United States Government  
Statement for 2019 Annual Grand Bargain Meeting  

With a staggering 131.7 million people who require assistance globally, most as a result of conflict, the international community faces a daunting struggle to address dire needs. Humanitarian needs continue to grow, and the gap between responses and needs is widening. The Grand Bargain has set out an ambitious agenda to respond by maximizing the value and impact of humanitarian response financing. While the signatories to the Grand Bargain have achieved incremental and laudable gains since the last annual meeting, the U.S. Government is concerned that progress remains uneven and has not yet resulted in the key changes necessary to significantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian system.

The U.S. Government exhorts endorsers of the Grand Bargain to achieve key commitments. U.S. Government priorities include widely implementing joint needs assessments and joint analysis—with accurate information—that underpin prioritized humanitarian response plans and appeals; reduced duplication and management costs; and improved work on relief-development coherence. This includes ensuring country office staff deliver on joint needs assessment protocols per the request from Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock in his August 2018 letter to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as well as the new guidance for Humanitarian Response Plans. In terms of reducing duplication and management costs, the U.S. Government expects aid organizations to provide demonstrable progress to provide transparent and comparable cost structures by the end of 2019, two years after the original timeline. This should include a holistic analysis by United Nations Agencies of their procurement and logistics for commonly-required goods and services and outlines efforts taken to maximize efficiencies and reduce costs.

Specifically, the U.S. Government expects six key improvements to enhance the quality of the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) that feed into humanitarian needs overview and humanitarian response plans: 1) better data and improved data collection; 2) improved data transparency; 3) strengthened joint needs analysis; 4) clearer response prioritization; 5) evidence costing methodologies; and 6) enhanced monitoring.

With the expansion of humanitarian crises outpacing global capacity to respond, it is critical that implementing agencies accelerate efforts toward a more uniform and transparent prioritization among, and within, humanitarian response plans. In addition, we need to ensure that planning done at the global level in Grand Bargain work streams is translated and better integrated at the country level to achieve the most impact. Concurrently, the U.S. Government, along with other donors, should re-examine how it funds efforts and programs to follow through with funding priorities identified through the process.

The U.S. Government welcomes a frank dialogue on issues related to risk and risk management within the context of the Grand Bargain, with the aim of identifying practical solutions. By undertaking efforts to mitigate fraud, waste, and abuse, all Grand Bargain signatories can work toward ensuring accountability and deepening the impact of donor funding in addressing humanitarian needs. The U.S. Government is committed to this and will coordinate with other donors to harmonize practices, where possible.
Working upon gains in recent years, we expect Grand Bargain endorsers to intensify efforts to improve thoughtful collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in crisis-affected and fragile contexts. We appreciate that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has prioritized relief-development coherence in its strategy, and we look forward to the development of field guidance for implementing agencies.

In line with the *quid pro quo* nature of the Grand Bargain, the U.S. Government continues to advance areas identified for improvement, such as efforts to streamline reporting, support localization, explore opportunities for more multi-year funding, and improve accountability of affected populations, among others. We instituted a U.S. Government Relief-Development Coherence working group to review our programming to identify ways we can end humanitarian need with durable solutions. We also joined the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group for this rotation to demonstrate our support and help drive forward tangible progress. The Facilitation Group worked with co-conveners to pinpoint bottlenecks that prevented progress, and also ensured that the independent report of the Overseas Development Institute would be stronger with better data than years prior; which can provide a focus on prioritized commitments for the over 60 endorsers. However, we reiterate that implementing agencies must make significant progress on their commitments before the U.S. Government can make significant changes.

In line with the Grand Bargain, the U.S. Government has been aggressive in optimizing its own overseas humanitarian assistance. This includes the creation of a new USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, which merges USAID’s Offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace. Other signatories may wish to examine their own internal systems and approaches and, if needed, be willing to make the necessary organizational shifts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid.

While bureaucracy hinders the Grand Bargain at times, we must not discount the successes. The Grand Bargain has created a unique forum that brings together donors, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations on equal footing, which has created improved joint understanding on key issues that otherwise would not have received attention. The U.S. Government has started to see commendable progress on critical areas related to cash-based programming, harmonized reporting, transparency, joint needs-assessments, and attempts to better integrate across work streams. We also welcome the increased reporting by signatories in this annual report and hope next year’s report reflects significant progress on commitments.

The U.S. Government remains committed to the Grand Bargain and the need to realize significant results in the field. We thank the outgoing Eminent Person, Kristalina Georgieva, and welcome Minister Sigrid Kaag to the role. We look forward to working with her to reenergize the process and advance our joint priorities, scale up successes, and unblock bottlenecks at the political level. Amid today’s increasingly protracted conflicts and devastating natural disasters, the need to implement effective reforms in the humanitarian system could not be more paramount. We must respond with urgency, determination, and clarity.