

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
Room HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

We write to request \$87.7 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) to support the formation of legitimate, durable institutions that will enhance peace and stability in Somalia. This request mirrors the President's FY2016 budget request for ESF in Somalia. We believe the decreased FY2017 budget request of \$79.4 million does not adequately account for the severe drought ravaging the country, causing nearly a million people to struggle to procure basic necessities like food and water. Somalia is at a critical juncture and we must provide meaningful assistance in order to build upon gains achieved over the last several years. We thus urge you to prioritize assistance to this country.

In recent years, significant gains have been made against Al-Shabaab with the help of U.S. and international contributions to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Just this month, U.S. forces worked with those on the ground to eliminate many high-ranking Al-Shabaab leaders. However, this assistance needs to be matched by a robust investment in capacity building and support for legitimate and capable government institutions, which are a pre-requisite for long-term stability in Somalia. Somalia is working to repair the negative effects of 20 years of state collapse, widespread violence, and lawlessness. Rebuilding state capacity and fostering a peaceful political system will be a long-term project. For humanitarian and national security reasons, we must be willing to make the commitment necessary to help the people of Somalia undertake that project.

The need to invest in strong institutions and capacity building in Somalia has been made clear by the current situation surrounding remittance flows to Somalia from countries like the U.S., United Kingdom, and Australia. Last year, nearly all financial institutions handling money transfers from the U.S. to Somalia closed the accounts of all Somali-American Money Transfer Operators (MTO). Without banking services, many of these MTOs were forced to curtail their operations, leaving the Somali diaspora in the U.S. without a secure means to send funds to loved ones back home. Domestic U.S. regulations are only partially responsible for this situation; Somalia also lacks a fully functional central bank and the robust regulatory institutions necessary to participate in the world banking system.

Last year, Salaama Somali Bank became the first Somali lender to handle foreign transactions. This is an encouraging sign of stabilization after decades of conflict. We must continue to encourage and support such progress. Failure to adequately invest in Somalia's political and economic development risks undermining the fragile gains made and losing hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. investment to date.

Furthermore, as you consider FY2017 appropriations we request that you consider a request to increase transparency on the efficacy of our aid in Somalia.

Thus we request that you include language in the appropriations directing the Secretary of State to submit a report to the congressional foreign affairs committees containing an assessment and analysis of all government and non-government assistance being provided to the Somali Government and its people. Information provided in the report will help further our priorities, to include: improving the security situation in Somalia; combatting the rise of extremist groups; strengthening governance and civil society; building people-to-people ties between the people of Somalia and the United States; and better coordinating international assistance from all stakeholders.

We respectfully suggest that the report contain the following six sections:

- (1) The status of assistance to Somalia to include U.S. assistance, assistance provided by other nations, and assistance provided by international organizations. Information should include the type of assistance provided, the sectors targeted, an assessment of the impact of the aid, and a quantification and assessment of all training provided.
- (2) An assessment of the feasibility and costs of expanding assistance to Somalia. This should include analysis of Somalia's capacity to receive and effectively utilize higher levels of assistance that highlights the current limitations of the Somalia government. This section should also include an assessment of the feasibility of expanding Economic Support Funds and other programs, including education, English language, and cultural exchange programs.
- (3) An update on the current challenges faced by the Somalia government, including recommendations regarding how those challenges can be met.
- (4) An update on the current status of remittances to Somalia, as well as recommendations on how the U.S. government could facilitate the legal transfer of remittances to help the Somali people and contribute to the stability of Somalia.
- (5) An update on the potential opening of a U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu when the security situation allows, recognizing the need for institutionalized mechanisms to coordinate and synchronize monetary and other support from the international community. The update should contain information on the timeline and requirements that must be met prior to opening an Embassy in Mogadishu, including facility construction requirements, physical security of facilities, and an articulation of what the security situation on the ground should look like before an Embassy could open. The section should also include an update on international community cooperation and the synchronization of security and stability efforts in Somalia, including details on the lead entity/organization.
- (6) Any other matters the Secretary determines appropriate.

Thank you for considering providing the ESF funding that Somalia needs in Fiscal Year 2017 as well as information policy makers need to assess the security, humanitarian and governance needs of Somalia. We appreciate the challenges your subcommittee faces and look forward to working with you to craft a FY2017 State Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that gives fragile countries like Somalia the tools they need to build stable, democratic governing institutions.

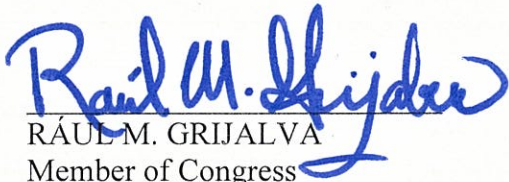
Sincerely,



KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress



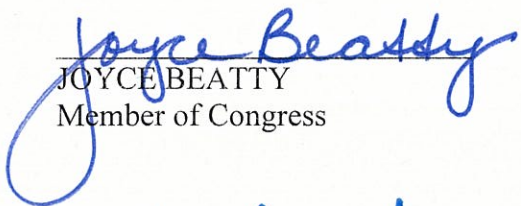
CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress



RÁUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



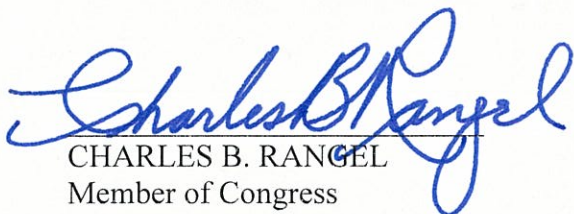
RUBEN GALLEGO
Member of Congress



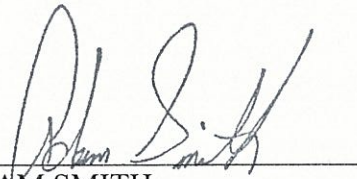
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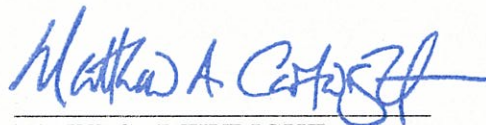
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