

Remarks of Chairman Donald M. Payne
Hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health and
The Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight
“Oversight of the Feed the Future Initiative”
Tuesday, July 20th, 2010 at 1:00PM
2172 Rayburn House Office Building

Good Afternoon. Thank you for joining us here today for this critically important joint hearing “Oversight of the Feed the Future Initiative”. I’m grateful for our distinguished witnesses, and I look forward to a productive discussion.

The number of people who go hungry each day has climbed to over one billion over the last few years, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon reports 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 doing to address the food insecurity of nearly one sixth of the world’s population.

Food security is a crucial component of development and has always been a top priority of mine as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health. The Subcommittee has held six hearings, including this one, focused on food security since 2007. The last such hearing, held last October, also focused on the Obama Administration’s Food Security Initiative, now called Feed the Future, which Secretary of State Hillary Clinton unveiled at the UN General Assembly last September.

In addition to these hearings, in August of 2009 I traveled with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack to the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act Forum in Nairobi, Kenya where we talked about the importance of food security and visited farms and research institutions. I have also requested six GAO reports in recent years to evaluate how U.S. funds were being used to address food security around the world, and particularly in Africa.

I commend President Obama for encouraging this bold initiative as well as Secretary Clinton and USAID Administrator Shah, who have taken this on as a major priority. I am pleased that Ambassador Garvelink at USAID and Ambassador Haslach at the State Department have been appointed as deputy coordinators for this initiative, and I look forward to the announcement of a coordinator.

The Feed the Future 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.

The initiative works to address the root causes of hunger that limit the potential of millions of people and establish a lasting foundation for change by leveraging our resources with country-owned plans and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

It will also have a strong emphasis on the role of women and empowering them with the education, tools, and assistance they need. Women make up the majority of smallholder farmers and are the engines of development in every society.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, it will take a 70 percent increase in global food production to feed the world's population in 2050, when it is expected to reach 9.1 billion, due to both population growth and rising incomes.

According to the FAO, 25,000 people die each day due to hunger and related causes. In Africa alone, 265 million people, or nearly one-third of the continent's entire population, suffer from hunger. This is simply unconscionable, particularly when the continent possesses such vast uncultivated agricultural resources.

According to the UN Environment Programme, 21 percent of Africa's land mass is suitable for cultivation. However, only 7 percent of this land is currently irrigated. As a result, African countries spend billions of dollars on food imports in addition to receiving food aid. Moreover, the proportion of the African population living on less than \$1 per day increased from 47.6 percent in 1985 to 59 percent in 2000.

We can and we must do more to end hunger. Africa has both the natural and human resources to dramatically increase agricultural productivity. In fact, 203 million people in Africa, or 56.6 percent of the labor force, are engaged in agriculture. We must focus on leveraging our resources to ensure food security. I believe Feed the Future is an important step towards achieving food security and, thereby, the upliftment of millions of people in Africa and around the world, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Administration to make the dream of a food secure world a reality.

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.