
Opening Statement of Ranking Member Spencer Bachus, Full Committee Hearing Entitled "The 15th Replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) and the 11th Replenishment of the African Development Fund (AfDF)"

June 18, 2008

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing on the authorization of the U.S. contribution to the International Development Association (IDA) and the African Development Fund (AfDF).

By fulfilling the U.S. commitment to IDA-15 and AfDF-11, we fund two of the most effective vehicles for delivering aid to the world's most impoverished countries. As examples, in the last 15 years IDA contributions helped rebuild nearly 9,000 miles of roads in Ethiopia, helped triple the number of girls attending Bangladesh secondary schools and helped improve the access of 25 million people in the world's poorest countries to safe drinking water and sanitation. For countries unable to borrow at market rates to meet the basic medical, educational and nutritional needs of their people, the IDA and AfDF programs are a vital financial life-line.

Mr. Chairman, not even their strongest proponents contend that these programs are perfect, and today's hearing offers this Committee an opportunity for oversight to ensure that the funds that U.S. taxpayers contribute to these efforts are being used wisely and effectively. In this regard, recent reforms undertaken by the IDA with encouragement by the U.S. and other donor nations are worth noting. Among other steps, IDA has re-evaluated the conditions placed on countries, improved its system for monitoring results, increased its role and engagement in fragile and "post-conflict" states, and is working to become more transparent.

Next week, the Committee will consider legislation authorizing funding for both of these entities. It is my hope that we fulfill our prior commitments to assist these 82 heavily indebted poor countries and approve a bill free of new conditions that could weaken, not strengthen, the U.S. voice within the World Bank.

As I have said before, the cost of not acting is not just hopelessness, but increased political unrest throughout the world, because poverty creates a fertile environment for terrorism and corruption and creates the type of conditions that allow dictators to thrive. This sentiment is echoed in the Report of the 9/11 Commission, which states: "When people lose hope, when societies break down, when countries fragment, the breeding grounds for terrorism are created."

Mr. Chairman, the U.S. government has pledged this money. It is now up to Congress to authorize it. This is an important and noble task. We have an opportunity to make a difference over the long term to countries mired in poverty and strife. We should not turn our backs on them.

While I look forward to hearing the testimony of all of our witnesses, I want to extend a special welcome to David Beckman, President of Bread for the World. Mr. Beckman and I have worked together on providing assistance to

developing countries in the past, and his book *Grace at the Table* helped inspire me to become involved in this effort.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you again for your leadership on this issue and for holding this hearing, and yield back the balance of my time.

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