Secretary of State Clinton’s Deputy Nominees Strike the Right Tone on Elevating and Enhancing U.S. Foreign Assistance Efforts

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January 22, 2009 (WASHINGTON): The following Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN) statement was delivered on behalf of the group by Co-Chair Steve Radelet, senior fellow at the Center for Global Development.

“Today, in confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), Deputy Secretary of State nominees Jim Steinberg and Jack Lew showed a keen understanding of the importance of elevating global development in the U.S. foreign policy toolkit and balancing it with diplomacy and defense. Both nominees should be quickly confirmed, so they can immediately begin working with Secretary of State Clinton to bring such changes to life and usher in a new era of U.S. foreign policy.

Lew joined SFRC Members in highlighting the critical need for enhancing and better coordinating U.S. foreign assistance efforts, which are currently divided between dozens of agencies, so that our investments in programs that alleviate poverty, fight disease, and create opportunity are more strategic and efficient. MFAN believes President Obama, Secretary Clinton and Mr. Lew can take key steps in this direction by:

• Ensuring a prominent individual is named quickly to be Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and working with that individual to make the case for elevating and empowering USAID with increased human and financial resources;

• Beginning to rebuild USAID into a strong, professional development agency, and beginning to address the overlapping structures currently governing U.S. foreign assistance programs. This task dovetails with President Obama’s vision for making government more effective and will set the stage for truly elevating development as a pillar of U.S. foreign policy;

• Empowering the USAID Administrator to work, in cooperation with the White House, on the development of the first-ever National Strategy for Global Development; and cooperate with Congress to overhaul the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to ensure our foreign assistance priorities reflect 21st Century challenges.”