



**WASHINGTON SECURITY BRIEFING 2023
PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE-SECURITY FORUM
WASHINGTON, DC – DECEMBER 7-8, 2023
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Committee Hearing Room 106.**

SUMMARY REPORT

DECEMBER 7

OPENING REMARKS

- **Hon. Robert Pittenger, Chairman, Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum**

In his address, Hon. Robert Pittenger, Chairman of the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum, expressed gratitude to sponsors and highlighted the non-profit nature of the organization. He emphasized the global impact, thanked experts contributing their insights, and underscored the importance of legislators in addressing critical issues. Pittenger welcomed online viewers and acknowledged the dynamic nature of global challenges. He recognized the significance of the forum's 26th edition and plans for expansion into various continents. The Chairman thanked attendees, including special guest Bob Fu leading efforts for a future forum in Taiwan. He concluded by previewing upcoming speakers and activities.

- **Hon. James Lankford, United States Senator**

Senator James Lankford highlighted ongoing legislative efforts, including a package addressing Indo-Pacific issues, Ukraine, Israel, and the southern border. Senator Lankford emphasized the importance of cautious engagement with China, particularly regarding technology and data security.

The senator addressed international challenges, expressing solidarity with Ukraine and condemning acts of terrorism globally. Senator Lankford discussed the complexities of managing migration at the southern border, acknowledging shared struggles among nations in handling orderly pathways for migrants.

Senator Lankford underscored the significance of international cooperation, advocating for open dialogue, trade, and the protection of freedom of speech, press, and religion. He shared insights from the state he represents, Oklahoma, as an example of successful international cooperation in trade and economic development. The senator concluded by emphasizing the importance of protecting individual rights and fostering partnerships for global peace and prosperity.

- **Hon. Thom Tillis, United States Senator**

Senator Thom Tillis discussed the challenging times for Western nations, emphasizing the importance of democracies standing together. He explained his vote against a recent aid package for Ukraine and Israel, citing concerns about domestic homeland security due to one and a half million people entering the U.S. over the past two years.

While expressing support for Ukraine and Israel, Senator Tillis stressed the need to address domestic challenges, particularly migration issues. Despite the complexities of negotiations in the current divided government, he expressed confidence in finding a solution.

As the Republican lead for the Senate NATO Observer group, Senator Tillis highlighted NATO's strength and modernization efforts in response to Vladimir Putin's actions in Ukraine. He emphasized the historic opportunity to use the goodwill from supporting Ukraine to build multilateral economic ties, countering China's influence in Africa and South America.

In conclusion, Senator Tillis encouraged continued dialogue, partnership, and economic cooperation among nations, expressing optimism about overcoming challenges and fostering prosperity and freedom.

- **Hon. Roger Marshall, United States Senator**

Senator Roger Marshall discussed his background and legislative efforts, focusing on the National Security threats the United States faces. He highlighted the Digital Asset Anti-Money Laundering Act, co-authored with Senator Elizabeth Warren, aimed at regulating cryptocurrency with a light touch to protect against criminal use.

Senator Marshall expressed concerns about the open Southern border as an immediate national security threat, emphasizing the need for stronger border control. He also addressed the long-lasting threat of the national debt, reaching \$33 trillion, and the importance of energy and food security. Senator Marshall advocated for nuclear modular reactors as an environmentally friendly and secure energy solution.

In conclusion, he stressed the significance of fusion centers for information sharing and vigilance against cyber threats. Senator Marshall touched on topics like social media and AI in the context of national security, expressing the need for global collaboration and learning from other countries' approaches.

- **Hon. Matt Pottinger, Former Deputy National Security Advisor**

Mr. Matt Pottinger emphasized the urgent need for candid and robust international cooperation in addressing the threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He pointed out that the CCP's actions, including its reckless handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, environmental degradation, intellectual property theft, and support for rogue regimes, have endangered global health, prosperity, security, and liberty. Mr. Pottinger highlighted the deceptive tactics employed by the CCP, such as dual messaging and covert operations, to advance its agenda. He urged nations to speak openly to Beijing about actions that undermine sovereignty, impose costs on the CCP's harmful actions, and take measures to protect the rights of Chinese people living abroad while fostering united front efforts among independent and sovereign nations to safeguard their shared values and interests.

- **Dr. Jonathan Ward, PhD, President, Atlas Organization and Author, “The Decisive Decade and China’s Vision of Victory”**

Dr. Jonathan Ward addressed the urgent need to understand and act upon the challenge posed by China. He highlighted China's vision of becoming the preeminent global power and its comprehensive strategic partnership with Russia. Ward stressed the dangerous era we face, citing China's military buildup and its ambitions in the Indo Pacific.

Dr. Ward underscored the importance of economic power as the key to winning against authoritarian states. He advocated for economic containment of China, restricting its access to markets, technology, and capital. Dr. Ward called for restructuring the world economy to depend less on China, securing supply chains, and investing in new markets. He urged nations like India, Brazil, Nigeria, and Kenya to join in rebuilding a future where security and prosperity are not traded for one another.

In conclusion, Ward expressed optimism about the potential to build a bigger, richer, and better world through global collaboration, emphasizing the need for unity in facing the challenges posed by China.

COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL THREATS AND BORDER INSECURITY

- **Hon. Michael Chertoff, Former Secretary of U.S. Homeland Security**

Former Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff highlighted the evolving transnational threats faced by the world. Secretary Chertoff discussed the shift from hierarchical international terrorism to more loosely networked, inspired acts of terror, emphasizing the challenges in monitoring online activities without impinging on free speech.

He also addressed the changing nature of conflict, pointing out the conflicts with Russia and the potential concerns with China. Secretary Chertoff highlighted the expanded domains of conflict, including cyber warfare, economic warfare, and the role of intelligence in strategic planning. He stressed the need for a comprehensive and strategic vision to navigate these challenges, urging the intelligence and security community to focus not only on tactical issues but also on broader, long-term threats.

In conclusion, Secretary Chertoff emphasized the importance of international collaboration in addressing these multifaceted challenges and commended the organizers for convening the discussion.

- **Prof. Celina Realuyo, Professor of Practice, William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University, United States**

Professor Celina Realuyo discussed the dark side of globalization, focusing on the convergence of terrorist groups and criminal networks. She highlighted the evolution of terrorist groups like ISIS and the persistent threat of Hezbollah in Latin America. Professor Realuyo emphasized the exploitation of emerging technologies and financial mechanisms by these groups and expressed concern about the migration crisis and the potential infiltration of terrorists.

She also addressed the rising threat of fentanyl, a deadly drug originating from China and processed by Mexican cartels, which poses a significant risk to the United States. Additionally, Professor Realuyo discussed the challenges of border security, the potential for foreign fighters and the importance of detecting and preventing terrorist activities. She shared FBI Director Wray's warning that the Israel-Hamas war could inspire Islamic terrorist attacks around the world, including in Latin America. She concluded by calling for global cooperation to enhance the fight against terrorism and crime at the multilateral level.

- **Mr. Joseph Humire, Executive Director, Center for a Secure Free Society**

Mr. Joseph Humire, with a background in economics and now focusing on national security, shared his observations on global challenges, conflicts, and evolving forms of terrorism. He highlighted the urgency in the world, referencing conflicts like the war in Ukraine, the new challenges faced by Israel, potential conflicts in Taiwan, and emerging issues in the Western Hemisphere, such as Venezuela's impending invasion of Guyana.

Mr. Humire delved into the concept of sovereignty, especially in the context of border security. He argued that border security, represented by measures like walls or fences, is not about dividing nations but about enforcing and respecting the rule of law between sovereign nations. He connected sovereignty to democracy, prosperity, and human rights, asserting that the current assault on borders globally, especially the U.S. Southern border is a critical development for U.S. national security.

Mr. Humire then shifted the focus to the concept of weaponized migration. He discussed its history, citing instances where nations used migration as a tool of coercion to gain concessions. Mr. Humire introduced the idea of strategic engineered migration, where autocratic powers induce mass migration to achieve political and geopolitical objectives. Using examples like the migration crisis between Poland and Belarus and the mass migration of Venezuelans, Mr. Humire argued that autocratic regimes exploit vulnerable migrants to destabilize other nations. He highlighted the sophistication of these efforts, involving disinformation, transnational organized crime, and coordination with authoritarian allies like Russia, China, and Iran.

Towards the end of his speech, Mr. Humire shared alarming statistics, such as the number of times weaponized migration has been successful and the massive scale of the Venezuelan migration crisis.

ADVERSARIAL FOREIGN INVESTMENTS AND REVERSE CFIUS

- **Congressman Andy Barr, U.S. House of Representatives**

Congressman Barr expressed gratitude for Chairman Robert Pittenger's leadership on cross-border capital flows, emphasizing the economic and security aspects. He highlighted past reforms in inbound investment screening, closing gaps in joint ventures, minority investments, and real estate. Three proposed outbound investment screening approaches were discussed: the White House's sector-focused initiative, the Casey-Cornyn notification regime without restrictions, and the Financial Services Committee's entity-focused sanctions approach. Congressman Barr advocated for a targeted strategy

to avoid hindering beneficial cross-border capital flows. The legislative timeline aims for consensus by the first quarter of the following year.

- **Dr. Sohan Dasgupta, Partner, Taft, Stettinius & Hollister LLP - Former Deputy General Counsel, U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

Dr. Sohan Dasgupta highlighted the crucial need for unity among the nations of the Free World to address unprecedented security challenges. Emphasizing the shared values of individual dignity, freedom, and rule of law, he stressed the importance of fortifying a lasting firewall against detrimental and adversarial foreign investments. Dr. Dasgupta discussed various measures, including sanctions and export controls, implemented by the U.S. Government to counteract potential threats. He underscored the significance of a "whole free world approach" through four-quadrant partnerships, economic fortification, and international cooperation to bolster economic security. Dr. Dasgupta also touched upon the role of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) in reviewing and regulating inbound investments, thereby safeguarding the Free World's security. He also discussed the "reverse CFIUS" Executive Order and, finally, the need for strategies aligned with core principles of justice and freedom.

- **Hon. John Strand, CEO of Strand Consult**

Hon. John Strand, CEO of Strand Consult, expressed gratitude for an invitation and addressed the challenges faced by small countries in implementing foreign investment screening. Drawing from Denmark's experience, he highlighted the Danish Act for Foreign Investment Screening, implemented a year ago, as a successful model.

Key points include:

Two-Sided Model: Denmark's approach combines rules for foreign investments and equipment acquisitions into a unified law, treating them as interconnected issues.

Inclusivity: The law applies to both foreign companies investing in Danish ones and Danish companies using equipment from non-partner countries, without distinction.

Clear Framework: Denmark has identified five industry sectors, including defense, ICT security, dual-use products, and critical technology, where the law applies.

Limitations: The law includes a minimum investment threshold of 10% and encompasses joint ventures, partnerships, and suppliers.

EU Framework: Denmark, as an EU member, adheres to a clear framework, also covering agreements with non-EU countries like Norway and Switzerland.

Public Sector Inclusion: The law applies not only to private companies but also to public-sector entities.

Simplicity and Implementation: Described as a simple and easy-to-implement model, the law has already been effectively used to compel a major telecom company to remove Huawei equipment from vital infrastructure.

Information Sharing: Hon. Strand encouraged sharing the translated law with other nations, emphasizing its potential for swift implementation.

In conclusion, Hon. Strand highlighted the accessibility of the model, encouraging other countries to adopt it without the need for extensive groundwork.

REMARKS

- **Hon. Marco Rubio, United States Senator**

Senator Marco Rubio highlighted the critical moment in global history, emphasizing geopolitical shifts, technological advancements, and national security challenges.

Discussing the return to great power competition, particularly with China's ascent, he stressed the strategic adaptation required. Key challenges included technological competition, alliance significance, and reliance on natural resources. Senator Rubio acknowledged democracy's challenges and called for international alliances to safeguard democratic values, individual liberties and strengthen freedom and prosperity globally.

GLOBAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

- **Congressman Burgess Owens, United States House of Representatives**

Congressman Owens acknowledged Utah's strength in diversity and core values that foster collaboration. He raised concerns about China's dominance, holding 60% of the world's critical mineral supply and 85% of processing capacities. Congressman Owens highlighted the exploitation of forced child labor in Africa by Chinese companies, stressing the need for accountability. He successfully led the passage of an amendment to support the domestic critical mineral mining industry, aiming to counter foreign adversaries like China. Hon. Owens pledged to advocate for policies ending child exploitation,

emphasizing the collective effort required to combat this long-standing evil, and expressed gratitude for raising awareness globally.

- **Mr. John Sitilides, Geopolitical Strategist, Trilogy Advisors LLC, and Senior Fellow (National Security Program), Foreign Policy Research Institute**

Mr. John Sitilides highlighted critical global challenges at the strategic level. He underscored the importance of international shipping waterways, emphasizing that they facilitate 80% of the world's oil and gas transportation and 90% of global commerce. Discussing China, he warned about the Communist Party's control over every aspect of the country, economy, and society, and its aggressive foreign policy towards the U.S. and its Asian allies.

Expressing concern about Ukraine, Mr. Sitilides noted the potential lack of sustained U.S. support due to domestic fiscal and debt challenges and depleting military hardware provisions. He noted the limited international backing for U.S.-led sanctions against Russia, particularly from global South countries that have rejected most sanctions.

The presentation delved into global energy markets, emphasizing the positive U.S. role as an energy superpower, and cautioning against dependency on China for rare earth elements essential to 21st century technologies. Mr. Sitilides concluded by stressing the importance of energy abundance, dominance, and sovereignty for the West to leverage and prevail over geopolitical rivals. He warned against hasty adoption of unrealistic or unachievable net-zero emission targets at the expense of human flourishing and national economic well-being.

- **Ambassador Carla Sands, Vice Chair, Center for Energy and Environment, America First Policy Institute; former US Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark**

Ambassador Carla Sands acknowledged the diverse security threats faced by numerous countries and stressed the need for a common vision to strengthen nations. Ambassador Sands highlighted challenges posed by China, emphasizing its aggressive tactics, military buildup, and Belt and Road Initiative. She raised concerns about Taiwan, North Korea, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Iran's aggression. Ambassador Sands criticized global leaders for failing their citizens, especially in the context of energy disarmament and the anti-energy agenda. She argued that such policies weaken global security, empower aggressors like Russia and Iran, and increase control over energy supplies. She cautioned against the rejection of basic principles, linking energy security to economic

and national security. Rejecting the radical climate agenda, Ambassador Sands proposed a pro-human agenda centered on pro-growth and common-sense principles. She called for policies that prioritize citizens and promote economic security, rejecting ideologies that lead to poverty and control. Ambassador Sands advocated for embracing America's unique position as a global leader with abundant resources, promoting energy security for allies, and supporting various energy sources, including nuclear energy. She emphasized the importance of pro-human values, economic freedom, and energy freedom in building a prosperous and secure future for all nations. Ambassador Sands concluded by advocating for a collective commitment to freedom, prosperity, and security in a challenging global landscape.

QUANTUM TECHNOLOGIES: PROMOTING INNOVATION AND PROTECTING NATIONAL SECURITY

- **The Honorable Jay Obernolte (R-CA), Member, U.S. House of Representatives**

Hon. Jay Obernolte highlighted the inflection point in Quantum Computing, moving from intense research to real-world applications. As a computer scientist, Hon. Obernolte found the emergence of Quantum technology exciting, emphasizing its potential beyond faster computers. He explained that Quantum Computing goes beyond speed, addressing classes of problems challenging for traditional computing. Hon. Obernolte stressed the need for appropriate management in transitioning Quantum Computing from pure science to public and private sector applications. Public-private partnerships were identified as crucial during this delicate stage, with bipartisan support for reauthorizing the National Quantum Initiative. Hon. Obernolte mentioned a bill co-led with Congresswoman Ross to direct the National Science and Technology Council in identifying uses for quantum technology within federal agencies. He underscored the importance of government establishing test beds to catalyze technology emergence. The profound implications of Quantum Computing on national security were discussed, particularly regarding encryption standards and the vulnerability of past encrypted information to future decryption by quantum computers.

He acknowledged the need for alternative encryption standards proof against quantum computers. He urged awareness of the timeline for adversaries to decrypt information collected over the years.

- **Hon. Jaak Madison, Member of the European Parliament, Deputy Chairman of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia**

Hon. Jaak Madison noted the significance of quantum technology and its connection to AI. Hon. Madison shared some historical background on quantum technology, including its roots in nuclear bombs. The discussion touched upon the importance of quantum technology in cybersecurity, emphasizing its role in protecting against cyber threats. Hon. Madison highlighted the EU's efforts to regulate AI and expressed concerns about potential privacy issues, especially when considering the use of AI for constant surveillance, as seen in China. He raised questions about the ethical use of AI, citing examples of how different countries approached pandemic control measures and privacy concerns. Hon. Madison questioned the balance between security and privacy, citing instances where governments used technology for pandemic control, leading to potential privacy infringements. He emphasized the need to find a balance between security and privacy, raising concerns about the cost and benefits of investing in AI and quantum technology.

Hon. Madison concluded by emphasizing the theoretical question of how much society is willing to pay for these technologies and who ultimately benefits from their implementation.

- **Mr. Ryan McKenney, General Counsel of Compliance & Director of Government Relations, Quantinuum**

Mr. Ryan McKenney highlighted the broad impact of technology, spanning industries such as Pharmaceuticals, Green energy, Material Science, and government operations optimization. However, he underscored a significant challenge related to encryption, emphasizing the critical role of Quantum technology in addressing national security concerns. Drawing parallels with the importance of AI in the 21st century, he stressed the need for robust government partnerships in the development of Quantum technology. Mr. McKenney pointed out the considerable expenses and expertise required for creating quantum computers, emphasizing the necessity for collaborative efforts between the government and industry.

- **Mr. Jonah Force Hill, Head of U.S. Federal Business Development & Government Affairs at Xanadu Quantum Technologies**

Mr. Jonah Force Hill described Xanadu as another full-stack quantum computing company, emphasizing their capability to build hardware, software, and develop algorithms. Mr. Hill highlighted a distinctive feature of Xanadu's approach, which centers on a photonics-based method for storing and manipulating information using light. He explained that this approach allows for easy integration into existing fiber optic systems used in telecommunications, eliminating the need for extensive cryogenic cooling systems associated with traditional quantum computers. Mr. Hill also mentioned Xanadu's open-source platform, Penny Lane, which seamlessly integrates with various quantum computing systems. He emphasized the collaborative nature of the quantum industry, recognizing competition but underscoring the importance of working together to advance technologies, build the necessary workforce, and garner government attention and investment. Overall, Mr. Hill expressed satisfaction with the industry's effective collaboration towards shared goals.

- **Ms. Allison Schwartz, Global Government Relations and Public Affairs Leader at D-Wave Quantum Inc.**

Ms. Allison Schwartz highlighted that D-Wave is a comprehensive quantum computing company, offering hardware, software, and cloud access. Ms. Schwartz mentioned the Quantum Annealer, a 5,000-Qubit system actively engaged in various global use cases, with installations in Canada, the US, and Germany. Notably, D-Wave stands out as the sole company constructing both an annealer and a gate model system, each tailored to distinct focuses. She explained that gate model systems are essential for cryptography, drug discovery, personalized medicine, and other innovative applications. Ms. Schwartz expressed enthusiasm for participating in the discussion, welcoming any questions and conveying D-Wave's commitment to advancing quantum computing technology.

DIGITAL ASSETS AND THE FUTURE OF MONEY

- **Hon. Heath Tarbert, Chief Legal Officer & Head of Corporate Affairs for Circle; former 14th Chairman & Chief Executive of the CFTC and U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Markets**

Hon. Heath Tarbert shared his perspective on when he first became aware of the significance of cryptocurrency. He mentioned that it was around the same time he was working on various issues related to national security and the future of the U.S.-China

relationship while serving as the U.S. Representative at the Financial Stability Board. Hon. Tarbert highlighted a pivotal moment when Mark Carney, the president of the UK's Bank of England, informed him about Facebook's plans to create a new global currency that could potentially surpass traditional currencies worldwide. This revelation served as his initial introduction to the concept of cryptocurrency, particularly the idea of money operating on public blockchains over the internet. Hon. Tarbert acknowledged that while he had heard of Bitcoin before, it was at that moment he realized the transformative potential and significance of cryptocurrencies.

- **Hon. Brian Quintenz, Head of Policy for a16z crypto, Andreessen Horowitz; former Commissioner, U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission**

Hon. Brian Quintenz, speaking about his experience, mentioned that he started his tenure as a commissioner at the CFTC (Commodity Futures Trading Commission) in 2017 under Chairman Heath Tarbert. Initially, his focus was on Dodd-Frank and how financial rules were crafted in response to the global financial crisis. Hon. Quintenz expressed his intention to recalibrate what he saw as a Draconian approach to financial markets through overreaching legislation. Hon. Quintenz highlighted the CFTC's pro-innovation process outlined in statute, which shifts the burden of approving new products onto the regulator only if they object to something an exchange has already deemed compliant with the law. Hon. Quintenz emphasized the importance of this approach, noting the positive impact on innovation in derivatives markets. The approval of Bitcoin Futures became a significant development, placing the CFTC in the midst of the governmental debate on crypto and immersing the agency into the crypto ecosystem.

- **Mr. Ji Kim, Head of Global Policy, Digital Assets, & General Counsel at Crypto Council for Innovation**

Mr. Ji Kim provided background information on his professional journey, mentioning his previous role as a corporate bankruptcy and restructuring attorney. He explained that his entry into the field of law was driven by a desire to apply his legal skills to help distressed companies improve their financial health. This same motivation led him to explore the world of cryptocurrencies, believing that they have the potential to transform and enhance legacy financial systems and payment infrastructures.

Having worked for two global cryptocurrency exchanges and custodians, Mr. Kim discussed his current role at CCI (Crypto Council for Innovation), a global educational advocacy organization. He explained that CCI aims to represent its members and collaborate with regulators and policymakers globally to shape credible regulatory frameworks. The goal is to facilitate responsible growth and innovation within the crypto industry, with a focus on providing access to the traditional financial system for individuals who may not have had it before.

Mr. J.C. Boggs, Esq., Partner, King & Spalding LLP (moderated of the panel)

CYBERSECURITY

- **N. MacDonnell Ulsch, Founder & Chief Analyst, Gray Zone Research & Intelligence-China Series / SkyTop Media Group and 2020Partner Network Alliance**

N. MacDonnell Ulsch discussed smart cities as urban environments integrating IoT, 5G, and AI. Mr. Ulsch raised concerns about conflicts arising from different political systems. He highlighted China's use of smart cities for mass surveillance, citing the Uighur situation and China's 800-900 smart cities. Mr. Ulsch mentioned the global availability of surveillance technologies and urged scrutiny of smart city contracts for banned technologies and associated risks. In the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative, he noted smart cities' role in granting China access to new markets. Mr. Ulsch emphasized the need to monitor smart city implementations, especially vendor involvement, to address vulnerabilities and ensure national security, citing the National Defense Authorization Act.

- **Mr. J.P. Parker, former Special Advisor to the Vice President for Cyber**

Mr. J.P. Parker shared his experience in the U.S. intelligence community and the challenge of coordinating 17 organizations to defend against cyberattacks. Mr. Parker discussed the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach involving various organizations and collaborating with industry. He emphasized the need for penetration testing, vulnerability testing, and isolating networks to enhance cybersecurity. He also highlighted the shift to a zero-trust architecture, where no data, device, or person goes unchallenged on the network. He urged proactive planning for network compromises and emphasized the significance of reconstitution in the face of a thoroughly compromised network.

- **Dr. Emily Goldman, Cyber Strategist, US Cyber Command**

Dr. Emily Goldman highlighted cyberspace as a major battlefield in great power competition, emphasizing its transformative nature in gaining strategic advantage without resorting to traditional warfare. She stressed the cumulative impact of exploiting vulnerabilities over time and discussed how cyber capabilities can be used to undermine military capabilities, economic competitiveness, social cohesion, and confidence in democratic institutions. Addressing ideological fault lines, she pointed out that authoritarian powers recognized cyberspace as an existential threat early on and have been using it to reshape the international system.

Dr. Goldman raised the fundamental question of whether societies want information freedom or information control, emphasizing the challenge and competition in this regard.

In terms of addressing the cyber threat landscape, Dr. Goldman emphasized the need for continuous understanding, anticipation, and vulnerability mitigation. She urged proactive engagement in the global system, collaboration with partners, and vigilance to anticipate and act before attacks occur. Dr. Goldman highlighted the routinized and normalized nature of cyber behavior, suggesting that legislative changes play a crucial role in enabling active cyber defense strategies. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of acting to preclude malicious activities rather than relying on traditional deterrence.

- **Ms. Carole N. House, Executive in Residence | Terranet Ventures, Inc - Former National Security Council Director for Cyber and Secure Digital Innovation**

Ms. Carole N. House framed the discussion within the context of the most intense period of great power competition since World War II. She emphasized the rapid pace of innovation and technology deployment, as well as the use of technology policy and economic tools in this competitive landscape. Ms. House highlighted that the conversation should not be limited to technology policy, economic policy, or national security but should involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including industry, government agencies, law enforcement, intelligence, national security, cyber regulators, and politicians. She stressed the interdisciplinary nature of the conversation, emphasizing that the issues at hand are global and affect the entire world. Ms. House concluded by emphasizing the high stakes and rapid pace of technological development, stating that these factors demand interdisciplinary discussions like the one taking place at the forum.

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CRYPTOCURRENCY SUPERVISION AND REGULATION

- **Mr. Yaya J. Fanusie, Director of Policy for AML & Cyber Risk, Crypto Council for Innovation**

Mr. Yaya J. Fanusie shared his experience as a former analyst in the US intelligence community, specifically in counterterrorism, and clarified that he began exploring cryptocurrency after leaving the government. Mr. Fanusie then discussed the national security lens through which digital assets and cryptocurrencies are viewed, outlining three dimensions. The first dimension, according to Mr. Fanusie, involves addressing short-term, straightforward risks associated with bad actors using crypto assets. He emphasized the importance of implementing anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism rules, which the US Treasury had introduced in 2013.

The second dimension, described as the "it's complicated" stage, emerged between 2018 and 2021. During this period, Mr. Fanusie observed increased sophistication among crypto rogues, involving nation-state actors investing in and learning about crypto technology. This phase marked a shift towards geopolitical considerations, with nations like Russia and Iran exploring crypto for reasons beyond immediate financial gains.

The third dimension, referred to as "winning the future," encompasses the ongoing strategic competition among different actors to shape the future of digital assets. Mr. Fanusie highlighted the current race in innovation, with various forms of digital money emerging and competing within the financial and tech sectors. He concluded by discussing the digital future of finance, contrasting the controlled model pursued by China, particularly with its central bank digital currency (CBDC), against the ethos of decentralization embraced by the cryptocurrency space.

- **Ms. Lilita Infante, Chief Executive Officer, CAT Labs, Former U.S. Department of Justice Special Agent**

Ms. Lilita Infante discussed her early involvement in creating a federal task force exclusively dedicated to addressing cryptocurrency-enabled crime. The task force covered various aspects such as dark web activities, money laundering by criminal organizations, terrorist financing, and funding by adversarial nation-states for nuclear arms programs. Having witnessed the negative applications of crypto over the years, Ms. Infante acknowledged the challenges posed by scams, hacks, and fraud within the industry. Despite these challenges, she expressed her belief in the technology and its potential to combat cyber warfare, particularly through cryptography. Ms. Infante emphasized the need for continued research and development in cryptography as a proactive measure against emerging threats, including the anticipated challenges posed

by Quantum Computing. She stressed the importance of not stifling the cryptocurrency industry through excessive regulation, as it plays a crucial role in fostering innovation and developing tools to address future threats.

- **Mr. Kristopher Klaich, Deputy Director, Policy - Chamber of Digital Commerce**

Mr. Kristopher Klaich provided context regarding the use and regulation of digital assets, emphasizing that only around a quarter percent of crypto transactions are illicit, compared to 2 to 5% in the traditional finance world. Mr. Klaich highlighted the effectiveness of blockchain technology in tracking, tracing, and dismantling terrorism funding, noting that the majority of terrorism financing still occurs through traditional channels. He questioned the logic behind proposed legislation that could adversely impact the crypto industry, cautioning against mischaracterizations and the need for nuanced regulations. Mr. Klaich discussed China's significant investment and advancements in blockchain technology, expressing concern about the potential global impact of a Chinese-controlled blockchain-based economic system. He urged nations to consider aligning with a freer, open, collaborative, and constructive approach led by the US, its friends, and allies.

- **Dr. Oonagh McDonald CBE - Senior adviser, Crito Capital - Former British Member of Parliament**

Dr. Oonagh McDonald began by highlighting the distinction between blockchain technology and its subsequent uses. She pointed out that the transparency of blockchain transactions is not as straightforward as claimed, particularly when it comes to identifying the parties involved. Dr. McDonald emphasized the importance of private keys in transactions, making it challenging to ascertain the identities of the sender and recipient. She delved into the issue of stablecoins, focusing on Tether (USDT), which claims to be pegged to the US dollar but faces regulatory concerns. Dr. McDonald expressed skepticism about Tether's reserves and its lack of proper regulation, especially in the British Virgin Islands. She raised questions about the transparency of stablecoins, especially regarding the redemption process, potential costs, delays, and limitations for holders.

Dr. McDonald touched on the shrinking crypto market, attributing it to the prevalence of bad actors and inadequate regulations. She discussed the losses suffered by ordinary consumers, emphasizing the need for better consumer protection in the face of fraud.

TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL CONVERGENCY

- **Mr. Alejo Campos, Regional Director, Crime Stoppers, Americas and Caribbean**

Mr. Alejo addressed the forum on the topic of transnational crime convergence, criminal ecosystems, and kleptocracy. Mr. Campos highlighted the evolution of criminal groups, emphasizing how they have transitioned from isolated entities to operating jointly in what he referred to as a criminal convergence.

He drew attention to the interconnected nature of criminal organizations, describing how drug traffickers, human traffickers, money launderers, weapon dealers, and corrupt actors have formed alliances to create a unified criminal body. This collaboration extends to politicians, mayors, and public officials, who, driven by greed or grievances, become part of these criminal structures.

Mr. Campos introduced the concept of "kleptocracy," emphasizing that corruption is no longer isolated but has become ingrained within the criminal ecosystem. He discussed how criminal convergence and kleptocracy negatively impact democracy, freedom, economic development, and national security, urging a unified and global effort to address these issues.

Mr. Campos outlined the challenges, including the lack of laws specifically targeting criminal convergence and the need for improved training among justice system operators to understand and combat this phenomenon. To address these challenges, Mr. Campos proposed several actions, including the creation of laws addressing criminal convergence, enhanced training programs, and the establishment of a special task force to monitor and address the issue. He stressed the importance of collaboration across public and private sectors, domestically and internationally, to effectively counteract the threats posed by criminal convergence and kleptocracy.

- **Mr. John Walsh, President and Chief Executive Officer, SightSpan Inc. Washington D.C**

Mr. John Walsh discussed the convergence of financial crime and terrorism, highlighting the history and global impact of counterterrorist financing. He emphasized the need for a unified approach, considering the interconnectedness of criminal and terrorist activities. Mr. Walsh underlined the role of poverty, lack of education, and limited resources in enabling illicit activities, calling for a proactive approach to address these underlying issues. He urged policymakers to focus on disrupting illicit financial flows, prosecuting high-profile cases, and strengthening border controls. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of collaboration, information sharing, and a global perspective to effectively combat criminality.

- **Mr. Michael Braun, President, SAVA Workforce Solutions - Former Chief of Operations, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (Retired)**

Mr. Michael Braun discussed the convergence of transnational organized crime with terrorist organizations in his presentation. Drawing from his extensive 35 year law enforcement background, he highlighted connections between various groups, including the Cali Cartel and Hezbollah, as well as the involvement of terrorist organizations in the global drug trade. Emphasizing the role of corruption in both the public and private sectors, he underscored the financial motivations behind this convergence. Braun also pointed out the vulnerabilities and commonalities between terrorist organizations and transnational organized crime groups, stressing the importance of understanding the interplay between ideology and criminal activities. Additionally, he discussed the permissive environments or ungoverned spaces where these groups operate and expressed concern about personal relationships formed in such settings evolving into strong interorganizational collaborations.

SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCY

- **Hon. Cristian Bacanu, Member of Parliament, Chamber of Deputies of Romania**

Hon. Cristian Bacanu addressed the forum by emphasizing the importance of the dialogue on transnational threats and the vulnerabilities faced by societies amid what he described as a new Cold War. He pointed out the lack of unity and a comprehensive plan among Western nations to counter the threats posed by what he termed an "axis of evil" formed by China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Hon. Bacanu underscored the need to reduce dependence on Chinese electronics, explore mining for vital elements in like-minded countries, strengthen relations with Africa to counter Chinese influence, achieve energy independence, and ensure food security. He emphasized the importance of robust public policies and public-private collaboration to safeguard democracy, freedom, and the global economy.

- **Hon. John Strand, CEO of Strand Consult**

Hon. John Strand discussed the impact of Chinese telecommunications infrastructure on European countries and highlighted the mapping of Chinese equipment in 31 European nations. He emphasized the significance of the EU's 5G toolbox, which aims to ensure that European countries do not use untrusted vendors in their 5G networks. Additionally, he presented recent research on 10 countries aspiring to join the European Union, revealing the challenges posed by Chinese equipment in these regions. Mr. Strand pointed out the misinformation spread by Huawei and addressed the need for stricter

regulations to safeguard national security. He also raised concerns about Russia's influence in occupied parts of Ukraine, where Chinese companies may be assisting in building and running mobile networks used by the Russian military. Strand called for increased scrutiny and public awareness regarding these activities, emphasizing the importance of understanding the conditions Western companies face in China.

- **Mr. François Baird, Chairman and Founder, Baird's US LLC/Baird's CMC Limited/Calbridge (Pty) Ltd/FairPlay, United States**

Mr. François Baird highlighted the impact of electricity shortages on various sectors, including agriculture and mining, emphasizing the trilemma of energy that involves balancing energy security, equity, and environmental sustainability. He discussed how corruption and state capture have contributed to the energy crisis in South Africa, leading to disruptions in the supply chain, and affecting not only electricity but also transportation and other critical sectors. Expressing concern for Africa's development, Mr. Baird criticized the focus on renewable energy solutions that might not be practical for the continent's needs and suggested that the West should support Africa in making the most of its abundant local resources. He argued for market solutions and the importance of the rule of law and institutions in ensuring sustainable development in Africa.

- **Ms. Kaniah Konkoly-Thege Chief Legal Officer, Chief Compliance Officer, and Senior Vice President of Government Relations for Quantinuum**

Ms. Kaniah Konkoly-Thege discussed Quantum Computing's capabilities, highlighting its potential to break public key encryption. She explained the complex nature of Quantum Computing hardware, detailing the intricate process of creating systems, involving various components, subassemblies, and collaborations with global suppliers. The scale of Quantum Computing systems, their growth, and the necessity of a vast and diverse supply chain were emphasized. She delved into the challenges faced by the Quantum Computing industry, such as the need for collaboration with suppliers worldwide, joint development efforts, and the increasing importance of scaling these systems. Konkoly-Thege acknowledged the global nature of the supply chain, with parts sourced from around 900 vendors globally. She noted the challenges of navigating the global economy, including concerns about raw materials from China. Ms. Konkoly-Thege concluded by pointing out the broader concerns related to skilled workers, know-how, and the fragility of supply chains. She highlighted the interconnected nature of these factors, emphasizing the importance of understanding critical supplies, resources, and manufacturing capabilities when formulating policies.

ILLICIT FINANCE

- **Mr. John Cassara, Board Member, Global Financial Integrity**

Mr. John Cassara, having a background in international law enforcement for around 30 years, highlighted the aspect of China as a transnational criminal and money laundering threat. He mentioned a book he authored, titled "China's Specified Unlawful Activities: CCP Inc - Transnational Crime and Money Laundering," where he explored 12 major categories of transnational crime, in 11 of which China led the world. These categories included narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, wildlife trafficking, illegal fishing, counterfeit intellectual property rights violations, and more.

Mr. Cassara specifically focused on illicit finance and trade-based money laundering. He discussed trade fraud as a widespread form of Chinese and global money laundering, involving invoice fraud, misrepresentation of goods' contents or values, and its role as a specified unlawful activity or a money laundering methodology. With China being the largest trading nation, Mr. Cassara acknowledged the challenge of obtaining reliable data and enforcing measures against trade fraud. Capital flight from China was also emphasized, with an estimated \$4 trillion leaving the country from 2006 to 2016. Mr. Cassara discussed the creative means employed, including capital controls and restrictions, and the use of trade-based money laundering to move money out of the country.

Mr. Cassara touched on China's involvement in global black-market exchanges, mentioning the use of Chinese apps such as WeChat Pay for illicit transactions. He discussed the evolution of Colombian Black Market Peso Exchange and its global spread, pointing out the challenges faced in combating these increasingly sophisticated money laundering schemes.

Additionally, Mr. Cassara highlighted China's participation in underground financial systems, such as "fei-chien" or flying money, which utilizes trade-based money laundering for remittances and, at times, the transfer of proceeds of crime.

- **Mr. Tom Cardamone, Director of Global Financial Integrity (GFI)**

Mr. Tom Cardamone highlighted the organization's focus on researching illicit financial flows, trade, money laundering, and transnational crime. He emphasized the significant challenges posed by counterfeiting and illegal trade, amounting to trillions of dollars annually. Mr. Cardamone identified a critical issue: the opacity in the ownership of commercial shipping vessels, linking it to various criminal activities. He discussed findings that vessels with undisclosed owners are more prone to violating safety rules and regulations. The lack of transparency in the ownership of these ships poses a challenge for law enforcement, hindering efforts to combat illicit activities. Mr. Cardamone proposed

two solutions: a national requirement for ships to disclose beneficial ownership before docking and the establishment of a global public beneficial ownership registry for companies owning or operating ships. He argued that such measures would enhance transparency, aid law enforcement, and benefit financial institutions and insurance companies. These proposals have been presented to the European Parliament for consideration in their anti-money laundering directive negotiations.

- **Hon. Jerome Beaumont, Executive Secretary, Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units.**

Hon. Jerome Beaumont acknowledged the vast and growing scope of illicit finance, quoting United Nations estimates of two to five trillion USD laundered annually. Hon. Beaumont delved into the challenges posed by money laundering through trade and emphasized the evolving landscape of illicit finance, specifically mentioning the impact of Web 3 technologies, including cryptocurrencies and NFTs (non-fungible tokens). He shared a personal experience of exploring crypto transactions and NFTs, highlighting the potential for money laundering in this space. Hon. Beaumont stressed the urgency of addressing money laundering, emphasizing the importance of tracking, confiscating criminal proceeds, and using recovered funds to address social issues caused by criminal organizations. He underscored the need for robust international cooperation, involving Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), and called attention to the chronic under-resourcing of FIUs globally, urging parliamentarians to address this critical problem in their respective countries. Hon. Beaumont concluded by encouraging a comprehensive review of FIUs' resources, autonomy, and capabilities, especially in upcoming budget proposals.

- **Hon. Elżbieta Franków-Jaśkiewicz, Head of the International Cooperation Unit within the Department of Financial Information of the Polish Ministry of Finance - Interim Chair, Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence**

Hon. Elżbieta Franków-Jaśkiewicz highlighted the severe and extensive impacts of illicit finance on a global scale, affecting businesses, economies, and nations. She emphasized the crucial role financial intelligence units (FIUs) play in aiding national and international efforts to counter money laundering, terrorist financing and predicate offences. Hon. Franków-Jaśkiewicz stressed the paramount importance of financial intelligence sharing, describing FIUs as the nerve centre of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing efforts. She discussed the challenges of tracing the web of money laundering and terrorist financing due to the global nature of these activities. Hon. Franków-Jaśkiewicz then introduced the Egmont group, a uniquely positioned, global organization formed by 170 member FIUs, designed to facilitate operational cooperation and information exchange among its members. She emphasized the group's efforts in providing a secure platform for information exchange amongst FIUs, capacity building by providing technical assistance and training through the Egmont Centre of FIU Excellence

and Leadership (ECOFEL) and sharing expertise, including typology reports and red flags/risk indicators, through the Information Exchange Working Group (IEWG). She then highlighted the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) as key stakeholders and longstanding supporters of the ECOFEL Program. Finally, Hon. Franków-Jaśkiewicz highlighted vital projects and achievements recently carried out by ECOFEL and the IEWG.

- **Mr. Mariano Federici, Senior Managing Director, K2 Integrity, and Frmr. Chair of the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units**

Mariano Federici discussed the persistent issue of corruption. He highlighted corruption's dual nature as both a threat and a vulnerability to a country's stability. Corruption generates illicit proceeds, jeopardizing financial systems and economies, while also compromising a nation's ability to counter threats effectively. Mr. Federici provided examples from his experience, including a case involving the national oil and gas company in Argentina, where corruption led to distortions in prices and macroeconomic policy inefficiencies. He emphasized how corruption contaminates institutions, rule of law, and democratic stability, recounting an instance where corruption extended into the executive and legislative branches.

DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS/TRAFFICKING AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

- **Dr. Bob Fu, Founder and President, China Aid**

Dr. Bob Fu, an advocate for persecuted Christians and a survivor of the Tiananmen Square protests, shared insights on the severe threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He emphasized the CCP's danger not only to the 1.3 billion Chinese people but to the entire world. He highlighted the CCP's relentless persecution, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when he and his wife faced threats from CCP agents for their advocacy. Dr. Fu discussed the CCP's three major religious wars under Xi Jinping: the war against the cross, the war against God's Church, and the war against God's children. The war against the cross involved the CCP ordering the removal of crosses from government-sanctioned churches, treating the cross as a national security threat. Dr. Fu also described the war against God's children, wherein children under 18 were prohibited from entering churches, and millions of Christian children were forced to renounce their faith publicly.

Dr. Fu addressed the CCP's persecution of Uighur Muslims, estimating between 1 to three million in modern-day concentration camps. He urged global awareness, suggesting actions such as holding Congressional hearings and testifying in parliaments worldwide. Dr. Fu concluded by emphasizing the transformative impact of removing the CCP from the global stage for the betterment of the world.

- **Mr. Felipe Alexandre, Founding Attorney, Alexandre Law Firm**

Mr. Felipe Alexandre expressed admiration for Dr. Bob Fu, drawing a parallel with Kobe Bryant idolizing Michael Jordan. He discussed his involvement in Chinese human rights through law school and highlighted the crucial role of organizations like China Aid, praising Bob Fu as a hero. Mr. Alexandre outlined how he and Dr. Fu work together, emphasizing Bob's ability to perform miracles in assisting victims of the CCP's persecution. He elaborated on the process of obtaining asylum, explaining the five protected grounds and sharing insights into representing cases involving political dissidents, religious practitioners, and persecuted groups like the Uighurs. Mr. Alexandre discussed the Mayflower Church case, where an entire church received humanitarian parole through Bob Fu's efforts. He touched upon the challenges of proving persecution in asylum cases and shared anecdotes about cases involving human rights lawyers in China. The speaker also shed light on the lack of judicial independence in China, exemplifying the crackdown on lawyers in 2015, and the ongoing challenges faced by those who seek justice against the government. Lastly, Mr. Alexandre expanded the discussion to include human rights issues in Brazil, particularly concerning attacks on democracy and free speech. He highlighted the case of Luda, a former judge facing repercussions for expressing opinions against the Brazilian government. Mr. Alexandre concluded by expressing confidence in the collective efforts to uphold human rights globally and encouraged continued advocacy for justice.

- **Hon. Alexandru Nazare, Member of Parliament, Romania**

Drawing on his personal experiences growing up in communist Romania, Hon. Alexandru Nazare emphasized the significance of freedom and recounted how his parents would listen to Radio Free Europe for real news. He highlighted the impact of communism on Romania and the subsequent transition to democracy, underlining Romania's transformation into a key player in NATO. Hon. Nazare shifted the focus to the Schengen Agreement, explaining its historical significance and the benefits it brought to European nations. He discussed the current challenges facing Schengen, pointing out that some member states are not upholding the agreement. He emphasized the importance of Romania and Bulgaria joining Schengen, citing economic losses and border-related issues. Hon. Nazare argued for reforming EU institutions and urged the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria in Schengen, given their readiness and the positive recommendations from the European Commission. Furthermore, he underscored the broader implications for regional security, stability, and transatlantic relations. Hon. Nazare raised awareness about the urgency of the decision, expressing hope for a

positive outcome in the next six months. He concluded by emphasizing the significance of the decision for Romania, Bulgaria, the region, Europe, and the transatlantic alliance.

- **Hon. Mary Vigil, Subcommittee Staff Director, House Foreign Affairs Committee, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, Chairman Michael McCaul**

Hon. Mary Vigil highlighted her extensive work on human trafficking since 1995, involving direct engagement with victims, advocacy organizations, and roles in both the executive and legislative branches. Working with Congressman Chris Smith on the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act reauthorization, she emphasized the intersection of human trafficking with democracy, human rights, and religious freedom.

Touching on the definition of human trafficking in the US, aligning with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and the UN protocol, Hon. Vigil underscored the importance of addressing child trafficking and the inclusion of organ trafficking in the reauthorization. She emphasized the global and varied nature of human trafficking, occurring across social classes, races, ethnicities, religions, and countries. Discussing the involvement of diverse individuals, including parents, strangers, teachers, church leaders, relatives, friends, and even peers, Hon. Vigil stressed the critical role of everyone learning how to prevent, identify, and respond to human trafficking. She emphasized the need for national action plans, laws, and their implementation and enforcement in the fight against human trafficking. Pointing to the three key aspects of prosecution, prevention, and protection, she added the importance of partnerships. Hon. Vigil highlighted the significance of a Survivor Advisory Council, acknowledging survivors as experts and leaders with crucial insights. She shared ongoing efforts in the US, including a prevention education grant targeting children from kindergarten to age 18. Addressing the issue's complexity, she reiterated the importance of the Survivor Advisory Council in shaping policy recommendations. Looking toward the future, Hon. Vigil listed several ongoing issues, such as online exploitation, organ trafficking, child labor, illicit financing, supply chain scrutiny, monitoring convicted child sex offenders globally, and training law enforcement and judges. She concluded by emphasizing the significance of enforcing sanctions to reduce trafficking and deter traffickers.

- **Dr. Achyuta Samanta, Member of Parliament, India**

In his speech, Dr. Achyuta Samanta, the founder of the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), highlighted his over 30-year commitment to eradicating poverty and providing quality education to marginalized indigenous children in Odisha, India. He shared his personal experience of poverty and how, through KISS and the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), he has offered free and residential education to 80,000 indigenous children, breaking the cycle of poverty and shielding them from issues like child labor and human trafficking. He emphasized the unique financial model involving

stakeholder collaboration and underscored KISS's positive impact on safeguarding human rights, promoting democracy, and gender and religious equality.

AFRICA PERSPECTIVE

- **Hon. Bol Gai Deng, President Republic of South Sudan Government in Exile**

Highlighting South Sudan as the world's youngest nation, Hon. Bol Gai Deng shared a compelling personal journey—from being born in Sudan, sold into slavery, and eventually finding liberty and freedom in the United States. As a candidate, he emphasized his commitment to peace and prosperity and urged the global community to advocate for transparent elections in South Sudan. Hon. Deng outlined the challenges faced by South Sudan, including a history of war, displacement, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation. He criticized President Salva Kiir's leadership, accusing him of perpetuating war, delaying elections, and exploiting the country's resources for personal gain.

Hon. Deng underscored the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, with millions in need of assistance due to violence, displacement, and human rights abuses. Deng appealed for international support to ensure free and fair elections in December 2024, challenging the alleged suppression of opposition figures and the need for a democratic transition. Drawing inspiration from Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideals, Hon. Deng emphasized the interconnectedness of justice and peace globally. He highlighted his grassroots movement advocating for a government by the people and underscored the importance of all candidates, including himself, being on the ballot in the upcoming elections.

- **Hon. Gathoni Wamuchomba MP, Githunguri Kenya**

Hon. Gathoni Wamuchomba emphasized that some nations, including Kenya, have made serious commitments and taken significant concessions and loans from China that will impact their economies for the next 30 years. She urged the forum's honorable members to shift the focus from disengagement to finding solutions and ways to support countries already entangled with China.

She presented a challenge to the forum, calling for a candid discussion on how to assist nations deeply tied to China in overcoming their economic struggles. Wamuchomba shared the current financial strain faced by her government, explaining that her staff members could not be paid salaries due to the financial burden caused by loans taken for infrastructure programs. Hon. Wamuchomba questioned the intentions behind these loans, asking whether they were designed to auction African countries. She raised

concerns about the selling off of national assets in Kenya, including the seed company and the iconic Kenya International Convention Center, as a means to meet loan obligations.

Hon. Wamuchomba called for a deeper examination of China's intentions in providing these loans and challenged the forum members to explore disengagement strategies while providing alternative solutions for African countries facing financial challenges. She urged the forum to address the root causes of the economic struggles and emphasized the importance of finding new paths for African nations that are burdened by loans they cannot afford to repay.

- **Hon (Dr.) Sha'Aban Ibrahim Sharada, OON Nigeria**

Hon. Sha'Aban Ibrahim Sharada shared insights into security matters and the intersection between education and national security. The presentation began by highlighting Nigeria's commitment to a new Africa that fosters growth, security, and youth development. Sharada underscored the importance of inclusive participation of African youth and women in democratic governance, aligning with the aspirations declared on July 28, 2023, during an extraordinary session of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Hon. Sharada emphasized the critical link between insecurity and the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Citing global reports, Sharada pointed out that over 244 million children, including adolescents, are out of school worldwide. Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria, faces significant challenges, with 20 million out-of-school children in the country.





