

Congressman Sam Farr (CA-17)
State, Foreign Operations, & Related Programs FY12 Testimony

As you know, I have been a long-time champion of the Peace Corps, humanitarian engagement with Colombia, and international development that promotes human rights, peacebuilding, and governance. In the midst of a difficult economic climate, I believe it is particularly important to prioritize these low-cost, high-return investments to defeat poverty and inequality, and promote enduring justice, peace, and prosperity.

United States Peace Corps

I urge the Committee to fully fund the Peace Corps at the President's request of \$439,600,000. For just 0.8% of our foreign affairs budget, the Peace Corps is one of our most cost-effective, bipartisan agents of diplomacy and development. Since 1961, nearly a quarter million Americans have served in poor communities in 139 developing countries. Volunteers work on key projects including education, water sanitation, and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDs Relief (PEPFAR). For the past 50 years, through war and conflict, Peace Corps Volunteers have shown the world a hopeful side of America that reflects our fundamental ideals of peace and prosperity.

Currently, 8,655 Americans from all 50 states are serving in 77 developing countries. Yet demand for the Peace Corps far exceeds supply. While the Peace Corps was able to open new programs in Colombia, Sierra Leone, and Indonesia in 2010, more than 20 countries have requested Volunteers, and still other countries have requested an increase in Volunteers. In 2010, some 13,500 Americans applied for the Peace Corps, but the agency could only afford to place about 4,500. Without this funding boost, the Peace Corps will be unable to meet both national and international demand.

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps. President Obama issued a Presidential Proclamation honoring the Peace Corps and stated that the agency's mission "is more relevant today than ever." This funding for the Peace Corps will enable the

agency to help communities help themselves in the Middle East, Northern Africa, and beyond, while promoting invaluable goodwill towards America. And, given that over 100 Members signed a bipartisan letter to the Office of Management and Budget supporting increased funding for the Peace Corps in FY12, there is robust Congressional backing for this program. I urge the Committee to make this enduring, bipartisan investment in peace.

Colombia: Economic Support Fund (ESF)

I support the President's request of \$189,108,000 for the State Department's ESF for Colombia, and I appreciate the Committee's efforts to address the on-going humanitarian crisis. Colombia, one of our most important hemispheric allies, has made significant security gains in recent years. Notwithstanding this progress, we must continue to fund ESF-supported programs, which enable increased Colombian ownership of Plan Colombia by supporting Colombian-led land restitution and victims' reparations, as well as governance efforts, rule of law, and improved labor and human rights conditions. I believe that ESF does particularly important work in judicial reform, and I also strongly support ESF activities designed to build rural economies and create alternative development opportunities, especially for indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations.

Western Hemisphere: Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)

I support robust funding for the State Department's MRA, and I urge the Committee to fund Western Hemisphere MRA at \$37,000,000. The armed conflict in Colombia remains a formidable threat to hemispheric stability and justice, and has left Colombia with four to five million internally displaced people (IDPs), the second largest IDP population in the world. This is both a humanitarian and security crisis that not only compromises human rights, but also threatens to severely undermine the progress Colombia has made to date. With no access to education or sustainable livelihoods, IDPs are especially

vulnerable to recruitment by criminal actors, further fueling the armed conflict. In 2010 alone, there were nearly 300,000 newly displaced people, and yet funding for the entire Western Hemisphere MRA account was cut by \$11.5 million. I encourage my colleagues to fully fund MRA for the Western Hemisphere, with particular attention to the crisis in Colombia, and look for opportunities to more completely address Colombia's IDP crisis.

Mexico: Economic Support Funds (ESF)

I strongly support the President's request of \$33,260,000 for the State Department's ESF for the Mérida Initiative. I am encouraged to see the shift from expensive military hardware to low-cost, high-importance institution strengthening. In 2010 alone, Mexico's Human Rights Commission reported 1,415 complaints of human rights abuses by the Mexican military and 111 civilian deaths during army or federal police operations. ESF supports much-needed rule of law, judicial sector reform, and law enforcement professionalization efforts at the federal and state level, all of which are essential to combat drug trafficking. This investment in democratic, transparent governance is especially important now, given that 2012 is a Presidential election year for Mexico, and civic trust in public institutions is essential for the incoming administration to defeat organized crime and promote long-term stability. I also support the mandate that 15% of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds for Mérida be withheld until the State Department issues a report to Congress confirming that Mexico is complying with human rights requirements.

Mexico: Development Assistance (DA)

I fully support the President's request of \$33,350,000 for the State Department's DA to Mexico, and I encourage the Committee to establish a pilot program in support of *Oportunidades*, the Mexican government's Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program.

This anti-poverty initiative, with 10 years of positive outcomes, provides cash transfers to 5.2 million families conditioned on participation in education and health activities that break the cycle of poverty. *Oportunidades* has helped reduce poverty by 8%, increased college enrollment among participants by 38%, and spawned CCT programs in over 15 countries in Latin America. We have finite resources and investing in proven programs like CCTs is an effective way to improve the livelihoods of Mexico's poorest citizens.

United States Institute of Peace

I support the President's request of \$42,740,000 for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Twenty-first century conflict cannot be resolved by military solutions alone, and USIP's unique on-the-ground peacebuilding capabilities enable stronger unity of effort between military and civilian actors, while promoting nonviolent solutions in complex conflicts. I strongly agree with General Petraeus when he said, "I would like to underscore the importance of USIP to the missions the US is pursuing in Iraq and Afghanistan." In these countries as well as other conflict-prone areas like Pakistan, Sudan, and Haiti, USIP undertakes essential conflict prevention and stabilization activities -- oftentimes in partnership with the Departments of Defense and State -- that amount to some of the best smart power tools in our foreign policy tool box. USIP is a cost-effective investment in America's security, international standing, and commitment to peace.

Feed the Future

I support the President's Request of \$911,900,000 through the State Department's Development Assistance and \$150,000,000 through USAID's Global Health and Child Survival for Feed the Future. Struggles to gain access to food can easily erupt in violence and instability. Feed the Future is a small financial investment in hunger security that

yields tremendous returns in the form of enhanced stability in fragile areas, reduced dependence on foreign aid, and increased goodwill towards America. This program has helped 18 million vulnerable men, women, and children to escape hunger and poverty, promoted in-country food-production systems, and leveraged \$70 million in private investment for agriculture.

International Military Education and Training (IMET)

The State Department's IMET program has not been adequately funded to meet the critical needs to develop military-to-military relationships with regions of the world that are integral to our national security, and I believe that \$150,000,000 for IMET would enable the program to more fully address shifting stability and security conditions in the Middle East, North Africa, and South and Central Asia. This increase would also help to ensure that foreign militaries in Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt, and Tunisia are exposed to democratic values that can only contribute to strengthening their nascent democratic aspirations.

House Democracy Partnership (HDP)

I respectfully request \$1,900,000 through the State Department's Economic Support Fund for HDP. I am a member of this bipartisan, 20-member commission that works with partner legislatures in 14 developing countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, to build and strengthen their governance capacities, while promoting U.S. security interests and ensuring that democracy can take hold in countries that, in many cases, have been beset by war or civil unrest for decades.