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International Climate Change Assistance: Budget Authority, FY2009-FY2019

The United States committed to providing financial assistance to developing countries for climate-change-related activities through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The United States ratified the UNFCCC in 1992 with the advice and consent of the Senate (U.S. Treaty Number: 102-38). Among the obligations outlined in Article 4 of the UNFCCC, higher-income Parties (i.e., those listed in Annex II of the Convention, which were members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1992) sought to provide unspecified amounts of “financial resources, including for the transfer of technology, needed by developing countries to meet the agreed full incremental costs of implementing measures” to meet their general commitments under the UNFCCC. Further, “the implementation of these commitments shall take into account the need for adequacy and predictability in the flow of funds and the importance of appropriate burden sharing among the developed country Parties.”

Over the past several decades, and to varying degrees, the United States has delivered financial and technical assistance for climate-change-related activities in the developing world through a variety of bilateral and multilateral programs. (See **Table 1** for assistance provided over the past decade.)

U.S.-sponsored bilateral assistance has come through programs at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); the Millennium Challenge Corporation; the Environmental Protection Agency; and the U.S. Departments of State, Agriculture, Commerce, and Energy, among others.

U.S.-sponsored multilateral assistance has come through contributions by the U.S. Departments of State and the Treasury to environmental funds at various international financial institutions and organizations such as the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, the U.N. Development Program, the U.N. Environment Program, the UNFCCC’s Special Climate Change Fund, the UNFCCC’s Least Developed Country Fund, the World Bank’s Climate Investment Funds, and the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, among others. Each fund has its own mission and particular capacities.

The Obama Administration

Under President Barack Obama, the Administration aimed to integrate climate change considerations into relevant foreign assistance through a range of bilateral, multilateral, and private sector mechanisms to promote sustainable and resilient societies, foster low-carbon economic growth, and

reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and land degradation.

To this end, President Obama signed the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development (PPD-6), which called for the elevation of foreign development assistance as a national priority and outlined an integrated approach to development, diplomacy, and national security. One of the three main pillars of the directive was the Global Climate Change Initiative (GCCCI). (The other two pillars were Feed the Future and the Global Health Initiative.) The GCCCI was divided into three main programmatic initiatives or categories: (1) adaptation, (2) clean energy, and (3) sustainable landscapes.

The GCCCI was funded primarily through programs at the State Department, the Department of the Treasury, and USAID. Funds for these programs were requested in the President’s budget under the International Affairs Function 150 account for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. Many GCCCI activities were funded at agency subaccount levels, with allocations left to the discretion of the agencies under congressional consultation. Some additional international assistance was funded at other federal agencies. The Obama-era GCCCI budget authority fluctuated between \$900 million and \$2 billion annually.

The Trump Administration

Under President Donald Trump, the Administration has ceased providing financial assistance to developing countries for activities defined as related to climate change. The FY2018 Budget Blueprint, released on March 16, 2017, indicated that the administration would pursue a policy that “[e]liminates the Global Climate Change Initiative and fulfills the President’s pledge to cease payments to the United Nations’ (UN) climate change programs by eliminating U.S. funding related to the Green Climate Fund and its two precursor Climate Investment Funds.” The Trump Administration has not requested funding for these programs in subsequent budget requests.

Issues for Congress

Congress oversees U.S. government assistance to developing countries for climate-change-related initiatives. Congressional committees of jurisdiction have included the House Committees on Foreign Affairs, Financial Services, and Appropriations and the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Appropriations.

Congress undertakes several activities in regard to international climate change assistance, including (1) authorizing federal agency programs and multilateral fund contributions, (2) appropriating funds for those

authorizations, (3) providing guidance to the agencies on authorized programs and appropriations, and (4) overseeing U.S. interests in the programs.

Table I. International Climate Change Assistance, Budget Authority, FY2009-FY2019
(Nominal US\$ in millions; n/a indicates “not available” or not reported)

Agency/Account	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Department of State	55	199	125	133	126	127	147	1095	n/a	n/a	n/a
Diplomatic and Consular Affairs	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
Economic Support Fund	24	158	89	96	91	92	112	1059*	n/a	n/a	n/a
International Organizations and Programs	29	39	36	37	35	36	36	36	n/a	n/a	n/a
USAID	222	383	398	349	335	351	331	305	n/a	n/a	n/a
Assistance for Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia	15	26	-	15	-	-	-	16	n/a	n/a	n/a
Development Assistance	113	313	368	322	308	296	272	268	n/a	n/a	n/a
Economic Support Fund	94	44	30	12	27	55	59	21	n/a	n/a	n/a
Department of the Treasury	46	421	296	377	380	356	346	331	n/a	n/a	n/a
Debt Restructuring	20	20	16	12	11	-	-	-	-	-	-
Global Environment Facility	26	26	45	60	62	72	82	101	35	34	29
Clean Technology Fund	-	300	185	230	196	210	201	171	-	-	-
Strategic Climate Fund	-	75	50	75	110	75	63	60	-	-	-
Millennium Challenge Corporation	0	2	25	41	0	103	352	219	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other Agencies	50	75	85	59	76	77	76	78	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	373	1080	929	959	917	1014	1252	2028	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: CRS, from Office of Management and Budget, “Federal Expenditures on Science, Energy, and International Assistance Programs That Advance the Federal Response to Climate Change, Fiscal Years, 2013-2016,” January 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Climate Change: Analysis of Reported Federal Funding,” April 2018, GAO-18-223, and CRS correspondence with the Departments of State and the Treasury.

Notes: Numbers in the table may not sum due to rounding. “Other agencies” includes the Environmental Protection Agency; National Aeronautics and Space Administration; National Science Foundation; Peace Corps; U.S. Trade and Development Agency; and Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Energy.

*The Obama Administration made two contributions to the Green Climate Fund using FY2016 budget authority from the Economic Support Fund. Those contributions were for \$500 million on March 8, 2016, and \$500 million on January 17, 2017.

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