

Remarks of Chairman Donald M. Payne
Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health
A Hearing
Call to Action on Food Security: the Administration's Global Strategy
October 29, 2009

Good morning and thank you for joining the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health for this critically important hearing entitled *A Call to Action on Food Security: the Administration's Global Strategy*.

The number of people who go hungry each day has climbed to over a shocking one billion as a result of the food and economic crises over the last two years. Moreover, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon reports that the proportion of undernourished people has risen as well. This flies directly in the face of the first Millennium Development Goal to cut in half the proportion of hungry people by 2015.

Therefore, there is perhaps nothing more important we could be discussing today than what the United States is planning to do to address the food insecurity of nearly one sixth of the world's population.

This hearing is the latest in a series of close to half a dozen hearings on food security and food assistance that the Subcommittee has held since 2007. The last such hearing, held on June 4th of this year, focused on the role local and regional procurement (LRP) can play in enhancing our aid effectiveness. Today's hearing will discuss the U.S. Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative which Secretary of State Hillary Clinton unveiled at the UN General Assembly in September.

Following Secretary Clinton's announcement, the State Department released a draft document which outlines the Administration's strategy, whose goals are to "sustainably reduce chronic hunger, raise the incomes of the rural poor, and reduce the number of children suffering from under-nutrition".

This is a welcome paradigm shift back to strong investments in agricultural development both as a means to increase food security and as a critical element of long-term, sustainable development in poor regions of the world, particularly in Africa.

I commend President Obama for encouraging this bold step and Secretary Clinton who has taken this on as a major priority and has assigned her own chief-of-staff, Counselor Cheryl Mills, to lead up the initiative.

The U.S. Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative builds upon the commitments made at the July G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy where countries agreed to \$20 billion over three years towards the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security. This partnership will focus on promoting sustainable agricultural production, productivity, and rural economic growth.

Last month the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh reaffirmed these commitments and called for the establishment of a World Bank Food Security Trust Fund to finance medium- and long-term investments in agricultural productivity and market access in low-income countries.

The Administration's Food Security Initiative therefore will work in tandem with the global partnership and I think it is important to point out that both the U.S. and the global initiatives stress that assistance provided through these programs will be complementary to ongoing emergency food assistance.

The emphasis on agricultural production and rural development comes not a minute too soon. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, it will take a 70 percent increase in global food production to feed the world's population in 2050, when the world's population is expected to be 9.1 billion, due to both population growth and rising incomes.

There is also greater recognition, as emphasized particularly in the Administration's strategy, on the role of women and the importance of empowering them with the education, tools, and assistance, they need as they make up the majority of smallholder farmers and are the engines of development in every society.

While the U.S. initiative is welcome and encouraged, many of the details are still to be ironed out. Thus, today's hearing will include an assessment of where the initiative stands as of now, what it seeks to achieve, and what recommendations we might have as it is further developed.

Let me remind us all that it comes as no surprise that with the levels of poverty that exist in the world today, that the numbers of people who cannot afford to grow or buy the food they need to live healthy, productive lives has dramatically increased.

According to UNICEF, 25,000 children die each day due to poverty. This is simply unconscionable. We can and we must do more to end poverty. It is a moral imperative.

I sincerely thank the panel of esteemed witnesses for testifying before us today and sharing your insights on what we as a nation are doing and what more must be done to address this issue.

Thank you.