



Durbin Questions Witnesses At Senate Appropriations Committee Hearing On Global Food Security

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today questioned David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Program; Tjada D’Oyen McKenna, Chief Executive Officer at Mercy Corps; and Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, at a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs hearing on global food security and the COVID-19 response. Durbin began his questioning asking about nutrition in extreme places of famine.

“In areas of famine, I’ve seen the use of food supplements, Plumpy’nut, and also rehydration therapies. When you talk about food aid agencies, does it include these things?” asked Durbin.

Beasley confirmed the use of these supplements are utilized, which has shown a substantial improvement in added nutrition. The UN warns that without immediate humanitarian assistance, over 43 million people in 38 countries across the globe are at risk of falling into famine or famine-like conditions.

Durbin also asked about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine hesitancy in poorer countries. For example, fewer than 17 percent of Africans have received a primary

COVID immunization, with nearly half of the vaccine doses delivered to the continent thus far having gone unused.

“The U.S. has developed very effective vaccines, but we struggled to supply them to the rest of the world. Now we have a greater challenge in poorer countries than just providing vaccines—weak health infrastructure, vaccine hesitancy, and other competing basic health demands. A member of my staff returned from West Africa and I asked him specifically to look at COVID-19 and vaccine supplies. He reported a surplus of vaccines but not enough demand... it isn’t just the value of the vaccine, it’s the means of the delivery,” said Durbin.

According to the United Nations’ 2021 report, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, close to 12 percent of the world’s population, representing 928 million people, faces severe food insecurity and 30 percent face at least moderate food insecurity. The impact is particularly significant on women and children, with more than 149 million children under the age of five affected by stunting and nearly 30 percent of women around the world between the ages of 15 and 49 affected by anemia. Conflict and climate change are major contributors to the global hunger problem – a situation further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years.

Earlier this year, Durbin led a letter to President Biden urging any future supplemental funding request include support for emergency food aid. The most recent Biden Administration Ukraine-related request did include food aid. It passed the House yesterday and is expected to be voted on in the days ahead in the Senate.

Video of Durbin’s remarks from the hearing is available [here](#).

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