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Note to the Secretary

Update on Gender Considerations in FY13 Congressional Appropriations Bills

Summary

As you know, two weeks ago the House Appropriations Committee reported out its FY13 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, and this week the Senate Appropriations Committee followed suit. Both bills include strong general language on gender, but the Senate version includes an unprecedented \$1.65 billion for programs targeted at gender equality, with specific earmarks totaling \$250 million for women, peace, and security; political leadership in the Middle East and countries in transition; and gender-based violence. Senator Leahy and others on the Committee have consistently praised your leadership on behalf of women and girls, and they feel strongly that Administration policies must be backed up by effective programs that have a measurable impact for women on the ground. Given the ongoing difficulty in identifying existing funding to address many of our priorities around women, this is a decisive opportunity to attach significant funds to a critical, but under-resourced, foreign policy objective. As both bodies move to conference the appropriations bills later this summer, we at the State Department and others in the Administration need to publicly support the Senate language and maintain a strong position in favor of robust funding for women's programs.

House Language

While the House bill preserves valuable language from the FY12 Omnibus on gender integration and advancing women's political and economic leadership, there is very little funding tied specifically to gender activities.¹ The only specific earmarks are \$265 million for microenterprise, of which a portion would go to women; and \$20 million for women's leadership training. The House report also mandates that the State Department develop a comprehensive strategy to prevent child marriage in countries in which it is prevalent and identify diplomatic and programmatic initiatives, but does not allocate specific funding for these activities.

Senate Language

The Senate bill aligns resources for gender activities with the ongoing policies that we're seeking to institutionalize.² In earlier conversations, the Department already told the Senate that we spend \$1.65 billion cumulatively on women, so this language, if passed, would ensure that the building must maintain—if not increase—that level of funding, as well as account for it in the planning and design phases of programs. Far too often, women are not considered as programs are developed, or they are seen as a sideline factor in a larger program. This new language would help us track gender at the design, implementation, and evaluation phases of any programs, to ensure they align with our broader policy objectives.

Specifically, within the broader \$1.65 billion figure, not less than \$50 million would be dedicated solely to implementing the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security and our efforts to empower women as equal partners in countries affected by conflict. Not less than

¹ All House bill language related to gender can be found in Appendix 1.

² All Senate bill language related to gender can be found in Appendix 2.

\$150 million would go toward implementing a comprehensive strategy, which we're currently developing with the White House and USAID, on gender-based violence, including child marriage, rape, female genital cutting and mutilation, and domestic violence. In addition, at least \$50 million would go toward women's political leadership, especially to increase opportunities for women in countries where they suffer discrimination due to law, policy, or practice.

It should also be noted that the Senate bill requires a portion of the \$1 billion for the MENA Incentive Fund be dedicated toward advancing the status of women and girls.

Finally, the Senate bill establishes in law the Office of Global Women's Issues, and authorizes it to be led by an Ambassador-at-Large. The Office would have power to provide policy direction and oversight over all the gender assistance programs, in consultation with USAID's Gender Coordinator.

Next Steps

As we move into conference, we will be engaging with the House side – particularly Chairwoman Granger and Rep. Lowey – to thank them for their leadership on the gender provisions and urge them to include the Senate language in the final bill. This effort is a bipartisan one; both sides of the aisle have consistently affirmed their desire to elevate the status of women globally and to ensure our assistance is effectively targeting women and girls. We will also be reaching out to the Senate Appropriations Committee to thank them for their bold and substantial gesture.