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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 1, 2013

Senator Patty Murray  
Chairman  
Senate Budget Committee  
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Jeff Sessions  
Ranking Member  
Senate Budget Committee  
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Sessions:

I am writing to you to share my views on the International Affairs budget for FY 2014 and programs under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Foreign Relations. The President's Budget Request was due the first Monday of February, but since the President has failed to meet this statutory deadline, it is difficult for us to have an informed debate regarding the next International Affairs budget. It is also complicated by the fact that the Senate has failed to set priorities for International Affairs, having not passed a budget since 2009 or completed a reauthorization of State Department and foreign assistance authorities in recent history.

The United States must invest in the agencies and programs needed to advance its core economic and security interests. Careful and strategic funding for critical partners and initiatives around the world is needed, but given the finite nature of our resources, I firmly believe that we must find ways to reform our foreign assistance programs to make them more accountable and effective. The best way to begin these reforms is by passing a sustainable budget with responsible baseline spending caps and returning to annual reauthorizations of U.S. foreign assistance and State Department authorities.

I am deeply concerned about the dire fiscal situation of the United States government and the need to reduce spending. Last year alone we added \$1.1 trillion of debt, causing the nation's debt to reach 105 percent of our GDP. This is neither sustainable nor responsible. Now that Congress and the President have acted to identify new revenue, we must take on the difficult challenge of making thoughtful, but substantive reductions in spending.

As we currently operate in a “sequestration environment,” the first step in addressing spending reductions is ensuring that the FY 2014 Budget reflects the new baseline that is the result of the sequester. All accounts, including the International Affairs budget, must be reprioritized under the sequester cap, a small but important step towards returning to sustainable, baseline spending. Next, the Committees should authorize and appropriate within these caps and remain engaged with the Administration to assess the effectiveness of programs and mechanisms. These steps will position the United States to advance its essential interests globally.

Some have made dire but inaccurate predictions regarding these sequestration cuts to the International Affairs budget. The Foreign Assistance Act and many other foreign affairs funding statutes include provisions that authorize the transfer of some funds within the international affairs budget. This means that, with Congressional approval, the President may use existing transfer authorities to use a portion of funding from lower priority programs to increase funding for higher priority programs.

As Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I look forward to working with the Chairman and the Administration on a review of international affairs and foreign assistance programs to understand how priorities are being set, what approaches and mechanisms are working and which are less useful or affordable today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Boucark", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bob Corker  
Ranking Member