with their Embassy here in Washington about trying to partner better.

I apologize. I'm fairly new in the job and have not been able to see things through, other than the past couple of months, but I can tell you the level of interest in just that one country and in many others is very intense.

I have to reiterate the point that I made earlier, which is that the worst source of plastic pollution, nearly 30 percent, comes from the People's Republic of China. For a host of reasons that you, Senator, and the committee and many others, everyone in the Senate is aware of, our relations with the People's Republic of China are not such that we see the inherent partnership developing there on this issue, but with Vietnam and a number of other countries, Indonesia and elsewhere, they understand the problem, they see the problem concretely on the shore of lakes and rivers, and, of course, the ocean, and so there are a lot of practical partnerships that we can build both with diplomacy and with assistance.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. Maybe you could take that also for the record in terms of what kind of partnerships and how are they taking our recycling, are we working together on using those recycled products to make new products, and how that is going to work. I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Is it 7 countries and 10 rivers, is that right, 70 percent of the stuff comes out of? Seems to me we ought to focus on that too.

Senator Udall has joined the subcommittee. You are welcome. I appreciate all of your leadership on this topic and if you'd like to ask questions or join us, you're more than welcome to.

Senator UDALL. Well, thank you, Chairman Graham and Senator Leahy, you're Ranking, for allowing me to be here today and participate. I really appreciate it and have enjoyed some of the comments you have made here today in terms of the joining. I may bring those up in asking a question, but I think, Mr. Chairman, in terms of joining when it happens at all the other countries in the world join and then they make rules and we're not a part of it, then we got problems, and I think you and I've talked about that before and I think the thrust of what you're saying is very important for the administration to hear. Thank you for that comment.

And although I'm not a member of this subcommittee, I've devoted a great deal of attention to the issue of plastic pollution, appreciate both of you being here today, and I introduced comprehensive legislation on this topic in February, appreciate Senator Leahy's support. He mentioned today he was on my bill as a co-sponsor and look forward to the day when we can get the Chairman aboard, as well.

Across the United States and around the world, we're seeing increasing momentum to aggressively tackle the problem of plastic pollution. Unfortunately, I've been very disappointed by the lack of U.S. leadership.

Despite what has been said here today, it's very clear to me that the U.S. participation in all international processes to develop regulations on plastic production and impose limits on plastic waste exports have been counter to the efforts of the broader international community.

In May of last year, 187 countries took a major step to limit the flow of plastic waste to poor countries under the Basel Convention and more than 80 countries have expressed support for a new global agreement to address the full lifetime cycle of plastics.

In both cases, the U.S. has not only failed to be a leader but instead is actually working against progress on tackling this pollution.

The administration's efforts have tilted more towards development and trade agreements supporting investments in petrochemical production in various countries. This is totally at odds with the global policy solution to prevent plastic pollution, not to mention the climate change part of this.

The U.S. solution to the plastic pollution crisis cannot be let's just create more plastic. That's what we're doing. With nearly 400 million tons of plastic produced globally each year and failed policies to reclaim and recycle that plastic, we're creating suffocating amounts of plastic that are harming our environment, our health, and our budgets.

We've been sold a bill of goods that recycling alone is the answer but less than 9 percent of plastic has ever been recycled and a great deal of our recycled plastic in the United States is shipped overseas to burden poor and developing countries where there are clear struggles to effectively manage this volume of waste.

So limiting the production of the products in the first place would be the simplest policy for everyone involved.

So, Ambassador Moore, I'd like to ask you, is the U.S. participating in any efforts to prevent other countries from adopting bans or regulations on single-use plastic products?

Mr. MOORE. Senator Udall, thank you for your question, and thank you for your leadership on this issue. I know that's part of a family tradition looking after the interests of the United States.

In terms of discussing this, as I said in response to Senator Shaheen, there are conversations, including in the U.N. Environmental Program at the U.N. Environmental Assembly, looking at the issue of what's produced and how it's handled.

In terms of a variety of steps, it's not just about recycling. We like that and are very proud of the innovative ideas of American

business. There are other types of packaging and other things that can be done. So it's not just about increasing plastic waste.

I am not aware of any fundamental approach to block international consensus on this issue. We look after our national interests and our economic interests and we do have great faith in what American business can do to help address the problem. That includes producers and that includes recyclers.

Beyond that, I've been in the position for only a few months and in the midst of the pandemic. I have not been part of any effort like that, but if I have your permission, Senator, perhaps it would be better if I take the question and give you a more comprehensive response for the record.

Senator UDALL. Thank you. Well, and I would just note for the record that India did offer a resolution with regard to single-use plastics and the United States said they weren't going to do that and as many of us know, all over the country, Mr. Chairman, cities are engaging in ordinances and bans on single-use plastics. So some people see that as a solution. We need to explore that and we need to be part of it.

I see my time's out, but I really appreciate, like I said, the Chairman's comments in terms of joining.

The other comment I would make, the 10 rivers we're talking about, a great deal of that plastic we have shipped over there to developing countries and then it gets into those rivers and so I don't know the exact percentages. We'll try to get those for you, but that's the crux of the problem. We can't just say, oh, it's those 10 rivers.

In fact, we're shipping it over there and they're not effectively recycling it and so it gets into the rivers and gets into the ocean.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator UDALL. Great to be part of your subcommittee today.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. Well, to our witnesses, you've been very helpful, appreciate your leadership. I think I have a lot of confidence in your abilities here.

So is it right that no Administration's joined the Basel Convention since 1989, is that right?

Mr. MOORE. That's correct, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. So back to Senator Udall's point, we've got to find something we can join here. I want a global fund to be created like we've done for AIDS and malaria and other things to deal with plastics that we can control, but I really want us to look at the World Bank program to see if we can make some contributions there. We're going to leave the hearing open to Friday at 2 p.m. for additional questions.

#### ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the witnesses for response subsequent to the hearing.]

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HON. MICHELLE BEKKERING

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY

*Question.* It is estimated that of the 400 million metric tons of plastic produced each year, close to 40 percent is for packaging, such as beverage bottles and other

containers and plastic films. And as we know, much of that waste ends up in our rivers, lakes, and oceans. In fact, the top 10 items collected on beaches around the world are single-use plastics.

So I ask both of you, how are our policies and programs addressing the specific issue of single-use plastics, and if we continue doing only what we are currently doing to address it, what difference can we expect to make in the next 3, 5, and 10 years?

Assuming we want to play a leading role in the global effort to substantially reduce ocean plastic pollution within 10 years, we clearly need to do a lot more than what we are doing. What would you recommend?

*Answer.* USAID's approach to addressing ocean plastic pollution is holistic and includes single-use plastics. Efforts to reduce waste from single-use plastics, either through alternative product delivery models or behavior change, will be more effective when paired with efforts to improve solid waste management collection and treatment and creating new end markets for post-consumer recycled content.

An example of this approach is USAID-supported work in the Philippines (Negros Island) where a local NGO worked to increase commitment from mayors, build the capacity of the local governments through solid waste management plans, and mentor entrepreneurs to develop Zero Waste convenience stores. In the Philippines, the urban poor often purchase small amounts of everyday items, like shampoo, in single-serve plastic packets because they cannot afford to buy larger amounts. Over 160 million of these single-use plastic packets are sold—and discarded—every day in the Philippines. In the Zero Waste convenience stores established with USAID support, people can buy small, affordable quantities of these items in reusable containers.

Similarly, a local NGO supported by USAID in Sri Lanka (Negombo and Katunayake) collaborated with solid waste management officials to empower women in the waste management industry, connected public and private recyclers with sources of, and markets for, recycled plastics to improve collection efficiency, and partnered with supermarkets to reduce plastic carrier bag use. Single-use plastics, particularly carrier bags, comprise a significant portion of solid waste in Sri Lanka. A total of 14 supermarkets participated in a program to educate customers about not using single-use plastic bags, including holding “no plastic bag hours,” leading to an average 30 percent reduction in bag usage across participating stores.

Over the next 3 years, USAID will capture and take to scale lessons learned from the Municipal Waste Recycling Program (2016–2021), such as those described above. Through the Municipal Waste Recycling Program, USAID has helped cities and communities in Asia reduce plastic waste through more efficient and incentivized recycling as well as through behavior change and innovative business models, such as the Zero Waste stores. Collectively, the 30 grants USAID made to local organizations in Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka have already resulted in more than 3,000 metric tons of plastics being collected and recycled. By 2023, USAID expects more than 9,000 metric tons will be kept from leaking into the environment, with at least 900 metric tons due to reduction at source.

Over the next 5 years, USAID's new Clean Cities, Blue Ocean program (2019–2024), will build capacity and commitment for the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) in partner cities to help aggregate an additional 25,000 metric tons of recyclables. This is an essential step in creating viable recycling markets. USAID will also track the amount of investment mobilized and the number of innovations supported to strengthen the 3Rs and improve solid waste management. Through Clean Cities, Blue Ocean, USAID aims to mobilize \$100 million in new investment over the life of the project and support 35 innovations.

Over the next 10 years, through a blended finance partnership signed with Circulate Capital in 2019, USAID will leverage \$106 million in private sector capital, which has already been secured, to invest in the types of facilities that are needed to provide high quality post-consumer recycled content from single-use plastics. By expanding recycling capacity and providing a reliable supply of recycled content in key Asian countries, these facilities stimulate the collection of single-use plastics and create demand for plastic that would otherwise end up as waste. The first investment deal from Circulate Capital is to a women-owned recycling business in Indonesia specializing in recycling PET bottles into rPET flakes that can then be used in the development of new items.

With additional funding, USAID will expand its footprint through bilateral programming in key countries of Asia and other regions to substantially reduce ocean plastic pollution. We will work alongside partner countries to build capacity and engage the private sector to implement the 3Rs, ensuring that government policies and

investments translate to long-term behavior change and systems that are effective, financially self-sustaining, and fit to the local context.

The first of these bilateral programs will be in Indonesia and will utilize fiscal year 2020 funding. Indonesia is the second-largest contributor to ocean plastic pollution, largely because it collects only about half of municipal solid waste and most is not properly disposed of in sanitary landfills. Despite these significant challenges, USAID believes that progress can be made in partnership with the Government of Indonesia. The Government of Indonesia has set ambitious goals to manage 100 percent of solid waste (which will include a 20 percent reduction at source in urban areas and a 30 percent reduction at source throughout the country) and reduce the country's contribution to ocean plastics by 70 percent by the year 2025. To date, targets to achieve these goals have not been fully met due to under-investment and lax enforcement of relevant laws and regulations. Through Clean Cities, Blue Ocean, and a new bilateral program, USAID will support the Government of Indonesia as it works towards its ambitious goals.

*Question.* There's much more we should be doing in our own country to improve our infrastructure, reduce our reliance on plastics, and encourage innovation in waste management and recycling. But no country can tackle ocean plastic pollution alone. International cooperation is essential.

Ms. Bekkering, how does USAID collaborate with other countries and multilateral organizations to implement waste recycling and ocean plastic pollution activities? What progress can you point to?

*Answer.* Collaboration with other countries is key to USAID's approach to tackling ocean plastics pollution and ensures that systemic improvement is sustained. One of USAID's strengths is its long-standing relationships with national and local governments that allows it to bring together stakeholders at all levels, strengthening coordination horizontally across partners representing different areas of expertise and interests, as well as strengthening coordination vertically to ensure that cities are supported by national policies and regional and global initiatives. USAID began its efforts to address ocean plastic pollution by supporting 30 locally-led projects in four out of the top five contributing countries: Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. Starting with this initial set of target countries has allowed us to achieve meaningful results and develop best practices for further expansion in these countries and elsewhere around the world. It has also enabled us to impact national-level policy conversations to influence solid waste management and ocean plastic pollution even further.

For example, a USAID grantee in Vietnam developed a model to strengthen recycling for two districts in the city of Da Nang that has been adopted more broadly by city authorities and created an opportunity for higher-level policy influence. Due to its proven track record of helping Da Nang achieve results, the grantee was asked by the national government in December 2018 to design a national-level consultative workshop that informed the development of the country's National Action Plan on Marine Plastic Debris Management. The organization continued to provide input into the development of this plan, which was issued in late 2019 and includes efforts to scale good practices in plastic waste collection, separation, transportation, and treatment in coastal and marine areas; representing a significant step for Vietnam. In the Philippines, the national government has recently reached out to USAID directly for input on its national plan, which similarly was informed by USAID's ongoing work in the country.

While USAID's focus is on developing local solutions with a supporting national policy framework, this is a truly global challenge. No nation can solve this problem alone, so we need a coordinated global response. For our part, USAID is already coordinating with other donors to ensure the sharing of lessons learned and coordinated, impactful field programming. For example, USAID is actively seeking opportunities for partnership and coordination with multiple donors and development partners, including the UK, Australia, Norway, Japan, and the Global Environment Fund (GEF). With the World Bank and other donors, USAID is serving on an expert group for the development of the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Marine Plastics Debris. Through national, regional, and international fora, such as the Fisheries and Chemical Working Groups of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum and Our Ocean Conference, USAID has been sharing valuable lessons learned from our ongoing work. USAID has also shared lessons learned in Asia with other regions, such as with the Workshop on Marine Debris held under the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR).

Greater international collaboration, particularly coordinated funding, could be achieved through a global fund to combat ocean plastic pollution. Such a fund could be housed at USAID, as Section 635(d) of the Foreign Assistance Act already grants

USAID the authority to accept and pool funding from other donors and the private sector; it also allows USAID direct involvement, oversight, and promotion of these funds for this important foreign policy matter.

A Global Fund to Combat Ocean Plastic Pollution managed by USAID could mobilize and invest funds to address plastic pollution by increasing capacity for solid waste management and the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), incentivizing recycling in collaboration with the private sector (while empowering women and protecting workers), and promoting innovation and investment in locally appropriate business models, technologies, and infrastructure. USAID could use this fund to scale up pollution prevention activities in key source countries and expand geographically (particularly in regions such as Africa and Latin America), and also supplement USAID's existing marine biodiversity programs to integrate interventions for sea-based sources.

By making the United States a convener on the issue, a Fund would more directly permit the USG to shape the international agenda. When combined with expanded USAID programming on the ground, the Fund could raise the profile of USG leadership on the issue both internationally as well as in individual countries. Moreover, housing the Fund at USAID would address a major congressional concern regarding the lack of sufficient oversight of Funds managed by multilateral organizations.

USAID has the added advantage compared to existing multilateral funds of having the flexibility to work directly with all stakeholders, including national and municipal governments, the private sector, civil society, and academia. Other global funding entities, such as the GEF or the World Bank trust fund ProBlue, can only provide funding through specific types of partners, such as national governments or U.N. agencies. The USG also cannot provide direct oversight of these funds. Creating a new Fund managed by USAID would not prevent coordination with these multilateral funds. Activities could be coordinated via U.S. executive directors to those institutions.

USAID is the logical choice of a bilateral donor to manage such a fund because it is one of the few government donor agencies with an extensive on-the-ground presence across the developing world. Other donors like Canada, Australia, Sweden, Norway, and the UK either do not have a strong presence on the ground globally. Also, other donor countries have folded/are folding their aid agencies into their foreign ministries so they lack the capacity to manage such a fund.

Many countries are potential contributors to a USAID-managed fund, including those that have made commitments at the G20, such as Australia, Japan, the Asian Development Bank, and emerging partners such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Private sector companies and foundations can also be considered. After initial commitments, USAID would continue to pool resources from interested donor countries, foundations and the private sector on a 3–5 year funding cycle to replenish the fund based on evolving commitments and needs.

*Question.* The Department of State and USAID have a global workforce, and billions of dollars are spent annually constructing, maintaining, and operating U.S. Government facilities around the world and in our own country.

This question is for both of you. What are the Department of State and USAID doing to implement waste recycling and substantially reduce the use of single use plastics in your own construction, maintenance, and day-to-day operations? What would be a realistic target for achieving this goal in the near-term, and what would be the costs of doing so? Can you get us that information?

*Answer.* USAID's operations management aims to serve as a role model consistent with our foreign assistance programming approach on single-use plastics and solid waste management.

For domestic facilities, the construction and maintenance of the buildings is the responsibility of the General Services Administration (GSA). For the day-to-day operations aspect of the question, USAID participates in GSA's National Capital Region Recycling program. GSA recycling contractors pick up paper, cardboard, cans, glass/plastic bottles, and printer cartridges from USAID facilities. Not only is the program environmentally friendly, the revenue generated by the recycling returns back to the Agency. USAID promotes recycling via signage in galleys. In addition, USAID installed water bottle filling stations on every floor of its two main facilities, the Ronald Reagan Building and the USAID Annex, to discourage single-use plastic water bottles.

For the majority of USAID's overseas missions, the Department of State has primary responsibility for the construction and maintenance of overseas facilities, residential and office. In a few countries, USAID has primary responsibility for the construction and maintenance of one or more residential and/or office facilities. In those facilities, USAID has ensured construction includes for example, sustainable fea-

tures such as bottle fillers alongside water fountains to encourage use of other than single-use plastic bottles. In addition, the materials we procure, including furniture, are Greenguard certified, including but not limited to, carpet tiles, acoustical ceiling tiles, vinyl tile, and workstation panel fabrics and components. Most, if not all, contain a percentage of recycled plastic material.

For most USAID missions that are co-located with the Embassy, the Department of State has primary responsibility for day-to-day operations of facilities. For a few embassies, USAID, not the Department of State, has primary responsibility for day-to-day operations. In these latter cases, USAID follows operational standards consistent with the Department of State's International Cooperative Administrative Support Services service delivery platform and policies. USAID missions in conjunction with the Embassy implement recycling programs similar to GSA's National Capital Region Recycling program. These programs vary by post depending on the host countries' waste programs and local vendor availability.

Beyond facilities, USAID's day-to-day operations include implementation of hundreds of millions of dollars of development and humanitarian assistance. USAID has begun piloting a number of efforts to reduce the disposable products in the provision of these efforts. For example, in 2018, USAID's Mission in Vietnam began an initiative requiring partners receiving USAID funds to reduce or eliminate the use of disposable products in executing their activities. As of March 2020, USAID's Regional Mission for Asia helped expand this initiative across Missions in Southeast Asia. While it is too early to make definitive statements about costs, initial discussions with partners suggest that these changes could have minimal cost or even perhaps cost savings.

Similarly, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) has joined the United Nations and other global partners in assessing ways to reduce plastic packaging waste in humanitarian supply chains. USAID is spearheading a study, "Sustainability in Humanitarian Supply Chains: A Preliminary Scoping of Improvements in Packaging Waste Management" to assess the full life cycle of waste, drawing lessons from private sector advances in circular economy approaches. The study will evaluate short- and long-term gains regarding cost-effectiveness and efficiency. BHA is also engaging with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Lincoln Laboratory to investigate solutions to track, manage, and reduce the environmental impact of humanitarian aid packaging waste. Areas of research include innovative materials, reuse or recycling of existing packaging, and alternate distribution mechanisms. The partnership has identified innovative, cost effective recycling as a solution that can minimize the impact of packaging waste and provide benefits to local communities. An initial specification, leveraging U.S. technology innovations, has been developed for a portable, solar powered recycling unit. An initial pilot of this solution is expected to begin in early fiscal year 2021.

*Question.* Many individuals and corporations cite a 2015 Science magazine article to argue that the United States is not at fault for ocean plastic pollution and that the predominance of pollution is the result of poor waste management in Southeast Asia. The article's author, however, contends that this is the wrong conclusion, and has highlighted that the amount of waste generated by one person in the United States is two to six times greater than the waste generated in many countries. Much of our waste that has been sorted for recycling has been sent to poor countries that cannot handle it.

In response, we are seeing many countries act aggressively to limit their own production of unnecessary single-use plastic products and to stop the export of plastic waste. I ask both of you, what are we doing to support those efforts?

*Answer.* Low- and middle-income countries are experiencing rapid population and economic growth along with urbanization, which is driving up levels of waste generated. As lifestyles change, the composition of waste is changing to include increasing amounts of harder-to-recycle plastics. USAID supports its partner countries by working with them to improve their ability to manage the growing volumes of waste, and to implement the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) without limiting economic growth or creating unintended consequences for the poorest and most vulnerable populations. Helping these countries to build capacity to collect, process, and recycle any waste, whether imported or generated domestically, creates economic opportunities while also reducing pollution.

With better waste systems and incentives for implementing the 3Rs effectively, cities in low- and middle-income countries can get ahead of the challenges created by these demographic and consumption changes. In addition to providing grants to local organizations, USAID's program Clean Cities, Blue Ocean is providing specialized technical expertise to enable private sector investment in infrastructure, increased government transparency, and improved local enforcement of regulations.

USAID also supports a policy framework built on consensus that creates the right incentives for the 3Rs. To do this, USAID helps governments and other key stakeholders build an evidence base to increase local understanding of the current contextual situation as well as to develop appropriate policy instruments to address the local context. In Sri Lanka, USAID's grant to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce has supported policy dialogue among government, private sector, and environmental groups on post-consumer plastic management that was informed by research on plastic-based products, packaging use, and their value chain.

Helping countries capitalize on approaches that are old or new, that work in their national and cultural context is key. This is a complex challenge that cannot be solved through top-down measures alone or separate from economic realities. Instead of prescribing a specific path, USAID works with countries to find consensus-based solutions that are impactful and sustainable.

#### CONCLUSION OF HEARINGS

Senator GRAHAM. I just want to thank you both. I look forward to working with you on this.

We're going to provide you more resources. You just tell us where you think it will be best utilized.

Thank you.

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, and thank you for the attention.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Ms. BEKKERING. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. The hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:21 p.m., Tuesday, July 21, the hearings were concluded, and the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]