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Opening Statement of Chairman Stephen F. Lynch Hearing on “The U.S. and International Humanitarian Response to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine” June 10, 2022

Good morning, everyone. Now in its fourth month, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine has taken a devastating toll on the Ukrainian people. This unjust war of aggression has resulted in the tragic loss of thousands of innocent lives and precipitated a grave humanitarian crisis that is already having cascading effects in areas of the world far beyond Ukraine’s borders, such as Syria, Yemen, and Somalia.

Nearly 14 million people – roughly one-third of Ukraine’s entire population – have been forcibly displaced from their homes during more than 100 days of war. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees reports that we are witnessing “the largest displacement crisis in the world today” – with over 7.1 million people displaced within Ukraine and more than 6.5 million refugees fleeing to Poland, Romania, Moldova, and other neighboring countries.

Within Ukraine, UNHCR estimates that 15.7 million people urgently require humanitarian assistance – including food, water, medicine, and hygienic supplies. An estimated one in three Ukrainian households is currently food insecure.

Thanks to the extraordinary work of international humanitarian organizations such as World Central Kitchen, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee, and Samaritan’s Purse, aid is fortunately making its way into Ukraine. That task is complicated, however, and made more dangerous by indiscriminate violence and shelling of civilian areas and key infrastructure nodes. As Russia shifts its military objectives toward Eastern Ukraine, the international humanitarian community may only be beginning to understand the full extent of destruction and suffering the Russian military has left in their wake.

The deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Ukraine have also had a compounding impact on Ukrainian women and girls – who face a heightened risk of sexual exploitation and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

In March, I had the honor to lead a bipartisan delegation to Poland, Romania, Moldova, and multiple Ukrainian border points to conduct oversight of the delivery of U.S. and international security and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. And we had the opportunity to observe firsthand the generosity of the Polish, Romania, and Moldovan people, who have welcomed Ukrainian refugees into their homes. Our meetings with Ukrainian and other Eastern European officials and civil society organizations repeatedly underscored that absent continued assistance from the international community, our ability to provide relief and support services for the people of Ukraine may soon reach capacity.

Our delegation also visited a World Central Kitchen relief site located near the Przemyśl border crossing on the Polish-Ukraine border – where Chef José Andrés and his colleagues are preparing and distributing as many as 100,000 meals per day to Ukrainian families in need.

In steadfast and continued support of the Ukrainian people, Congress recently enacted a bipartisan aid package to provide \$40 billion in security and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. I am grateful that this legislation included \$9 billion in direct economic assistance for Ukraine as well as additional funding for refugee support programs and global emergency food relief.

I also commend President Biden and his Administration for leading the world in near-unanimous solidarity with the people of Ukraine and mobilizing an unprecedented humanitarian response to the conflict. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the experiences of their organizations on the ground in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, and whether there are ways the international humanitarian response can be improved.

Before I conclude, I would like to personally thank our witnesses for their testimony today—and more importantly, for the truly heroic work they and their organizations are doing not only in Ukraine, but around the world.

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