Statement of Senator Richard G. Lugar (Ret.) on House Passage of the Global Food Security Act

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It is with great pleasure that I note the strong bipartisan endorsement of the Global Food Security Act by the U.S. House of Representatives. U.S. leadership in addressing the misery of chronic hunger by more than 800 million people across the globe and its repercussions on national security, stable governance, and economic development is both a moral charge and critical to global stability. Yesterday’s strong support of this leadership, with a vote of 369-53, sends a powerful message of the Congressional commitment to this effort. With the Senate having already approved the bill, it may now proceed swiftly to the President’s desk for signature into law.

I congratulate Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) who was my partner at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as we crafted global food security legislation in 2009 following the devastating food price spikes of 2007-2008 which pushed more than 200 million more people into a state of chronic hunger and brought the total number at the time to nearly 1 billion. His continued patience and persistence in working toward enactment of this critical legislation ensures that there is no question about the commitment of the United States to eliminate hunger and malnutrition across the globe. Senator Casey’s partners in this effort in this Congress, Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN), deserve our thanks for their steady and patient efforts as well.

The bill places leadership responsibility for developing a Global Food Security Strategy on the President under a whole-of-government approach, appropriately signifying the high priority of this goal. Further, I am extremely pleased to note the foreign aid reform standards built into the legislation including accountability – transparency, monitoring, and evaluation - of programs carried out under the act and alignment with country-owned agriculture plans within developing countries in order to support sustainability of U.S. investments. As an Honorary Co-Chair of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network, I value these important aid reforms as keys to strengthening the impact of U.S. foreign assistance.
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Finally, as the former Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I know first-hand how challenging the task of authorizing foreign assistance programs can be. I compliment the Committee’s current Chairman, Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), for his leadership in including the authorization of the Emergency Food Security Program in the bill. This vital program addresses the immediate and emergency food needs of people in crisis. With more than 60 million people across the globe currently displaced from their homes, primarily as a result of conflict, the time for a fully authorized Emergency Food Security Program is indeed now.