

NO TIME TO WASTE

Initial InterAction Recommendations for the Biden-Harris Administration

INTRODUCTION

As the Biden-Harris Administration renews America's standing in the world and tackles global challenges, an opportunity exists not just to repair diplomatic relationships but also to chart a bold new course and shape a forward-leaning role for development and humanitarian assistance within U.S. foreign policy.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the global development and humanitarian community faced changing and expanding needs in an increasingly constrained operating space. Inequitable growth, a changing climate, backsliding in democratic governance, and increasing conflicts present significant threats to decades of progress on key global development goals aligned with American interests. Moreover, a shifting international order and shrinking space for civil society disrupt non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) operations and ability to serve communities.

A serious elevation of development and humanitarian priorities will require a renewed commitment to U.S. foreign assistance funding. To accomplish its goals, the Biden-Harris Administration should work with Congress to double annual bilateral and multilateral economic and humanitarian assistance by 2025.

InterAction is the largest U.S.-based alliance of international NGOs working to eliminate extreme poverty, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace, and ensure dignity for all people. We developed the below roadmap alongside and on behalf of our nearly 200 organizational members and partners, which work in almost every country worldwide.

Undergirded by the **five fundamental principles of U.S. foreign assistance programs**, these recommendations outline several key actions necessary for broader, rights-based poverty alleviation and U.S. leadership globally.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To strengthen American leadership, rebalancing U.S. national security and foreign policy priorities is essential and must involve improving and scaling up America's humanitarian and development responses around the world. This change will require structural, policy, and personnel decisions that shift aid's traditional place in foreign policy while combating the inequalities infused within foreign assistance structures.

Our recommendations fall into four categories, outlined below.

Elevate Principled Foreign Assistance within U.S. Foreign Policy

- Rebalance U.S. foreign policy priorities by doubling funding for bilateral and multilateral economic and humanitarian assistance.
- Support at least \$20 billion for global COVID-19 response.
- End transactional and politicized approaches to foreign assistance.
- Uphold humane and values-based displacement and migration policies.
- Improve localization and country ownership for effective development while contending with historical injustices.
- Commit to conflict prevention.



Advance Signature Issues for Better Development and Humanitarian Outcomes

- Build back better to prevent future pandemics.
- Champion the needs and voices of frontline communities in the global push to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Make gender equality and inclusivity a centerpiece of foreign policy.
- Embrace democracy and human rights as cornerstones of foreign policy.
- Reverse global deterioration in respect for civilians in armed conflict.
- Prioritize inclusive policies and investments in children and youth.

Support Inclusive, Effective, and Responsive Foreign Assistance

- Rebuild the State Department, USAID, and NSC leadership by quickly appointing qualified, elevated, and diverse individuals
- Enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of staffing for all U.S. agencies.
- Maintain, further invest in, and improve on recent structural changes at USAID.
- Improve cross-sectoral integration in development and humanitarian responses.
- Reduce legal and regulatory impediments to NGO operations.
- Ensure the U.S. Development Finance Corporation uses transparent and effective approaches to promote sustainable development globally.
- Fulfill Grand Bargain commitments.

Restore and Advance U.S. leadership in the Multilateral System

- Recommit and pay our fair share to multilateral processes and agencies to advance environmental sustainability and effectiveness of global responses.
- Recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Bolster the U.S.'s role in Multilateral Development Banks and the IMF.
- Renew U.S. leadership in the G7 and the G20.
- Recommit and reaffirm U.S. participation in international treaties and commitments.

Our broad community draws insights and offers these suggestions based on decades of on-the-ground operational experience partnering with the U.S. government (USG) on programs and policies and observing these efforts. To effectively deliver on these recommendations, the Biden-Harris Administration will need to partner early and frequently with a wide range of stakeholders, especially global development and relief NGOs seeking to take a rights-based approach to development and humanitarian work.

These recommendations are detailed below.

ELEVATE PRINCIPLED FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WITHIN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

U.S. foreign policy must lead to a more peaceful, just, and prosperous world. The U.S. must take a principled approach to development and humanitarian assistance, grounded in evidence and based on needs, impartiality, human rights, and inclusivity—as opposed to the currently-politicized approach to foreign aid. Prioritizing development and humanitarian assistance within U.S. foreign policy will improve the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable people worldwide; support human rights, democracy, and good governance; and ensure a safer and more stable world for everyone. The new Administration must quickly take the actions below to reverse harmful policies, minimize lasting damage to the U.S.'s reputation and role in the world, and ensure a coordinated and effective response to threats such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEY ACTIONS

Rebalance U.S. foreign policy priorities by doubling funding for bilateral and multilateral economic and humanitarian assistance.

The F.Y. 2022 President's Budget Request provides an immediate opportunity to signal U.S. leadership on critical global challenges and begin to rebalance U.S. foreign policy priorities. This shift is the first step in a commitment by the Administration to double annual bilateral and multilateral economic and humanitarian assistance funding by the end of the first term. Funding levels should be significantly increased, commensurate with global needs, and support the structures and strategies that ensure effective implementation and timely delivery of assistance. U.S. assistance should meet the urgency and rapidly evolving nature of local contexts and grow from current levels to build local capacity to face the unprecedented challenges from compound disasters and long-term trends. As part of the annual appropriations process, InterAction releases **Choose to Invest**, which provides detailed account-by-account descriptions, recommendations, and justifications for foreign assistance funding.

Support at least \$20 billion for the global COVID-19 response.

The COVID-19 outbreak and resulting movement restrictions and economic downturns have disrupted all aspects of development and humanitarian progress, yet funding for the international response to COVID-19 is woefully inadequate. The Administration should immediately work with Congress to appropriate at least **\$20 billion in emergency funding** to address the initial global response to COVID-19. The U.S. should lead with a bold investment in developing and deploying life-saving tools and immediate health responses and addressing the severe and life-threatening secondary impacts of COVID-19. **COVID-19 is not just a health crisis**—the pandemic will have far-reaching, multifaceted economic, human rights, and gender impacts on the world's poorest and most marginalized populations.

End transactional and politicized approaches to foreign assistance.

Foreign assistance is most effective when it is principled, mission-driven, evidence-based, rights-affirming, and human-centered. Attempting to instrumentalize foreign assistance for transactional or political ends sets back development gains, compounds human suffering, and has repeatedly proven ineffective. The U.S. must recommit its assistance toward an impartial, needs-based approach that targets all vulnerable populations in need without any discrimination. To immediately act toward these ends, the U.S. should remove politically-motivated, transactional conditionalities on bilateral assistance in humanitarian and development contexts, particularly in northern Yemen, Central America, Ethiopia, Pakistan, and the West Bank and Gaza. This should also include the de-politicization of foreign assistance related to family planning and reproductive health.

Uphold humane and values-based displacement and migration policies.

The U.S. should return to humane and values-based policies related to refugees and migrants—demonstrated in convening the 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees. The new Administration should immediately reset the U.S. resettlement cap to a minimum of 125,000 and request further resettlement funding so the cap can be responsibly increased again. U.S. respect for international laws and norms must be restored, including the revocation of discriminatory travel bans and the "remain in Mexico" policy; ensuring that immigrant children are no longer forcibly separated from their families; and affirming the principle of non-refoulement. The U.S. should leverage this renewed leadership to call on other states to share responsibility and develop equivalent policies of their own.

Improve localization and country ownership for effective development while contending with historical injustices.

Inequity in many countries and regions worldwide is bound up in the local-to-global interface of historical, economic, social, and political forces that disproportionately affect Black, indigenous, and other marginalized groups. Colonialism's history of oppression has too often underpinned foreign assistance programs' design, resulting in structural, racial, and ethnic inequities. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognized the benefits of ending the traditional relationship between donors, implementers, and beneficiaries and shifting to local ownership of program priorities, implementation, and financing. Correcting the imbalances of power and erosion of civil and democratic rights at the

country and local levels through an improved localization and country ownership agenda also leads to more successful and sustainable programs. The Administration can achieve this by directly supporting national and local actors, simplifying procedures, and examining how compliance burdens can undermine local and national NGO leadership and ownership. Local communities should also have a voice in development decisions, including accountability to human and environmental rights frameworks.

Commit to conflict prevention.

To prevent violent conflict, the Administration should place renewed emphasis on supporting democratic rights, institutions, and governance; women’s political empowerment; justice; and peacebuilding within U.S. foreign policy. As such, the U.S. should fully implement the **Global Fragility Act (GFA)**—including funding the multi-donor Global Fragility Fund, the **Women Peace and Security Act**, and the **Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act**. The Administration should also establish an interagency assistance coordination structure to better align conflict prevention efforts and democracy promotion activities with our global development and humanitarian assistance efforts. This structure will ensure that coordination to address conflict does not inadvertently undermine the impartiality and effectiveness of humanitarian actors’ assistance.

ADVANCE SIGNATURE ISSUES FOR BETTER DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN OUTCOMES

An ambitious foreign policy agenda is necessary to meet today’s global challenges and ensure better long-term humanitarian and development outcomes. The U.S. must think boldly and more broadly than ever before to incorporate innovative responses to the challenges we face, particularly as the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. The below recommendations reflect a new path forward for U.S. development and humanitarian policy. They serve as an opportunity for the wide-reaching, positive impact of poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance to serve as a lasting legacy for the Biden-Harris Administration. For these policies to be effective, the Administration must implement them in conjunction with other recommendations made in this document, in consultation with Congress and implementing stakeholders, and with adequate prioritization and resourcing.

KEY ACTIONS

Build back better to prevent future pandemics.

Prioritize global health security and health systems strengthening to facilitate recovery from COVID-19 and prevent future pandemics. Strengthening global health systems, including prioritizing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in U.S. global development policy, will build resilience and improve prevention and response measures for future infectious disease outbreaks. COVID-19 is devastating vulnerable communities—a reminder that pandemic preparedness requires substantial investments in cross-cutting functions and system strengthening beyond immediate health responses. COVID-19 has also emphasized the importance of the basic right of and access to health care, including reproductive health care, for all people. Building on the Affordable Care Act’s legacy, the Biden-Harris Administration should create a U.S. vision for championing universal health coverage globally. Finally, the U.S. government’s failure to rapidly obligate COVID-19 relief funding due to bureaucratic barriers demonstrates the need for reforms to facilitate the rapid delivery of aid in sudden-onset emergencies. The U.S. should establish new authorities for the U.S. government to pre-approve partners and ensure the streamlined distribution of funding from flexible appropriations accounts.

Champion the needs and voices of frontline communities in the global push to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The U.S. should immediately rejoin the Paris Agreement on climate change and establish a new 2030 U.S. Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)—in consultation with directly-affected communities, the U.S. Congress, and NGOs—and release it well ahead of the 2021 United Nations (U.N.) Climate Change Conference. Further, the new Administration should prioritize hosting a Climate World Summit and requesting that the U.S. Senate ratify the Kigali Amendment to

the Montreal Protocol. The new Administration should also immediately take path-clearing actions that do not require legislative or judicial action.¹ Any White House-level initiatives should consider and consult with those most affected by climate change's impacts and structurally incorporate leadership and lessons learned from USG development and humanitarian agencies. Further, The U.S. should lead and resource multilateral climate mitigation and adaptation solutions that fully account for the needs of people who are the hardest hit by climate change. The Administration should update USAID's lapsed Climate Strategy and the USAID Environmental and Natural Resource Management (ENRM) Framework to deepen climate's integration. The U.S. should also participate in the forthcoming Climate Finance Summit—an opportunity to increase bilateral assistance for adaptation—and implement an interagency strategy for addressing the predicted influx of climate-induced migrants into the U.S. and other host countries globally.

Make gender equality and inclusivity a centerpiece of foreign policy.

The U.S. should approach foreign policy in a way that prioritizes human rights, gender equality, consideration of intersectionality, and the disruption of colonial, racist, and patriarchal power structures at all levels. Such an approach should be based on the work of and in close consultation with civil society. Data and transparency on gender and inclusion in all USG programming should be enhanced, and all-of-government strategies should be updated to ensure they are inclusive, cross-sectoral, gender-transformative, transparent, and outcome-oriented. Key strategies to update include the 2012 USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment policy, the 2012 Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally, and the Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls. Further, the U.S. should announce and implement initiatives that promote equality, equity, and inclusivity. It should support legislation promoting equal and inclusive ideas and opportunities, such as creating an Office of International Disability Rights and the Girls LEAD Act.

Embrace democracy and human rights as cornerstones of foreign policy.

The Biden-Harris Administration can immediately signal and bolster its commitment to elevate democracy and human rights by requesting increased funding for their advancement **in the President's inaugural budget and** by mapping and upgrading democracy, rights, and governance tools across the U.S. government. Given the commitment to hosting a Democracy Summit within the first year, the Biden-Harris Administration should model inclusion and ensure civil society has a seat at the table by launching a consultative civil society process to help shape the Summit's content and outcome. In the long term, a Presidential Advisory Council on Democracy—or a similar high-level focal point—could drive interagency focus and provide an enduring partnership with civil society on shared priorities like disinformation, media manipulation, electoral integrity, and growing authoritarianism.

Reverse global deterioration in respect for civilians in armed conflict.

Building on the previous two administrations' policy progress, including the impending adoption and promulgation of the new **DoD-Instruction (DOD-I) on civilian casualties**, the U.S. should exercise global leadership to reinforce international humanitarian law (IHL) and protection of civilians in armed conflict. This entails **establishing explicit U.S. policy** where strategic, legal, and institutional interests are served by minimizing civilian harm in U.S. military operations and security partnerships. It also requires a commitment to transparency of effort and outcomes, concrete steps to respond to civilian harm where it occurs, and devoting resources to achieve these results—including through DOD-I implementation. The National Security Council should resume its interagency coordination role to ensure U.S. policy coherence and effectiveness, as envisioned by **EO 13732**, including regular and substantive dialogue with the humanitarian and human rights community. Such leadership would position the U.S. to champion the restoration of respect for norms that safeguard civilian life, property, and infrastructure and enable the U.S. to call on other states to respond with comparable policies and practical measures of their own. Further, U.S. arms transfers and security partnerships should be conditioned on a partner's demonstrable capacity and willingness to comply with international humanitarian law and respect human rights. The U.S. should additionally reinstitute U.S. landmine policies, ensure that civilian casualty reporting requirements apply to all kinetic operations, and adopt a policy and consistent practice of meaningful and effective restitution, remedy, and reconstruction for individuals, communities, and societies suffering injury and losses as a result of U.S. military operations.

Prioritize inclusive policies and investments for children and youth.

The needs and voices of children are too often missing from policy discussions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing marginalization and created new and increased risks, including learning loss, poor nutrition, school dropout, exposure to violence, extreme poverty, and social isolation. This is particularly true for the most marginalized—young people with disabilities, girls, LGBTQ+ youth, and children uprooted by conflict. Foreign assistance should reach families and communities early so that all children have a healthy start, begin their educational journeys developmentally on track, and acquire foundational learning skills throughout childhood. The Biden-Harris Administration should ensure dedicated high-level attention on global children and youth issues, including through a senior position at the National Security Council to centralize and elevate a coordinated whole-of-government approach and achieve better outcomes for girls, children, and adolescents. Equitable and inclusive policies, such as the Global Child Thrive Act and the Keeping Girls in School Act, are needed to ensure that humanitarian and global development programs empower young people, meaningfully engage children and youth in policy decisions, and support marginalized populations who are most at risk of being left behind.

SUPPORT INCLUSIVE, EFFECTIVE, AND RESPONSIVE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Inclusive, effective, and responsive systems and structures are essential for development and humanitarian relief programs to work. The U.S. must advance just and inclusive policy, support and empower key personnel, ensure transparent and efficient processes, and bolster existing structures to accomplish our goals of fostering more peaceful, prosperous, and just societies.

KEY ACTIONS

Rebuild the State Department, USAID, and NSC leadership and quickly appoint qualified, elevated, and diverse individuals.

The gutting of the State Department and damage to foreign policy decision-making processes means the new Administration must take even more care to appoint a diverse slate of exceptional political appointees who can guide the repair. In particular, the USAID Administrator should be quickly nominated and included in national security discussions at the Principals level, and National Security Council meetings as appropriate, so that international development is equal in priority to diplomacy and defense in decision-making processes. The Biden-Harris Administration should also appoint a National Security Council Senior Director for Development and Humanitarian Affairs to coordinate international development and humanitarian efforts. Beyond baseline qualifications, all political appointees should be committed to an intersectional approach to development, humanitarian, and human rights policies that prioritize gender equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion. The senior ranks of the State Department and USAID must also be rapidly rebuilt to reinvigorate diplomacy and international development. Career staff across the government must be given the proper authority to carry out their jobs. For example, apportionment authority should be returned to career officials at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of staffing for all U.S. agencies.

The Federal Government has a commitment to foster an inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity of the United States. However, concerns endure regarding the lack of diversity within USAID and State's workforce, service providers, and contractors. In hiring, leadership should ensure that historically disenfranchised and marginalized populations have an equal opportunity to be hired and, once hired, to thrive in their positions. All hired staff should be qualified for their position and committed to an intersectional approach to development and humanitarian policy that prioritizes gender equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion. This commitment should be underscored by regular anti-racism and diversity, equity, and inclusion education and training, and the misguided Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping should be rescinded. USAID and State should require strict adherence from service providers and contractors on non-discrimination. Also, USAID should assess its progress to achieve objectives on diversity and inclusion, take corrective

measures, and set new targets for 2022. Finally, USAID should immediately implement the GAO's 2020 recommendations to strengthen the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OCRD).

Maintain, further invest in, and improve on recent structural changes at USAID.ⁱⁱ

Recent Congressionally-approved structural changes under USAID Transformation were driven by career USAID staff and included significant consultation with the NGO community. While many details about the new structures are still being finalized and further consultations on implementation are needed, the Administration should maintain approved structures and invest in modernizing USAID to address the humanitarian and development challenges of the future. The creation of the Relief, Response, and Resilience (R3) bureaus improves the interconnection and coordination between humanitarian response, conflict prevention, and food security and resilience development programming. The Administration should also continue efforts to merge the policy, budget, and evaluation functions under the Bureau for Policy, Resources, and Performance. Other structural components of USAID Transformation, such as the Global Health Bureau's reorganization, require further stakeholder consultation to fully assess the impact of these changes and achieve consensus on how to move forward.

Improve cross-sectoral integration in development and humanitarian responses.

Cross-cutting issues like food security; nutrition; resilience; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); climate; the environment; children and youth; gender; democracy; and governance are central to effective development responses but are often siloed into singular areas of focus. USAID made progress on integration and coordination of these issues through recently-established Leadership Councils across technical bureaus that can serve as models. In the near-term, there are also opportunities to drive integration across development and humanitarian programming by ensuring complementarity and deliberate linkages between the Global Food Security Strategy, Global Water Strategy, and Global Fragility Strategy, all of which will be written or updated in 2021. Whole-of-government approaches to cross-cutting issues can also be useful in implementing new approaches to food aid reform.

Reduce legal and regulatory impediments to NGO operations.

NGOs' ability to effectively operate, particularly in non-permissive environments, is often impeded by U.S. government counter-terrorism laws and regulations, as well as sanctions against malign actors. Overly broad authorities to deal with complex problems—such as U.S. policies restricting Chinese telecommunications equipment—place tremendous operational burdens upon U.S. government implementers and reduce the impact of U.S. investments in development and humanitarian programming. Sanctions authorities must do more to reduce the prevalence of bank de-risking to ensure that NGOs operating in difficult environments have financial access and the ability to deliver goods. Other sanctions authorities, such as those under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, should protect critical civil society and democracy programs. The Bank Examination Manual should immediately reflect the risk-based approach to banking NGOs as outlined in the U.S. National Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment to alleviate unintended consequences of transfer delays or closed bank accounts. More robust and transparent safeguards should be integrated into partner vetting programs, and beneficiary screening requirements should be ended for humanitarian programs, reducing undue risk to humanitarian workers.

Ensure the U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) uses transparent and effective approaches to promote sustainable development globally.

The new DFC is a ready-made asset to the Biden-Harris Administration's U.S. foreign policy by advancing sustainable private sector-led development around the world. To fulfill this potential, the DFC should prioritize investment in low- and lower-income countries and sub-regions while coordinating with USAID, mainstreaming gender, creating job opportunities for decent work for youth, leading in clean energy and workers' rights, monitoring and evaluating projects in meaningful ways, consulting with local and international NGOs, strengthening transparency and accountability, and phasing out U.S. domestic investments authorized under the Defense Production Act. The U.S. should better integrate development into agency-wide strategy, increase investments in climate mitigation and adaptation, and restore the Environmental and Social Policy and Procedures and align them with relevant U.S. Treasury policy. The Administration should also issue an Executive Order to expand the mandates around gender analysis and integration to include all foreign assistance, diplomacy, and

trade agencies and departments. Finally, the U.S. should create a DFC remedy fund to address negative impacts from its projects and launch a stakeholder consultation process for an independent accountability mechanism.

Fulfill Grand Bargain commitments.

In 2016, the United States made commitments under the Grand Bargain to enact improvements and efficiencies in its humanitarian assistance. Many of these commitments have not been fulfilled. Recent USAID efforts to reform the delivery of its humanitarian assistance have focused upon structural and bureaucratic processes. They must progress further to harmonize, simplify, and streamline the application and reporting burdens on USAID partners, particularly the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's (BHA's) Emergency Application Guidelines, which have so far failed to live up to U.S. Grand Bargain commitments. Additional commitments where the U.S. can make progress as a major donor include: authorities to provide more predictable, multi-year funding for humanitarian partners; decreased reliance on pass-through funding mechanisms; and adoption of evidence and market-based approaches.

RESTORE AND ADVANCE U.S. LEADERSHIP IN THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

Recent disengagement from the multilateral system has reduced U.S. leadership and investment and harmed its global partner status. Today's global challenges are so intertwined that we can only solve them with agile responses across countries and cultures. The new Administration must immediately reverse policies espousing isolation. Authentic U.S. leadership results in more inclusive policies and outcomes, fosters global cooperation, supports the poorest and most vulnerable, and ensures civil society and affected communities are consulted and centered in decision-making. Multilateral organizations, including those in the U.N. system, require U.S. commitment, leadership, and funding. Working in concert with our allies, the U.S. can augment multilateral organizations' effectiveness and equity, and make them more "fit for purpose" in the current international context.

KEY ACTIONS

Recommit and pay our fair share to multilateral processes and agencies to advance environmental sustainability and effectiveness of global responses.

There is not only an opportunity to rebuild American leadership in multilateral spaces but also to advance and reform them while advocating for more dynamic, long-term solutions. But real reform can only happen if we have paid our fair share of dues and paid back our massive arrears. Multilateral fora are also critical to galvanizing global action on climate change. The Biden-Harris Administration is well-positioned to emphasize socioeconomic, racial, and gender equality in global climate policy and elevate the voices of people most at-risk, especially women and girls, Indigenous Peoples, communities of color, persons with disabilities, workers, and the elderly. It is crucial to not only recommit the U.S. to multilateral engagement and solutions, but also to work to improve these structures. Specifically, the U.S. should reaffirm its commitment to the WHO, refund organizations such as the U.N. Population Fund and Green Climate Fund, reengage in multilateral processes and fora, and reinvigorate the impact of regional development banks and other U.N. agencies.ⁱⁱⁱ

Recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2015, all 193 U.N. Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, pledging to achieve 17 SDGs by 2030. These goals provide a blueprint for concertedly addressing the urgent economic, environmental, and political challenges confronting our world. However, realizing the 2030 Agenda requires broad ownership of the SDGs and a strong commitment to implement them—the world is **not on track** to meet these goals by 2030. The U.S. should immediately signal a return to global leadership by recommitting to and driving progress toward these ambitious targets.

Bolster the U.S.'s role in Multilateral Development Banks and the IMF.

The United States has historically played a leading role in promoting strong environmental, social, and accountability standards and practices at Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), including the World Bank Group. The U.S. should

spearhead improvements in these areas to ensure that MDB-financed projects achieve their intended development goals and benefit—not harm—affected communities. This includes demanding reforms at the MDBs, championing strong independent accountability mechanisms, and requiring that remedy be available for any negative project impacts. The U.S. can advance the Administration’s climate agenda by requiring that its representatives at the MDBs vote against any international projects funding or subsidizing fossil fuel exploration, extraction, refining, or transportation and by pushing governments to optimize the benefits of their climate commitments for their poorest and most vulnerable citizens. In response to the ongoing economic distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. should champion debt relief and call on the World Bank and IMF’s leaders to suspend official bilateral debt payments due from IDA eligible countries for as long as necessary. As the debt picture worsens for these countries, the international community may need to consider deeper and broader debt relief.

Renew U.S. leadership in the G7 and the G20.

The G7 and the G20 have historically served to facilitate discussion of critical shared priorities and ensure that sufficient political will and resources support global efforts to achieve them. The G7 and the G20 have been behind concrete achievements, such as creating the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria and the Muskoka Initiative to reduce maternal and infant mortality. Recent summits have, at times, been confrontational, with G7 and G20 leaders at odds on historically agreed-upon issues. The resumption of strong U.S. leadership in the G7 and the G20 would help build consensus decisions in these forums and position the U.S. as a de facto leader.

Recommit and reaffirm U.S. participation in international treaties and commitments.

U.S. leadership has been essential in the design and enforcement of international laws and norms. U.S. support for and engagement in the treaties that govern these laws is crucial to ensuring they are widely upheld. The U.S. should direct the Secretary of State to include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Arms Trade Treaty, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in the U.S.’s Treaty Priority List and push for the Senate to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The U.S. should also reaffirm its commitment to the international human rights framework and discontinue the Commission on Unalienable Rights, which has promoted a narrow and discriminatory view of U.S. support for human rights. Further, the U.S. should end support for and leadership around alternative frameworks intended to undermine treaties, treaty-making bodies, and previously negotiated language.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

These recommendations do not reflect the comprehensive views of any individual InterAction Member NGO. Instead, as a consolidation of hundreds of inputs across our extremely diverse community, they represent the most immediate and earnest priorities of the development and humanitarian sectors. There is no time to waste.

InterAction stands prepared to coordinate consultations between the Biden-Harris Administration and our Members to dive deeper into the suggested policies or recommendations provided. We look forward to serving as a resource as the Administration establishes its approach to development and humanitarian response.

Please reach out to Jenny Marron (jmarron@interaction.org), InterAction’s Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, for more information.

- i These actions should include lifting [Executive Order 13783](#), which supplanted the 2013 U.S. Climate Action Plan, reinstating [Executive Order 13653](#) on Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change, building upon [13677 on Climate-Resilient International Development](#), and reinstating [13693 on Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Decade](#).
- ii The InterAction community actively worked with USAID and Congress to feed into the USAID Transformation process. The Bureaus established under this effort are still working to effectively merge staff, coordinate processes and align missions. As this process continues, we hope to continue to be a resource for consultation and ideas.
- iii (RE)JOIN. Recommit to the WHO and immediately halt the withdrawal process. Join COVAX, the WHO-linked public-private effort to develop and distribute the COVID-19 vaccine. Join the U.N.'s Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and rejoin the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Join and commit to a leadership role in the Global Compact on Refugees. Revoke sanctions imposed on personnel of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and recommit the U.S. as a signatory to the Rome Statute of the ICC. Join other bilateral and multilateral donors in the Risk Informed Early Action Partnership (REAP), champion 'Adaptation Compacts' for the most climate vulnerable countries, and address the humanitarian protection gap for climate-induced displacement.
- (RE)FUND. Restore funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and increase the U.S. contribution to the Green Climate Fund. Fund the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, which increases global collaborations to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 testing, treatments, and vaccines. Fully fund our assessments for UN peacekeeping operations and pay back arrears that have accrued since FY17. Fund entities like the UNFCCC, IPCC, Adaptation Fund and Least Developed Countries Fund that facilitate multilateral climate negotiations and research and channel multilateral funding to fragile and high climate risk countries.
- (RE)ENGAGE. Engage in gender-focused multilateral processes and fora, such as the Commission on the Status of Women and Generation Equality/Beijing +25, and work to ensure transformative results. Attend global summits such as the Convention of the Status of Women (CSW), U.N. Food Systems Summit and the Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2021, with strong commitments for relevant U.S. assistance.
- (RE)INVIGORATE. Further invest in and advance impact of the World Food Program, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and in multilateral stakeholder funds, such as Education Cannot Wait and Global Partnership for Education.