

GLOBAL SECURITY PRIORITIES BRIEFING

Statement of

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I want to thank Representative Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Representative Dan Lungren (R-CA) for sponsoring the Global Security Priorities Act and for hosting this briefing.

We are hearing a lot this season about how the American people are longing for cooperation and action in Washington to tackle the problems facing our country and the world. The resolution being introduced by Representatives McGovern and Lungren is an example of the kind of thoughtful, bipartisan dialogue that is needed on challenging issues like nuclear proliferation, terrorism, global security, and the implementation of global goals to save the lives of vulnerable children.

There are a number of initiatives relating to the Millennium Development Goals and to child survival. The U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act, for example, will be the subject of a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing.

But the Global Security Priorities Act makes a special contribution. It takes a hard look at how we can enhance global security and address the threat of terrorism by reducing the number and accessibility of nuclear weapons. The measure further acknowledges the need to make child survival and child nutrition budgetary priorities. It invites a discussion of the security implications of societies trapped in poverty, hunger, and disease. Can we consider ourselves secure in a world where 9.7 million children every year don't survive to their fifth birthday?

Representatives McGovern and Lungren are distinguished as thoughtful leaders in their parties – and both are key members of the House Budget Committee. So their sponsorship of this resolution initiates an elevated, serious dialogue on the need to reexamine budget priorities.

What is particularly significant about this resolution and the Global Priorities Campaign behind it is the active engagement of those who approach these issues from a faith-based or religious perspective. We have seen the global impact of people of faith on issues like debt relief. They have promoted a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and they are joining the ranks of those fighting climate change.

Their voices add urgency to the effort to save children from dying of preventable causes. They remind us that it is a moral outrage that nearly 27,000

children are dying every day when know how to save them. Despite the progress that has been made, the world is not yet on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal #4 of a two-thirds reduction in the rate of child mortality by 2015.

Most of the children at risk live in 60 developing countries – and half of all child deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. Infections like pneumonia and tetanus, and diarrhea from poor water and sanitation, account for nearly half of all child deaths. Lack of nutritious food contributes to half of all under-five deaths. The bipartisan McGovern-Dole school feeding program, which the legislation seeks to boost, is part of the solution.

Since child deaths in 1990 numbered about 13 million, meeting the global goal implies that during the next seven years the number of child deaths must be cut in half – to fewer than 13,000 deaths per day or fewer than 5 million per year. That’s quite a challenge. Business as usual won’t get us there.

The McGovern-Lungren resolution represents a break from business as usual. We believe it will foster the kind of committed search for bipartisan action that is so desperately needed.

Helping families to access an integrated package of proven, low-cost interventions for children and mothers in their own communities could cut mortality rates by up to 30% at a cost of \$1,000 per life saved. That means every additional \$100 million invested in this approach would save up to 100,000 children. The McGovern-Lungren measure would make securing such funding a budgetary imperative.

UNICEF’s *State of the World’s Children Report for 2008* focuses on Child Survival. The full report can be found at the UNICEF Web site, www.unicef.org. I’d like to conclude by reading the last paragraphs of the report:

“It is time to rally behind the goals of maternal, newborn and child survival and health with renewed energy and sharper vision, and to position these goals at the heart of the international agenda to fulfill the tenets of social justice and honor the sanctity of life.

“The means are at hand. It is now a question of will and of action – for there is no enterprise more noble, or reward more precious than saving the life of a child.”

Thank you.