

**Hearing on Violent Extremism and the Role of Foreign Assistance
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs**

192 Dirksen Senate Office Building

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**Statement of Richard Leach, President and CEO of the World Food
Program USA**

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for convening this hearing on violent extremism and the role of foreign assistance. As you know, the World Food Programme has a long history of success in fighting hunger and food insecurity on a global scale. We at WFPUSA recognize that food assistance is an important element in overall humanitarian relief efforts and are concerned that the scale of need is rapidly outpacing the ability of the international community to cope with the unfolding human tragedy and historic challenges to security.

In that context, on 12 April, WFPUSA together with partners CARE, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Oxfam America, Save the Children, U.S., the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, and the U.S. Institute for Peace released a report entitled “A World at Risk: Humanitarian Response at a Crossroads”, which I believe speaks directly to the subject of this hearing. I would like to present an overview of that report.

The humanitarian system is struggling to keep pace with the seemingly ever-growing demands placed on it. Today there are more than 60 million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons worldwide as a result of conflict and persecution – the most since World War II. At the same time, the human and economic costs of disasters caused by natural hazards have also been steadily escalating. Since 2008, nearly 175 million people who live in developing countries have been displaced by natural disasters.

The growth in humanitarian crises and the associated financial needs has been dramatic. At the time of its launch, the 2016 Global Humanitarian

Appeal requested an unprecedented \$20 billion to assist more than 87 million people in 37 countries. Despite the generosity demonstrated by increased support from donors over the years, huge gaps between appeal requirements and confirmed contributions continue. Just 54% of the needs outlined in the 2015 appeal were funded. These shortfalls in resourcing translate into cuts of basic assistance and services to vulnerable populations, the majority of whom are women and children.

Despite the protracted nature of many of the world's conflict-related crises, humanitarian assistance has been overwhelmingly focused on immediate life-saving actions. Addressing the needs of the increasing numbers of people affected by crises is, however, not only a concern and responsibility for the humanitarian community. It is a development challenge as well. Given that the average length of displacement for a refugee today is 17 years, it is clear that strategies for assistance should no longer be framed with a short-term lens. Further, they must be defined by greater alignment of the capacities of both relief and development partners.

Political leaders, policy makers and the public must understand that in addition to our moral obligation to our fellow men, women and children affected by crises, there are important issues of public interest at stake. Conflict, natural disasters and public health emergencies do not respect national borders. Countries hosting refugees, often middle-income and developing countries themselves, are on the front-lines of providing assistance and protection. Among them are Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Ethiopia and Kenya. They must be recognized as providing a global public good and should be supported by the international community to ensure they are able to meet both the needs of refugees as well as their own vulnerable populations.

An estimated 1.4 billion people today live in fragile countries, a third of which are conflict-affected. By 2030 – just 14 years from now – two thirds of the world's poor are likely to be living in nations classified as fragile. With the current humanitarian system under tremendous strain and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Agenda in jeopardy, urgent action is needed. National governments, donors, humanitarian and development organizations, the International Financial Institutions, private

sector and affected communities must step up to ensure the needs of conflict-affected populations are met with no one left behind.

The report makes a number of key recommendations:

We need better financing with:

- More predictable, timely, multi-year and flexible resources from an expanded donor base;
- Immediate life-saving funding complemented by resources in support of preparedness, disaster risk reduction, recovery and resilience-building;
- Greater engagement of the International Financial Institutions in helping crisis-affected and refugee-hosting countries to access development financing;
- The resources, skills and capacities of the private sector being more fully leveraged.

We must overcome the Humanitarian/Development Divide with:

- More integrated planning and programming at the country level;
- Greater collaboration in joint needs analyses and risk assessments;
- Combined efforts to strengthen national and local capacities in disaster preparedness and risk reduction, emergency response and recovery, and resilience building;
- Strengthened partnerships in support of national safety net systems in fragile, conflict-affected and refugee-hosting countries.

We need to increase accountability with:

- Humanitarian organizations renewing commitments to ensure efficiency, cost-effectiveness and transparency in their operations;
- Women being empowered to realize their rights to assistance and protection, including from gender-based violence, and to be leaders in crisis response and recovery;
- Children having access to basic assistance and protection, including comprehensive services that prevent and respond to all forms of child abuse, exploitation and neglect;
- Crisis-affected populations having a greater voice and more control over resources.

It must always be remembered that although the humanitarian community is committed to meeting the needs of those affected by crisis, wherever in the world they reside, humanitarian action can never serve as a substitute for the political will and action needed to address the root causes of conflict and to reach sustainable peace agreements.

I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to provide this statement and to share an abbreviated account of our report. I also want to thank you for recognition of these serious issues and your dedication to working toward lasting solutions to this global crisis.