

MFAN Statement on Chairman Howard Berman's "Initiating Foreign Assistance Act of 2009" (H.R. 2139)

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April 29, 2009 (WASHINGTON) – This statement is delivered on behalf of the [Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network](#) (MFAN) by MFAN Co-Chairs [Steve Radelet](#) and [David Beckmann](#):

Yesterday evening, Chairman Howard Berman (D-CA) of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs took the first step towards modernizing the U.S. foreign assistance system by introducing legislation calling for the creation of the first-ever National Strategy for Global Development (NSGD). The "Initiating Foreign Assistance Act of 2009" (H.R. 2139) would also put in place new monitoring and evaluation and transparency provisions, to ensure U.S. foreign assistance is being used effectively and efficiently. We applaud Chairman Berman's leadership on this issue, and are pleased that he has been joined in this bipartisan and common-sense effort by Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL). The legislation would provide an unprecedented and much-needed strategic framework for U.S. global development efforts, and we are hopeful it will move through the legislative process quickly.

As the all-important opening move in a broader effort to make U.S. foreign assistance more strategic, effective, and transparent, the NSGD would:

- Provide a detailed vision for how U.S. efforts to alleviate poverty, fight disease, create opportunity, and foster sustainable security in developing nations are in the nation's interest; and
- Give the Obama Administration and Congress a framework for jointly turning a widely-held and important view – that global development should have equal status in U.S. foreign affairs with defense and diplomacy – into effective policy, particularly through a rewrite of the Foreign Assistance Act.

Chairman Berman's legislation would also establish a transparent approach to planning, measuring and evaluating U.S. foreign assistance efforts to make sure U.S. taxpayer dollars are used as effectively and efficiently as possible, and that the American people know how their money is being spent.

MFAN hopes that the Obama Administration will recognize the importance and value of developing an NSGD. The most successful approach to doing so has three key elements: immediately naming a seasoned USAID Administrator to speak on behalf of development issues and giving that person a seat at the National Security Council;

making sure the creation of the NSGD is run through the NSC to ensure a “whole-of-government,” interagency process; and aligning the strategy with the nation’s overall National Security Strategy. MFAN is ready and willing to support the Administration in this critical effort.