August 7, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin  
Secretary of the Treasury  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Mark Green  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Mnuchin, and Administrator Green:

We are writing to you about an expected and imminent U.S. government decision that could either help sustain critical and life-saving relief to Somalia or exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation and put hundreds of thousands if not millions of people at grave risk. In particular, we write to urge the United States government to formally object to a proposal from the government of Kenya in the United Nations that, if implemented, would cripple the humanitarian aid effort.

We know that humanitarian aid in Somalia saves lives. In 2017, a deadly combination of drought and violent conflict brought Somalia to the edge of catastrophe—one that could have rivaled the 2011 Somali famine that killed 260,000 people. But the world averted a disaster, with the United States providing more than $420 million in life-saving assistance as part of a broader international effort. Today, Somalia is again in crisis, with more than four million Somalis in need of humanitarian aid, including a million children who face acute malnutrition. And once again, we are grateful that the U.S. government has stepped up. In June, USAID announced $184.6 million in new funding for Somalia, bringing the total U.S. humanitarian funding for the country to more than $670 million for FY18/19.

With United States support, international agencies and NGOs have also navigated a complex environment in Somalia. They have worked carefully to develop systems to reach people while limiting aid diversion and operating within the bounds of current bilateral and multilateral sanctions regimes. Although the militant organization Al Shabaab is already listed under the UN Security Council sanctions regime concerning Somalia, a carefully administered (and U.S.-initiated) Security Council exemption has facilitated delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians in dire need. This process has proven effective. At both the national and international levels, official and non-governmental offices and agencies have developed a range of risk mitigation strategies to identify, prevent, and address issues of diversion and misappropriation of assistance.

For all these reasons, we are deeply concerned by a Kenyan government proposal to include Al Shabaab in the separate UN sanctions regime applicable to Al Qaeda, ISIL and their affiliates, which does not provide the same type of exemption for humanitarian assistance. As you know, under UN procedures, this proposal will be approved unless a member of the Security Council objects. And while we appreciate that the United States has placed a “hold” on the proposal, we also know that this hold ends on August 29 and that senior U.S. officials are discussing whether or not to object to the Kenyan proposal.

The practical impact of this measure would be to put humanitarian assistance efforts in jeopardy and many hundreds of thousands of lives at risk.

Thus, we strongly urge the government of the United States to object to this proposal.
Sincerely,

**J. Brian Atwood**  
Former Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

**Frederick D. Barton**  
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Operations  
Former UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees  
Former Director, Office of Transition Initiatives, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

**Mark Bellamy**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Kenya  
Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

**Daniel Benjamin**  
Former Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State

**Barbara Bodine**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Yemen

**Reuben E. Brigety II**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to the African Union

**Mark Brzezinski**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Sweden  
Former National Security Council Director for Russian/Eurasian Affairs and Southeast European Affairs

**Sean Carroll**  
President and CEO  
American Near East Refugee Aid

**Joel Charny**  
Executive Director  
Norwegian Refugee Council USA

**James B. Cunningham**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, to Afghanistan, and to Israel

**Jeffrey Davidow**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Venezuela and Zambia  
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs

**Arthur “Gene” Dewey**  
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration  
Former UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees

**Mohamed S. Idris**  
Executive Director  
American Relief Agency for the Horn of Africa

**Mark Lagon**  
Former Ambassador-at-Large to Combat Trafficking in Persons, U.S. Department of State
General William L. Nash  
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Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, India, Israel, Nigeria, Jordan and El Salvador, and the United Nations  
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Copies to:

Senator James Risch, Chair  
Senator Robert Menendez, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Senator Lindsey Graham, Chair  
Senator Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

Representative Eliot Engel, Chair  
Representative Michael McCaul, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Representative Nita Lowey, Chair  
Representative Hal Rogers, Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

*Additional signatories were added to this letter after it was transmitted.