

AFSA USAID Vice President Update: January 23, 2009

Here is your update from USAID Vice President Francisco Zamora. Please send any comments and questions to <fzamora@usaid.gov>.

The day after Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton greeted State Department employees, she was received by USAID employees at the Ronald Reagan Building to the same enthusiastic welcome. On Friday, January 23, 2009, AFSA, AFGE and Agency management welcomed Secretary Clinton on her second day of work.

USAID AFSA Vice President Francisco Zamora opened with welcoming remarks on behalf of all USAID employees (see remarks below) and was followed by Acting Administrator Kent Hill. The ceremony was covered by C-SPAN, CNN, MSNBC, NPR and other news media.

The full text of AFSA's welcoming remarks – and the Secretary's response – is copied below.

USAID AFSA will join State AFSA for a first formal meeting with the new Secretary sometime in the near future. While we share major concerns – including the staffing/resource deficit, overseas comparability pay, fairness and equity in assignments, war-zone postings, and family-friendliness in the Foreign Service – USAID AFSA will specifically point out that there must be equity with State in the benefits offered to us. Secondly, we will appeal to her again to empower USAID by reducing the fragmentation of foreign assistance and making us more independent. We look forward to advising her closely on this effort.

#### TEXT of Remarks Made by USAID AFSA Vice President

Greetings, everyone. My name is Francisco Zamora, Vice President of AFSA's USAID constituency. Joining me in the audience is Mr. Willy Hardin, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of USAID AFGE.

Madam Secretary: On behalf of all USAID staff working here and in Missions all over the globe, it is our honor to welcome you to our agency.

Yesterday afternoon at the State Department, I had the pleasure of hearing your words of support for those of us who work in development. It is clear to me that you understand that our work is a major tool which not only improves our nation's image but also contributes to our national security. As demonstrated by your testimony before the Senate during your confirmation hearing, your support for foreign assistance is strong.

I am no stranger to the fact that you have a keen interest in the development activities USAID implements worldwide. As a health officer in Egypt, I met you when you inaugurated a health clinic for women and children in a very underserved and poor community in Upper Egypt. Your compassion for the disadvantaged is evident.

As you know, our Foreign Service Officers spend their careers in the most inhospitable environments on earth carrying out the work they love. In fact, more than 75% of our postings are in hardship locations and most officers even volunteer

for second tours. Although we prefer to do development in reasonably stable countries, we have overwhelmingly responded to service in places considered war zones. By this summer, almost half of our Foreign Service staff will have served away from their families in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and Iraq.

It would be redundant to point out the problems in understaffing and under-funding that our agency has been experiencing for more than a decade now. You are already well aware of this and you and President Obama have been very clear about the need to turn this around. In addition to resources, there is also a need to implement foreign assistance in a more rational and effective manner, which you call "smart power". There are too many actors currently involved in foreign assistance, causing much confusion and waste. We look forward to learning more from you about how the Administration plans to create a more empowered independent USAID.

USAID is staffed by very talented and knowledgeable Foreign Service, Civil Service and other expert staff who do "development". This is our strength and we look forward to working closely in synergy with our colleagues at State who do "diplomacy". Together we stand behind you and you will find us enthusiastic partners.

Thank you for your support for us and for the world's poor.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Address to the U.S. Agency for International Development Employees

January 23, 2009  
Ronald Reagan Building  
Washington, DC

Thank you. Thank you very, very much. Thank you, Dr. Hill, for not only that very warm introduction, but for your description. That really does briefly encapsulate the work that USAID does with the help of all of you. And Mr. Zamora, thank you for reminding me of our time in Egypt. And I was looking out here when Dr. Hill said that I perhaps have seen some of you in other places, from Nicaragua to Egypt to Indonesia and lots of places in between. And I wanted to come here today with a very simple message: I believe in development, and I believe with all my heart that it truly is an equal partner, along with defense and diplomacy, in the furtherance of America's national security.

I don't think it is at all unexpected to look at the feelings that people have toward our country in sub-Saharan Africa, and to see the positive attitudes toward the United States because of the work that is being done through PEPFAR, through the Malaria Initiative; tangible results that make a difference in people's lives, linked to the heart and the enthusiasm of the American people, has been a critical element of our being able to further our national interests and exemplify our values. As we look toward the future, it is essential that the role of USAID and our other foreign assistance programs be strengthened and be adequately funded and be coordinated in a way that makes abundantly clear that the United States understands and supports development assistance.

Now, there are many new missions that many of you have undertaken in the last several years: the reconstruction and stabilization missions, the kinds of post-conflict missions, the role working hand-in-hand with our military colleagues. And in every instance where we look at what the United States is doing abroad, we will find someone, maybe from this very room or colleagues of yours across the world, who is there. Time and again, when I speak to my friends over at the Defense Department, they will confess that they very often have to turn to you to determine how best to spend the money they've been given for development, reconstruction, and stabilization. Our diplomats who believe in the development mission, but whose primary goal is to serve our diplomatic function, will also make clear that they look to you to be partners in how we advance America's role in the world.

What I'm hoping to do as your Secretary of State is to work with USAID to provide the kind of leadership and support that will give you the tools you desperately need in order to fulfill the missions we are asking you to perform. We are asking you to do more and more with less, and my goal is to make sure we match the mission and the resources. It will be very difficult for us to expect you to perform at the very high level of professionalism that we will expect, without providing you the resources to do the job we ask you to do.

As I said yesterday in the State Department, we are going to work toward robust diplomacy. And I challenged my colleagues in the State Department to think more broadly, more deeply, outside the proverbial box, to let us know the ideas you have that will make what you do more effective for us. And I offer the same challenge to all of you here at USAID. I know that for some of you, this has been not just a career, but a labor of love, and that sometimes it hasn't been easy, but that you have stayed with this mission because of your conviction of its importance. But I am asking you now to help us help you to be more effective.

I'm going to demand a lot. I don't think we have a choice. We have, with President Obama, someone who believes in development and diplomacy. Coming to the State Department yesterday sent a very strong signal. A few of you may even know, as I mentioned in my testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee, that the President's late mother was an expert in microfinance and worked in Indonesia. I have been involved in microfinance since 1983, when I first met Muhammad Yunus and had Muhammad come to see us in Arkansas so that we could use the lessons from the Grameen Bank in our own country. I was actually looking forward to being on a panel with the President's mother in Beijing on microfinance.

So his understanding and commitment to these important human issues runs very deep. But we must be the best we can be to merit his support. It's not going to be given freely; we have to demonstrate how prepared we are to perform.

It will also not surprise you to learn that we have to regain some credibility in order to regain the authorities and the resources that have drifted elsewhere. It is, as I said publicly in my testimony, ironic that our very best young military leaders – captains and majors and lieutenant colonels – are given unfettered resources through the Commander's Emergency Response Program to spend as they see fit to build a school, to open a health clinic, to pave a road, and our diplomats and our development experts have to go through miles of paperwork to spend ten cents. It is not a sensible approach.

Much of the migration of the authority and the resources to the Defense Department came about because they were able to move, and move aggressively and agilely, to fulfill a purpose or a need. We are going to have to streamline our operations. We're going to have to be smart about smart power. As I said yesterday, smart power requires smart people. We've got the smart people. We just need the smart procedures that will enable the smart people to do the work that we expect you to do.

I know there is a very vigorous debate within the development community about how we should be organized, what form that organization should take, where in the government we should be situated. Well, having served for eight years in the Senate, the last thing we want is a never-ending debate about process. What we need to figure out how to do is to set forth a clear path using what we already have, and finding what else additionally we need in terms of authorities and resources. And I'm going to be tasking your leadership with the responsibility of asking every one of you, "How do we do what you do better? How do we eliminate redundancy? How do we streamline procedures? How do we better target missions and then resource them?" And I invite you to provide that kind of feedback.

Maybe because I have been in the public eye and in the political world for what seems like a very long time now, I welcome debate and I am respectful of dissent, and then I expect everybody, once we've made a decision, to work as hard as you can to get the job done. But I want to know from you what we need to do to make sure that USAID assumes once again the global leadership role you deserve it to have in the delivery of development assistance.

You know, on a personal note, I feel so passionately about this because, of course, it is part of my DNA. You know, I started out as an advocate. The first time I ever appeared before the Senate, which was before some of you were born, was as a nominee from President Carter to serve on the Legal Services Corporation. I was privileged, with my first job out of law school, to go to work for the Children's Defense Fund. And in so many different settings, in Arkansas and nationally, my heart has been with work here at home to help those who need a helping hand. As First Lady, that heart was expanded, because I was able to see the work you do, and to see the results with my own eyes, and to travel a lot of miles to support you and your predecessors in the important work of literally embodying American values.

So I take this work very personally. I was quite honored upon leaving the White House to have a plaque put up in the lobby recognizing my work. And if anybody knows where that plaque is, you know, I'd just love to see it again.

So this will be a lot of hard work. But you know, one of my all-time favorite movies, *A League of Their Own*, has this great scene where the Geena Davis character has decided, you know, her husband's come home from the war, he was injured, they're in the playoffs, and she just goes to Tom Hanks, the broken-down, drunken coach – that's not an analogy, I'm just describing his role – (laughter) – and says, "You know, I've got to go home. I just can't do this anymore. It is just too hard." And Tom Hanks says, "Well, it's supposed to be hard. If it weren't hard, anybody could do it."

And that's how I see your role. You go to places that are difficult and dangerous. You encounter peril, but you make a difference. And now what we have to do together is figure out how to magnify that difference and how to produce results that justify the American taxpayers' investment in development during a very difficult time for our

fellow citizens. You know, if you don't know somebody who's lost their job yet, you will. And we have some challenging days ahead.

And President Obama is working very hard with his economic team to move us forward. But we have to be able to make the case. You have to be able to make it to your sister who's worried about paying her car payments, to your son who got out of college and the jobs dried up, to your husband who is worried his job is going to disappear. You've got to be able to make the case that what you do for America is important, even in these tough times.

I believe we can make that case. But it can't be just a speech from me. It has to be the accumulated efforts of every one of you that will enable me to make the case, not just to our Congress and not just to the White House, but to the American people.

So I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work with you. And I look forward to the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. Thank you all and God bless you.