

MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY KERRY



John Kerry
United States Secretary of State

Today's international landscape is more complex than ever before. The challenges we face are enormous, and so are the opportunities. They require us to keep faith with institutions like the State Department and USAID - with America - to ensure our ability to do the big things required to protect our interests and promote our values. And that means providing our diplomats and development professionals with both the willpower and the tools to accomplish the impossible.

I want the QDDR to be the blueprint for the next generation of American diplomacy. I want our diplomats and development professionals to have the technology and know-how to confront both the challenges and the opportunities. That's why I launched the second QDDR last April.

In the months that followed, hundreds of our offices and posts worldwide have engaged in exercises, focus groups, consultations, drafting and editing to help define and shape this document. From the outset, I asked our teams to avoid making this exercise all things for all people. A very smart Foreign Service officer told me when I first got here, "If everything's important, nothing's important." So this QDDR does not seek to be everything to everybody. Why? Because most of all, we intend to make it relevant. It focuses on a few big challenges and a few big opportunities, both strategic and operational.

In other words, this QDDR is a product that will guide a modern State Department and a modern USAID. It will spur greater ownership and initiative from every bureau, post, and mission in the field. It will narrow the distance between Washington and the front lines. It will be implemented by leaders at every level - leaders who are empowered to guide others to higher achievement. And it will help us to plan strategically and innovate constantly.

We are building on the first QDDR, which was itself an innovation. The commitment and contributions of Secretary Clinton didn't simply demonstrate the importance of civilian power. She showed how to drive change and help create the opportunities we are seizing today.

I am inspired each day to work with our dedicated diplomats and development professionals. These brave, creative public servants have forged diverse coalitions to confront threats ranging from ISIL to Ebola to the changing Arctic and climate change. They have built the foundations for diplomatic progress from Havana to Tehran, and opened the door for the historic agreement with China to reduce carbon emissions. Our teams were on the ground to respond to natural disasters in Haiti and the Philippines, and they are building infrastructure and institutions in both countries for a resilient future. They work each day with governments and civil society around the world to confront corruption, and have helped more than 100 countries to develop laws against human trafficking during the last decade. They have supported invigorating local and national economies by promoting women's economic empowerment and full participation. They have worked with our private sector and partner nations to spur more than \$20 billion in investments in critical energy infrastructure across Africa.

And all of that is just the beginning. Everywhere that we have a presence, we are leading and we are getting things done that simply couldn't and wouldn't happen without us.

The work of our diplomatic and development professionals has never been without risk. We serve on the frontlines of conflicts large and small. We live and work in countries subject to terrorism, violence, unstable political and social forces, increasing climate change impacts, severe economic deprivation, inefficient governance, and the risk of disease and illness. These are constant challenges to achieving our goals.

We are not naïve about the dangers. Balancing our values and interests with the risks inherent in 21st century diplomacy is challenging in the best of circumstances. There are steps we can take to mitigate risk, but we can never eliminate it. At the entrances to the State Department and USAID there are memorials to those who have given their lives in service. Together, these plaques bear the names of 341 American diplomats and development professionals, including those killed in recent years in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Sudan, and Libya. Risk is a real part of this job. We remain committed to constantly improving our capacity to assess and mitigate risk and to take appropriate measures to reduce it. But in the end, no matter how hard we try, effective diplomacy and development work require the assumption of risks that cannot be eliminated. As public servants, we accept that risk.

Building on the spirit of innovation of the previous quadrennial review, this QDDR examines the management of our resources and people, the flexibility for experimentation, the modernization of our activities, and the actions that will guide a modern State Department and USAID. The institutional changes presented in these pages are forward-looking. Each requires further work by teams and experts. But in all cases, we have identified a set of reforms and approaches that will advance U.S. interests and reshape the Department and USAID for the future. We cannot do this alone. We look forward to working with the Congress to bring these changes into reality.

To reiterate: For the QDDR to be effective it has to connect in a real way to our needs as diplomats and development professionals, and contribute directly to our advocacy of U.S. interests and values. It reviewed our performance to date and previews how we can better project American leadership in a complicated and dangerous world.

Above all, the QDDR is an expression of American optimism. We believe that America is safer when the world is safe, more prosperous when the world prospers, and more secure in our dignity and democracy when those values become universal.

The time has long since passed when we could hide from the world or pretend that what happens overseas does not affect us. In the 21st century, next door is everywhere. And with this QDDR, we are advancing our interests and values that for more than 200 years have defined our country and continue today to inspire the world.

Onwards, 

John Kerry