

USAID Remarks - NATO Vents Event

As USAID's Development Advisor to the U.S.-European Command, it is my sincere pleasure to join my North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and U.S. State Department colleagues for today's event, here in southern Italy.

I am pleased to announce USAID's contribution of 200 brand-new, high-quality, American made ventilators to NATO's medical stockpile that is helping our allies fight COVID-19. This donation underscores the strength of the NATO alliance, as well as US support for our allies in their time of need. Today's handover ceremony will outline NATO's plans to distribute the ventilators to member states and other partners over the coming weeks and months.

This donation builds upon more than \$20.5 billion that the United States has committed to fight COVID-19 around the world. I would like to highlight a few examples of how USAID is supporting our partners across Europe and Eurasia.

First and foremost, USAID and the State Department have committed more than \$115 million in emergency health assistance to the region. This assistance is preparing laboratory systems, activating case-finding and event-based surveillance, supporting technical experts for response and preparedness, bolstering communication, and more.

For example, USAID supported the Government of Belarus and UNICEF to distribute face coverings, sanitizer, and soap to 9 institutions for children with disabilities across the country. We are supporting similar work in many other countries across Europe and Eurasia.

In addition to emergency health assistance, USAID quickly adapted our ongoing programs to ensure that we continue to prepare for, and respond to, the broader impacts of COVID-19 on economic growth and democratic progress.

We helped ensure that Serbia and North Macedonia were able to conduct free and fair elections in safe, and accessible manners. In Ukraine, USAID helped digitize government operations that assisted local and national authorities to continue providing services to people across the country. In Kosovo, our long-term work to strengthen the accessibility of the justice system led to the country's first-ever virtual court hearing on July 6.

In Moldova, USAID facilitated a public-private partnership between the Ministry of Education and Google to facilitate access to education during the pandemic.

Across Europe and Eurasia, USAID is engaging civil society and journalists to share best practices in monitoring public spending during the COVID-19 outbreak. USAID is also providing an additional \$5 million to empower civil society and media groups to address democratic backsliding that could occur as a result of COVID-19.

Even while we are intensely focused on helping our partners tackle the challenges of COVID-19, ultimately USAID is in the business of long-term, sustainable development. We are actively monitoring the region's overall economic health, strength of small and medium-sized businesses, energy security, the financial stability of independent media institutions, and any evidence that the pandemic could be used to crack down on civil society and basic freedoms.

Zooming out from the Europe and Eurasia region, I want to emphasize USAID's role across the globe in building up the health infrastructure we are collectively relying on today. For more than half a century, the United States has been the world's largest contributor to global health security and humanitarian assistance. The United States continues to help friends and allies with their pandemic responses through an all-of-America approach that includes governments, businesses, NGOs, and faith-based organizations.

Thank you once again for joining us today to commemorate the hand-over of these 200 ventilators. The partnership between the United States and our NATO allies remains strong, and together we will overcome the challenges that COVID is presenting to all of us.