**Assistant Secretary Eric P. Schwartz**
***Saving Lives, Securing Interests:***
***Reflections on Humanitarian Response and U.S. Foreign Policy***
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Thank you George. And thanks also to Jean-Marie Guéhenno, who will be part of our subsequent discussion. George, of course, served not only as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs but also as our Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva; and Jean-Marie is one of the foremost experts on the protection of civilians in conflict and was an extraordinarily thoughtful and effective UN Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping. In fact, it's humbling for me to be the featured speaker today.

I also want to thank our colleagues at USIP, including my friend and former colleague Tara Sonenshine; as well as Beth Cole for helping, to create today's partnership, and to David Smock and Amanda Mayoral for all their assistance and support in organizing today's event.

I can't begin this talk without considering the humanitarian tragedy in the Horn of Africa. Over 13 million people in the region are now in need of humanitarian assistance. And of the 3 million people in crisis in southern Somalia, 2.6 million are facing emergency and famine conditions in areas that are mostly under the control of al-Shabaab, and have been largely inaccessible to humanitarian assistance organizations. Tens of thousands are already thought to have perished, and some 750,000 people are at risk of death by the end of this year.

A crisis of this dimension brings into stark relief the systemic challenges facing those who are committed to alleviating suffering and promoting conditions for peace and stability. Indeed, in Somalia, progress in reducing human misery will be measured by the very same

indicators that will test us in future crises: our capacity and our will to address the political and security issues that create most of the world's humanitarian suffering; our capacity and our will to include in the international system of humanitarian response new partners that bring new resources and capabilities; our capacity and our will to equip peacekeepers with the ability to protect civilians; and our capacity and our will to promote more effective and coherent international response – and, within the U.S. government, to better organize ourselves for the challenge.

In short, the immediate and urgent imperatives we face in Somalia all relate directly to the broad challenges that will occupy much of the focus of my talk this afternoon.

And what about the humanitarian challenges we can expect in the future?

While trends in this area are notoriously difficult to measure, it appears that widespread suffering continues unabated. In addition to massive displacement, death and destruction caused by disasters resulting from natural hazards, we've seen in recent years substantial new or ongoing displacement in places like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan.

We also face a range of protracted refugee situations where the stakes for human security and well-being are also substantial and significant. And from the Roma in Europe, to Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic, to the Rohingya in Burma, stateless people – which number as many as 12 million worldwide – suffer from marginalization and neglect.

These situations create a dizzying array of dilemmas, but progress is achievable – and generous U.S. financial support for humanitarian response is critical, as an expression of our values and in recognition of our interests.

First, there is the moral imperative – the simple policy goal of saving lives. Our supporters in Congress well understand that our entire annual civilian humanitarian assistance funding is only a small fraction of the less than one percent of our federal budget that is dedicated to overseas assistance, and is a wise investment.

Second, we have a key interest in sustaining U.S. leadership worldwide, which enables us to influence the development of international humanitarian and refugee law, programs and policy, and to leverage critical support from others. And of course, our influence comes not only from the wisdom of our perspectives, but also from the magnitude of our aid.

Third, our humanitarian assistance can help to promote reconciliation and well-being in circumstances where despair and desperation may threaten stability, and ultimately, our own national security interests.

For example, about two million or more refugees in Africa returned home over the past decade, and the United States provided important assistance for the return effort. There are still some 1.7 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and our support of ongoing voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan and our advocacy and our funding of community programs have been important in helping to sustain Pakistani willingness to host Afghan refugees.

And in the Middle East, we support the UN Relief and Works Agency – UNRWA – which assists Palestinian refugees with food, health care, rental subsidies, rebuilding expertise,

and education programs promoting tolerance. If UNRWA didn't exist, the international community would have to build another institution to do the job.

So if our rationales for assistance are sound, how do we better ensure that our actions and activities are as effective as they can possibly be? In addressing this critical challenge, we must proceed on two fronts – building our national capacities while strengthening the multilateral system of humanitarian response.

First, humanitarians in the U.S. government must sustain and strengthen our involvement in policy advocacy. Among our colleagues in other bureaus and agencies, and in our engagement with governments hosting populations at risk, we must be relentless, formidable, and highly effective advocates for victims of persecution, violence and human rights abuses, emboldened by a broad conception of our humanitarian and protection mandate. In short, we must be skillful and aggressive humanitarian diplomats, both at home and abroad.

For example, in Sri Lanka in 2009, my visits with displaced Tamil civilians interned in camps in the north helped me to more deeply appreciate their challenging circumstances and informed U.S. efforts to provide them with assistance. But it was just as critical that I pressed the case with the President of Sri Lanka, with the Defense Minister and with other senior officials – for freedom of movement and return of these IDPs to their homes, and for reconciliation.

In Iraq, Jordan and Syria, my visits with Iraqis who had to flee their homes have informed our efforts to provide relief, but they have also provided critical opportunities to urge senior Iraqi officials to develop strategies to promote return, local integration and reconciliation, all of which provide a foundation for enduring peace and stability.

In Israel, I was deeply moved by the testimony of a young Eritrean woman I met in a Tel Aviv shelter, who talked to me about dreadful abuses to which she and her very young son were subjected by migrant smugglers in the Sinai. Our conversation enriched my understanding of ways our assistance programs might help such victims. But we also owe it to her and to other victims to use the insights we gain by such encounters to encourage senior Egyptian and Israeli officials to more effectively combat smuggling and provide aid to victims – as indeed we have so urged them to do.

And in Kenya, my visits to refugee camps in the remote northeast of the country, which now host nearly 500,000 Somalis, reaffirmed my conviction about the critical importance of opportunities for self-sufficiency – including education and permission to work – among the hundreds of thousands of long-term refugees. During my trip to Dadaab last month with Dr. Jill Biden, I was inspired by a meeting with a young Somali woman who grew up in the camp, and was among the few refugees to be given the opportunity for higher education outside of Dadaab. She's now giving back to her community through her work as a facilitator for an NGO in the camp and as a volunteer assisting new arrivals.

The reality, however, is that greater opportunities for long-staying Somali refugees in Kenya will – understandably – require the cooperation and support of the Government of Kenya – hence the critical importance of our sustained policy dialogue with Kenyan officials, from the President and the Prime Minister to other Kenyan officials involved in humanitarian response.

Without compromising the impartiality of the programs we are supporting, responsible humanitarian action also requires engagement in broader governmental discussions of policy on political and security issues. Whether it is improving political and human rights conditions in

places like Burma, Libya, or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or security conditions in Chad with the withdrawal of the MINURCAT peacekeeping mission, these issues have serious humanitarian implications; humanitarians should be offering both advice and assistance at the decision-making table. If not invited, we should be pounding on the door of the rooms where these decisions are being made.

An emboldened and broadened concept of our humanitarian mandate goes hand-in-hand with a more integrated U.S. government approach toward conflict prevention and response, one of the key objectives of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review that the Department of State and USAID are now implementing. And we have two critical challenges ahead of us: first, to implement the Secretary of State's goal for enhanced capacity within the State Department; and second, to ensure integration of effort between the Department and USAID. We have begun that process, in part through the creation of a Humanitarian Policy Working Group that brings together all of the civilian agencies and offices engaged in humanitarian policy work, but there is much more to be done.

Strengthened coordination will also enhance our ability to anticipate and respond to a changing humanitarian landscape that demands new approaches on issues like urban refugees; protracted refugee situations; and the protection of particularly vulnerable populations, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. It will also better enable us to meet ambitious objectives of President Obama, Secretary Clinton and USAID Administrator Shah to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality – through a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; through support of the UN Population Fund and its work to provide reproductive health services in conflict settings; and through efforts to combat discrimination against women in nationality laws.

As part of the QDDR implementation process, we must also work with our military colleagues to best utilize their unique capabilities – especially in quick-onset large-scale emergencies that may outstrip the short-term capacity of civilian providers – and to develop shared understandings of the principles that should inform and define their engagement.

Let me also emphasize that if we are to be credible interlocutors with foreign governments, we must practice at home what we preach abroad. So we have sought to ease the burdens faced by newly arriving refugees in the U.S. by expanding our assistance to them in their first weeks after arrival and we have engaged with the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) in its efforts to address domestic migrant detention practices. But we must do more. For example, while enhanced refugee admissions screening procedures have been important in ensuring that we do not permit entry of persons who would pose security risks, we now must address the major challenges these procedures have imposed on our ability to promptly resettle deserving refugees.

We must also give genuine substance to our expressions of support for multilateral humanitarian organizations. No matter how much we enhance our own national capabilities, it is the major international organizations that largely determine the character of the worldwide response to humanitarian suffering. Our Bureau provides the bulk of U.S. government support to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration, and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees; and this support enables us to influence and enhance the character and capacity of these organizations. For instance, during the Libya conflict, the capacity of UNHCR and IOM to respond quickly to the migration challenges in Tunisia and Egypt was in no small

measure due to the capacity that core funding had enabled both organizations to develop over the past many years.

But from Haiti to Somalia, problems in effective delivery of aid and protection have demonstrated that the multilateral humanitarian system has a long way to go. In a conversation with me earlier this month, Secretary Clinton put it so well, when she said that we have yet to develop a consistently effective and predictable template for crisis response.

So how can we improve multilateral efforts to ease suffering?

First, the United States and other donor governments must take aim at serious challenges that are bedeviling the system, including failures in coordination between UN and non-UN assistance providers; the limited ability of donor governments to influence decisions made by the UN-led humanitarian coordination structure; and uneven performance by some agencies vested with interagency leadership responsibilities in crisis response.

Second, we must further encourage support from non-traditional donors, while seeking to ensure their participation enhances coherence and effective response. The crisis in Somalia has demonstrated the importance of working with new donors and civil society groups, both for the resources they have at their disposal and for their ability to work in areas that may be inaccessible to established relief organizations. But a proliferation of groups operating on their own can also risk creating obstacles to coherent and effective delivery to those in need – and these issues must be carefully addressed. Also, as we move toward greater inclusion, we must do so with a keen understanding that from the Middle East to Asia to Latin America, governments that are prepared to support the international humanitarian response system will reasonably expect to play a role in shaping its further evolution and development.

Third, we and our humanitarian counterparts in international organizations must encourage the further development of civilian protection capabilities in other parts of the UN system, and, in particular, among peacekeepers.

Finally, the U.S. government itself must make greater efforts to promote greater effectiveness and coherence among international humanitarian agencies – and within the international humanitarian response system overall. We have punched below our weight and we must do much better. As I've said, whatever our efforts to improve our national capacities, they will be inadequate without an ambitious effort to enhance the character of multilateral response.

Allow me to close on a personal note as I prepare to leave the Department of State. Since July 2009, I have worked each day to justify the trust and confidence of the President and Secretary of State, and to serve as a responsible steward of the humanitarian brief – traveling to dozens of countries where our humanitarian diplomacy and assistance has made a difference, visiting with vulnerable women, men and children in some of the most difficult environments, working to sustain our world leadership in international humanitarian response and our strong support from the Congress, and strengthening the policy engagement and the operational capacity of a bureau – PRM – that has some of the most dedicated and skilled professionals I have ever encountered.

As I prepare to move on, I leave with a deep conviction that U.S. support for international humanitarian assistance is money well-spent: it saves lives, it promotes our leadership, and it can create conditions for peace and reconciliation. And while the challenges that characterize this work are daunting, we must not underestimate our collective capacity to improve the human condition – to provide food, shelter, education, basic protection and real hope for a brighter

future. In sustaining focused and skillful efforts to promote the principles of international humanitarianism, we demonstrate our commitment to these honorable objectives, and we keep faith with millions of vulnerable people around the world.

Thank you.