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House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global  
Environment  
Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, Chairman

*Renewed Engagement: U.S. Policy Toward Pacific Island Nations*

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Chairman Faleomavaega, Ranking Member Manzullo, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the U.S. Agency for International Development's views on renewed engagement in the Pacific.

Mr. Chairman, let me start by first thanking you for your leadership in focusing U.S. attention to the Pacific, a region of growing geopolitical importance to the United States. We share your commitment and appreciate the opportunity to discuss our programs and strategies for strengthening our partnerships and cooperation with Pacific nations. And we are pleased to be here with our State and DOD colleagues to echo their concerns about the need for stronger links in the Pacific, to reaffirm bonds of friendship based on common history, experiences and democratic values.

From a development perspective, we know that nations in the Pacific are among the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of global climate change (GCC) as well as some of the least able to respond. We know these changes affect life and livelihoods in many countries in the Pacific, threatening catastrophic warming and resource-based instability.

In the Pacific, GCC threatens the very existence of some island-nations and is hence the top priority for this region in this century. Many Pacific islanders already experience the effects of sea-level rise, more frequent storms due to climate change, and other extreme climate events that can impact water, coastal and marine resources, and agriculture. To try to avert the worst case scenario results, USAID, in collaboration with the Department of State, is leading USG efforts to ensure that the least developed states in the Pacific region are better able to adapt to the changes in practical and life-saving ways as they grow their economies. The Obama Administration is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to minimize future impacts of climate change, but it will also be critical for all countries to adapt to unavoidable changes in climate conditions. To make sure we focus our efforts appropriately, USAID will engage governments and residents in setting priorities and designing programs to address critical climate-affected needs, such as water catchments, mangrove conservation, crop adjustments to salt intrusion and, possibly, land and migration impacts.

In this fiscal year (FY 2010), we have \$3 million for climate change adaptation work in the Pacific region and the State Department has an additional \$9 million that will be programmed in coordination with USAID. An additional \$9.5 million in USAID funds for Global Climate Change is part of our request for FY 2011. In New York this week, Secretary Clinton discussed USG assistance for Small Island Developing States worldwide, including the \$21.5 million in FY 2010 and requested FY 2011 funding. I met earlier this month with Director General Jimmie Rogers of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to review his ideas for advancing a shared effort on global climate change. Tomorrow, David Sheppard, Director of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP) will be reviewing SPREP's new five year strategy with

our Global Climate Change team at USAID. We expect this to lead to a number of shared activities in the region.

USAID has also noted threats to health and prosperity represented by the very serious HIV/AIDS problem in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In recent years, USAID has been notably active there implementing a bilateral assistance program, valued at \$2.5 million per year, that focuses on reducing that country's HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. Papua New Guinea benefits from regionally funded programs to protect tropical forests. Both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands participate in USAID and Department of State-funded Coral Triangle Initiative, a partnership to protect marine habitats supported with \$4 million in fiscal year 2009.

USAID also has been active in responding to natural disasters in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Fiji and is poised to do so in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Since 1995, USAID has implemented the Pacific Islands Disaster Program through its Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, which aims to improve the disaster management ability of local and national disaster management agencies and individuals. The program helps them develop and adapt training materials and provides guidance on how to conduct disaster management courses. And, currently, USAID supports a fulltime officer in Majuro to provide disaster preparedness, recovery and reconstruction in the event that a disaster occurs in the RMI and FSM. As you know, USAID currently implements its programs and activities in the Pacific from our Regional Development Mission for Asia, located in Bangkok.

Looking forward, USAID currently has a senior officer traveling in the Pacific region for three months to lay the groundwork for expanding our

partnerships in the region to work on global climate change issues, and to examine opportunities to work with government and non-governmental organizations on health challenges in Papua New Guinea. The officer will examine effective and appropriate ways to support and manage our activities in the region and report his findings to USAID by the end of this calendar year.

How we approach our presence in the Pacific region will need to take into account the severely constrained budget environment confronting us today and, we expect, in the future. We will need to be highly selective and rigorous in making decisions. USAID remains committed to renewing strong partnerships in the Pacific region and to finding the most effective ways to develop and sustain these partnerships in light of the budget constraints faced by USAID, and all government agencies.

Our commitment to engage and intensify activities that address the significant challenges faced by nations in the Pacific region - from climate change and health - remains strong. We look forward to carrying out that commitment and to working with the Congress to ensure that our interests and those of the people of the Pacific region are well served.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.