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“A New Direction for USAID—at Home and Abroad”

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum identifies new pathways the Obama administration might pursue to increase collaboration and cooperation between the Development community and the various arms of the U.S. foreign policy establishment.

WASHINGTON, Mar. 10th – “There is a feeling that we are at a special moment here in Washington, maybe a time of harmonic convergence, where the national security establishment might be ready to address America’s a-symmetric civilian capacities and resources, and produce a more effective way forward,” claimed **Rick Barton**, senior adviser at the CSIS International Security Program and moderator of today’s **Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum (CPRF)**, a monthly program co-sponsored by **Search for Common Ground**, **U.S. Institute of Peace**, and **The Council on Foreign Relations**, among other organization and academic institutions at the forefront of the conflict resolution and foreign policy fields. **Over 130** individuals from government agencies, think-tanks, non-profits and students came to the event held at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

“It is not a moment for 'business as usual' in any part of the tool kit of statecraft, it is a moment for major change,” stated Gordon Adams, Distinguished Fellow at the Henry L. Stimson Center and professor of U.S. Foreign Policy at American University. “This is a global financial and economic crisis and it is hitting especially hard at the countries that are less well off. The recovery from that problem is going to be something of enormous magnitude, not a minor shift in development assistance.”

“I am increasingly convinced that not only do the tools of statecraft that we have need to be rebalanced, but that they need to be substantially better integrated than they are.”

“The major dilemma we have to deal with,” continued Adams, speaking to the challenges facing the development community in light of the global financial crisis, “isn’t the Taliban, it isn’t the stability of the Iraqi government, it isn’t what to do with NATO...the major problem that American statecraft, and global statecraft, is going to have to deal with is this: how do we get economic policy, trade policy, investment policy and security all marching together, to help countries avoid a slide into disaster and to recover from what could be a very prolonged and very severe economic crisis internationally?”

“Let me envision with you, what it could look like, if we did a radical reform and rethinking of development,” began Raymond Shonholtz, Founder and President of *Partners for Democratic Change*, when speaking about impact investing for sustainable development as the future of the development community and U.S. foreign aid policy. “We currently operate development under the philosophy of assistance...we should scrap that concept completely. We are not *assisting* these countries; we are *investing* in these countries. This is not only conceptually a better idea; it is something Americans can understand. We in this country invest....this is absolutely in America’s best interest. It is easier to sell self-interest and investment to congress and to taxpayers.”

“[Prevention initiatives and foreign development] is probably one of the subject areas in which we can get the greatest integration between departments.”

Shonholtz went on to say that “the more we really relate our work to the actual needs of communities, the more loyalty we will build up...but we’ll also build up an understanding of what they need from a prevention point of view.”

“The areas we are going into are more and more difficult areas and we have less understanding of them, less language capabilities and less people who really understand the communities they are working in” continued Shonholtz, “...so mainstreaming assessment from a prevention point of view makes an enormous amount of sense.”

Gordan Adams spoke of a top-down approach to institutional changes in State and USAID: “The capacity to think across agency programs, across region, across country, simply doesn’t exist in Washington. That is why I heartily endorse a much more conscious sense of the cross-agency and cross-program connection.”

“This means reinforcing the capacity at State to do strategic planning. Strategic planning is not part of State Department culture. There is a capacity-building that needs to happen at that level.”

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