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**Statement of the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs
before the Committee on House Administration
2:45 p.m., Wednesday, November 30, 2011**

Chairman Lungren, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

Our Committee on Foreign Affairs has been challenged this year by significant global developments.

These required rigorous examination of our national security interests and foreign policy priorities, as well as U.S. programs and funding, in order to determine an appropriate and timely response.

Despite the 5% reduction to the Committee's budget for this calendar year, we have met and have surpassed our goals as described in our Oversight Plan.

We have covered every region, every functional area, and held an average of one mark-up a month, including one of the most robust debates our Committee has had in over a decade concerning the funding authorization and policy prescriptions for the Department of State, USAID, and other agencies under our Committee's jurisdiction.

Our mark-up of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act began at 10:00 a.m. on a Wednesday and continued uninterrupted, except for Floor votes, until 2:15 a.m. Thursday morning. We reconvened at 9:00 a.m. the same Thursday and concluded after 11:00 p.m. that night.

We have taken a strategic approach to hosting visiting foreign dignitaries by considering whether there is added value to holding the meeting; focusing on the most senior foreign leaders; and scheduling during off-times, rather than during breakfast or lunch.

By taking these small steps, the Committee has been able to carry out its protocol responsibilities while keeping costs down.

We also established for the first time an Oversight and Investigations team and included a Whistleblower feature on our Committee website.

This has enabled us to conduct serious oversight over the range of activities and agencies under our Committee's jurisdiction.

One of those investigative efforts, relating to the sexual assault of Peace Corps volunteers, resulted in legislation that was signed into law by the President on Monday of last week.

We have established several mechanisms to carefully scrutinize every Congressional notification received by the Committee to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used for their intended purpose and are, in a tangible way, advancing U.S. interests and priorities.

The main Committee website added a new interactive feature this year called: "Ask the Question."

It allows the public to submit questions that they would like to have answered by witnesses testifying before our Committee.

Looking forward, we believe we can continue to operate successfully and build on these efforts, despite the additional 6.4% cut to our operating budget.

We have restructured the breakdown of the Committee budget to minimize the impact on current personnel allocations, as I believe our most valuable resource is our dedicated staff.

I made a commitment to Ranking Member Berman at the beginning of this Congress, to provide the Minority with an \$180,000 supplement to their 1/3 allocation of the personnel budget.

The additional \$180,000 will continue in calendar year 2012.

In making determinations about resource allocations, I respectfully ask this Committee to take into account that the Foreign Affairs Committee, out of its budget, covers all administrative costs for the House Democracy Partnership and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

This includes office space, equipment, supplies, and other support.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs also:

- covers the full salary for the Staff Director of the House Democracy Partnership;
- covers a portion of the salary for the Majority Professional Staff Member of the House Democracy Partnership; and
- covers a portion of the salary for the Majority Professional Staff of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

However, these two entities do not provide any reciprocal assistance or contributions to the work of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

With respect to IPGs, inter-parliamentary groups, the Office of Inter-Parliamentary Affairs in the Speaker's Office is now handling the logistical component of these IPGs but our Committee continues to be responsible for the policy support and staffing, as practicable.

The further reduced budget for calendar year 2012 will again pose a challenge but one I believe we can meet successfully.

By demonstrating we can do more with less in the running of our respective committees, we can demand the same from the agencies under our jurisdiction.

Thank you for your time.