
The Chicago Council on Global Affairs initiated the project to provide the incoming U.S. administration and 111th Congress with an objective assessment of the risks posed by rural poverty and food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The report focuses on small farms and the role of women in farm families in bringing about change. It identifies opportunities for the United States to work with governments and other institutions in Africa and South Asia to increase productivity, market access, and incomes for small farmers in these regions. The proposed recommendations can be implemented at a modest cost, with the first year expenditures estimated at $340 million, compared to $83 million now spent on these activities in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

“While our country and many others face daunting financial challenges this year, we must not turn our backs on helping people in the poorest countries acquire one of life’s most basic necessities – food.”
Agriculture Central to Global Economy of Today and the Future

A letter from the President

The Chicago Council’s report Renewing American Leadership in the Fight Against Global Hunger and Poverty, described on page one of this issue of Communiqué, was the result of an eight-month initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to stimulate informed policy and public debate about the need to put agriculture back at the center of U.S. development policy.

Released just one month after President Obama pledged in his inauguration address to “make farms flourish” in poor nations, the report attracted much attention in Washington, D.C. Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana keynoted the release event attended by 200 people, and Senator Dick Durbin spoke at a dinner that evening. The project cochairs, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and former UN World Food Program director (and Chicagoan) Catherine Bertini, discussed the report with new U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and have been in touch with a number of other senior officials and members of Congress.

But members and friends of The Chicago Council might understandably ask, why agriculture? Isn’t that part of our past, not our future?

Actually, agriculture remains central to many of the greatest challenges and opportunities facing our nation and the world, now and in the future. Agricultural exports are critical to our nation’s economy, as the United States must regain its export competitiveness and rebalance its imports and exports. At the same time, agriculture is the single greatest impediment to global trade liberalization, as developed and to a lesser degree developing nations seek to protect their farm sectors. Low farm productivity and incomes are the source of most of the world’s extreme poverty, especially in Africa and South Asia, with the potential for increasing distress, unrest, and state failure in those regions. Yet, as we saw in the Green Revolution of the 1960s and the 1970s, technological change in agriculture will be the answer to rising concern about global food security as world population increases by fifty percent over the next forty years.

Agriculture also holds the promise of new fuels (such as ethanol), new drugs, and new materials. It is part of both the problem and the solution to the twin spectres of climate change and growing water scarcity. Today, industrial agriculture practices, such as large animal feedlots in the Midwest, are big emitters of carbon as methane. But agriculture is a natural “carbon sink,” or absorber of carbon, and new technologies could “double down” that advantage. Agriculture is the largest consumer of fresh water in many countries, and rising overall global demand for water, sure to be exacerbated by climate change in the most affected regions of Africa and South Asia, is seen to be a likely cause of conflict within and between societies. New technologies and practices could turn agriculture in new directions and offer new hope for prosperity.

But why should The Chicago Council involve itself in exploring these issues and searching for new approaches and policies? First, agriculture is one of the subjects we had in mind when we changed our name from “foreign relations” to “global affairs.” Like environment, migration, governance, and human rights, it is an issue that is both domestic and international, that is driven by global forces but regulated by national authorities. It cries out for understanding and debate, especially as we enter a period when forces of economic nationalism may be on the rise around the world.

Second, Chicago is still the capital of the world’s greatest agricultural region. Our urban economy may be in transition, but it is tied in part to the success of the agricultural businesses and communities that surround the city. Chicago and its region are home to most of the nation’s and the world’s great companies that serve agriculture at home and abroad—Deere, Corn Products, ADM, Monsanto, Cargill, Valmont, Pioneer, to name a few. The Chicago Mercantile Exchange and Board of Trade, created to serve the agriculture sector by enabling trading in farm commodity futures, are together the world’s largest trading floor for futures and derivatives of all kinds.

Third, the Midwest’s land grant universities, established to support the growth of agriculture, are among the world’s greatest and are a resource for the nation and the world in the faculty and students they attract, and the contributions they make to knowledge and progress.

The just-completed project on global agricultural development is not The Chicago Council’s first foray into the subject. In 2006, the Council sponsored a task force on U.S. farm policy with recommendations widely praised as a roadmap for reform. The Council is the sponsor of a new book on global hunger by two Wall Street Journal correspondents to be published in the late spring. Agriculture is central to the global economy of today and the future, and thus to the Council’s continuing focus on the economic forces reshaping our world.

Marshall M. Bouton
President
Report Calls for Renewed U.S. Leadership in the Fight Against Global Hunger and Poverty

continued from front

said project cochair Dan Glickman, former U.S. secretary of agriculture. “This is an expression of America’s basic values and vital interests. There is no better way at very affordable cost to reinvigorate U.S. international leadership and strengthen America’s image in the developing world. We have the knowledge and technology to solve this problem; what has been lacking is the political resolve.”

The project finds that, at a time when global food emergencies are occurring with greater frequency and severity, an unacceptably small percentage of U.S. and international development assistance is committed to improving agricultural productivity in the poorest countries, and helping these nations produce enough food and farm-based income to escape from poverty.

“Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked and the source of many other problems in developing countries such as disease and social dislocation,” said project cochair Catherine Bertini, former executive director of the UN World Food Program. “It is truly amazing how smallholder farms and rural communities in Africa and Asia will flourish when women, who do a large portion of the agriculture work, have access to key inputs such as land, credit, relevant technologies, and all levels of education. By supporting the work of African and Asian partners and engaging U.S. universities, NGOs, and companies, we can help spur a second Green Revolution and reduce poverty.”

More than 700 million people who survive on less than $1 per day live in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. In spite of this, the United States only spends four percent of its total development assistance on agricultural development. The report argues that there must be a government-led strategy to significantly increase investment in the key areas of global agricultural development where the United States holds great advantage—research, education, and infrastructure—and to help nations in Africa and South Asia to achieve their goals of alleviating rural poverty and related hunger.

The Chicago Council’s report outlines five recommendations, with twenty-one specific suggestions, for how the United States can provide the necessary leadership to revitalize the international fight against global hunger and poverty. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, increased investments in agricultural research could help more than 270 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia lift themselves out of poverty by 2020.

Major recommendations include increased agricultural education and extension at all levels, greater funding for agricultural research, more emphasis on expanding rural and agricultural infrastructure, reform of U.S. institutions that deliver agricultural development assistance, and their interactions with international institutions focused on agricultural development assistance, and reform of U.S. policies that discourage agricultural development abroad.

“The Council was honored to work with an impressive team that was able to build a fresh and realistic blueprint for how the U.S. can play a key role in addressing this global humanitarian challenge,” said Marshall M. Bouton, president of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. “We also know that the American public is supportive of a greater U.S. commitment to the leaders’ group proposals, as a 2008 Council survey found that seventy-four percent of Americans said they wanted the United States to ‘provide renewed international leadership’ specifically to increase agricultural productivity in poor countries. It is the right time to implement the group’s suggested reforms.”

This project was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The report put forth by the Global Agricultural Development Leaders Group can be found online at thechicagocouncil.org/globalagdevelopment.

Chicago Council to Honor Cohen, Rowe, and Sadik for Global Leadership

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs will present awards to the Honorable William S. Cohen, former U.S. secretary of defense and former U.S. senator and congressman from Maine; John W. Rowe, chairman and chief executive officer of Exelon Corporation; and Dr. Nafis Sadik, UN under-secretary general and former UNFPA executive director, for outstanding achievement in the realms of international relations, civic leadership, and philanthropy at the seventh annual Global Leadership Awards Dinner at the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago on Thursday, April 16, 2009. Gregory C. Case, president and chief executive officer of Aon Corporation, and Frederick H. Waddell, president and chief executive officer of Northern Trust Corporation, are serving as chairs of the dinner with hosts John F. and Mary Manley.

To learn more about the Global Leadership Awards Dinner or to request an invitation, please call 312-553-2000 or visit www.pjhchicago.com/thechicagocouncil.
Adele Simmons, who joined The Chicago Council’s Board of Directors in 2002, is vice chair of Chicago Metropolis 2020, where she focuses on early childhood education and the Centennial of Burnham’s Plan for Chicago. She also is cochair of the Chicago Climate Task Force that has been developing a Climate Action Plan for the city of Chicago, and she is a member of The Chicago Council’s task force examining national energy policy and Midwestern regional competitiveness. Simmons also served as cochair of the Council’s 2007 study on Chicago’s global future and as a member of the Council’s 2006 task force on the economic engagement of greater Chicago and its Mexican community. She was heavily involved in the creation of Global Chicago at The Chicago Council in 2001 and currently sits on its executive committee. From 1989 to 1999, Simmons was president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and before joining the Foundation, she was president of Hampshire College and a senior officer at Princeton University.

Q: How did you first become involved with The Chicago Council?
A: I have been involved with The Chicago Council from a very early age – I joke that it’s been since before birth. In the 1930s my father and my godfather, Adlai Stevenson, were very active members, countering a strong isolationist movement led by Colonel McCormick at the Chicago Tribune. That perspective carried over into my own work and professional life. With a background in colonial history, peace and international security have long been of interest to me. I lived in Tunisia, Kenya, and Mauritius, and did my graduate work at Oxford in African history and politics. At Hampshire, I helped to set up the Program in Peace and World Security Studies. When I came back to Chicago as president of the MacArthur Foundation, I participated in a number of Council programs and funded several projects.

Q: How did Global Chicago come about and why do you think it is important to Chicago?
A: I spearheaded Global Chicago as part of an effort to nurture, encourage, and recognize the international expertise that was right here in the city. The project gave voice and visibility to people who were working globally and were based in Chicago. The city’s future depends on Chicago’s global connections. To the extent that Chicago is and has a reputation as being a place of new ideas where global connections happen – this strengthens the city and strengthens the region. We want Chicago to be regarded as a place where major corporations see a future for their businesses, as Boeing did when it relocated its headquarters here. Chicago should be recognized as a center where renowned architects are designing major projects worldwide from China to Dubai. Chicago is a place where people can come together and connect globally, as our law and accounting firms do. Our medical facilities are engaged in important research on diseases that have a huge impact on health in places like Africa and India.

Q: What global affairs topics do you believe should receive more attention?
A: I would like to see more attention paid to places where things are working. For instance Senegal won’t have an AIDS epidemic because of successful initiatives there. Burundi has established a rigorous conflict-resolution process that works. Sharing success stories about places in Africa in particular can help to change the image of the continent. We need to learn from history, but not just from conflict and disaster. We need to learn from what is working too.
In early 2007, the MacArthur Foundation contributed $1 million, the largest single grant in the Council’s history, to its 21st Century Fund. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs established the 21st Century Fund in 2005 as a major working capital fund to support a broad institutional transformation, and the MacArthur Foundation was eager to help.

“The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is a major civic asset for Chicago and the Midwest. It is an important national leader in the analysis of global trends and their impact on the United States,” said Jonathan F. Fanton, president of the MacArthur Foundation, at a Chicago Council event.

Fanton, president of the Foundation since September 1999, has an extensive background in education and administration. Himself a Yale alumnus, Fanton taught American history at Yale, and later at the University of Chicago, before joining the New School for Social Research as president in 1982. In addition to his duties at MacArthur, he serves on the boards of Human Rights Watch and the Chicago History Museum, and as cochair of Chicago’s Partnership for New Communities, among other positions.

The MacArthur Foundation, based in Chicago, has long fostered creativity, justice, and peace around the world. Founded in 1978, when Chicago businessman and philanthropist John D. MacArthur passed away and left assets of nearly $700 million to establish the foundation named for him and his wife, its mission is carried out both domestically and internationally. In 2007, the MacArthur Foundation gave more than $267 million in grants to 482 organizations in the United States and sixty other countries. Almost half of the Foundation’s philanthropy is devoted to programs abroad, with a focus on human rights and international justice, conservation, population and reproductive health, global migration and mobility, and reducing the dangers from weapons of mass destruction.

“We have offices in Russia, Nigeria, India, Mexico, and soon China. So we are deeply aware of America’s impact on the world; how the U.S. is perceived abroad; and what people in other nations admire, and hope for, in how America relates to the international community,” said Fanton.

The MacArthur Foundation has recently increased its investment in projects and groups relating especially to its Global Migration and Human Mobility Initiative. This program, analyzing policy as it relates to international migration, focuses on the correlation between migration and economic development. Migration, the Foundation asserts, is one of the most underserved components of our world’s rapid globalization. As MacArthur Foundation president Fanton attests, “the international movement of people is here to stay.”

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs serves as an outlet for the MacArthur Foundation to address the issue of global migration. In 2004, the Foundation supported the Council’s first major initiative on immigration, a task force and report titled Keeping the Promise: Immigration Proposals from the Heartland. The Chicago Council is now recognized as a leader in examining immigration issues. The Council followed the 2004 report with a 2006 task force report, A Shared Future: Economic Engagement of Chicago’s Mexican Community, and then Strengthening America: The Civil and Political Integration of Muslim Americans, which the MacArthur Foundation supported with a grant in 2007.

The MacArthur Foundation also has been a longtime supporter of the Council’s celebrated public opinion studies. With MacArthur funding in 2006, The Chicago Council conducted a survey about perceptions of and advocacy for the International Criminal Court. MacArthur president Fanton cited the poll’s findings when he called for U.S. participation in the international justice system in December 2007.
Experts Provide In-depth Analysis of the Global Economic Crisis

Since September, the United States has faced threats to its economic security and prospects for future growth that have not been seen since the Great Depression. Questions about the causes of the crisis and the magnitude of the U.S. federal government’s response persist. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is committed to offering corporate and public audiences in-depth, expert analysis of this issue that will shape U.S. and global economies for months, if not years, to come.

In what has become a multi-part Corporate Program series, panelists of local, national, and international renown have provided up-to-the-minute perspectives on the consequences of this crisis for the U.S. and global economies, American citizens and residents, and the future of U.S. global competitiveness. Michael H. Moskow, vice chairman and senior fellow on the global economy of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and former president and chief executive officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, has been serving as the moderator for the series.

The first panel, composed of Northern Trust chairman William A. Osborn, Mesirow Financial Holdings chief economist Diane Swonk, and global economics adviser David Hale, assembled in early October, amid rapidly evolving developments in the financial markets, and just days after Congress rejected the first federal assistance package. Panelists spoke to a wide range of pressing concerns, including causes of the financial meltdown; consequences for Wall Street, Main Street, and the global economy; and potential approaches to future federal assistance.

“Between the time the program was announced and the panel convened, significant changes occurred in the financial markets and in the federal government’s response,” said Moskow. “Nevertheless, the panel members were able to provide attendees with an in-depth understanding of the gloomy economic outlook and the likely impact of government action.”

Further developments in the crisis and new federal maneuvers, including investment in several U.S. commercial banks and coordinated interest rate cuts with the European Central Bank and others, stirred the need for a second program. The Chicago Council brought together University of Chicago Booth School of Business finance professor Raghuram Rajan, Citadel Investment Group founder Kenneth C. Griffin, and HSBC Finance chief executive

officer Niall S.K. Booker to dig deep into the origins of the crisis and consider the outlook for the banking sector and other market participants.

“I think what we're going to see over the next few years is a real global slowdown,” said Rajan. “Ultimately, I think it will have to be the industrial countries pulling themselves up by their shoestrings, not relying on external demand to pull themselves up.”

As the crisis continued into November, national attention shifted to the “Detroit Three” and the possibility of federal assistance. Part three of the Corporate Program series examined implications for specific industries, and featured Global Hyatt chairman Thomas J. Pritzker, Crate and Barrel founder Gordon Segal, and Allstate chairman Thomas J. Wilson. More than 300 people attended each of the corporate programs.

In December, the Council organized two programs aimed at public audiences to discuss the geopolitics of the global economic crisis and its possible impact on American foreign policy. Henry Bienen, president of Northwestern University, moderated a panel discussion with Jessica Matthews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Marvin Zonis, professor emeritus of the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. Later in December, Chicago Tribune columnist and editorial writer Steve Chapman interviewed Time columnist and Slate founder Michael Kinsley, who discussed his conversations with Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, Martin Wolf, Robert Reich, Lawrence Summers, and others, about the implications of the crisis for emerging markets and the world’s poor.

In response to ongoing developments and popular demand, The Chicago Council has extended coverage of the crisis into 2009. The Corporate Program series continued on February 18, just one day after President Obama signed the $787 billion stimulus bill. Moskow again moderated a panel discussion with William M. Daley, chairman of the Midwest for JPMorgan Chase & Co. and former U.S. secretary of commerce; Samuel K. Skinner, of counsel, Greenberg Traurig, LLP and former U.S. secretary of transportation; and Paul L. Kasriel, senior vice president and director of economic research at The Northern Trust Company, who examined the policy responses of Congress and the new administration.

In addition, a three-part public series on “The Global Economy” began in February and features Columbia University professor and Council on Foreign Relations senior fellow Jagdish Bhagwati, Financial Times associate editor Martin Wolf, and Harvard professor and historian Niall Ferguson. This series examines the causes and consequences of the current global economic crisis, and considers the implications for trade, global economic security, and the long-term development of the U.S. and world economies.

To learn more or to download audio files of these programs, visit thechicagocouncil.org/financialcrisis.
While general membership dues, President’s Circle contributions, and admission fees cover much of the budget for public programs, and make it possible for the Council to bring some of the world’s most powerful decision makers to the city, gifts at the highest levels from local and national foundations, corporations, and Chicago’s top civic and philanthropic leaders also help the Council to convene task forces, study groups, and conferences, amplifying the voices of Chicago and the Midwest in discussions of today’s most critical global issues.

The Chairman’s Circle and the newly established Directors’ Circle recognize individuals who demonstrate their unwavering commitment to The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and its mission by contributing $10,000 or more annually.

These most generous individual supporters enjoy unique opportunities to interact face-to-face with visiting dignitaries and thought leaders through private receptions, dinners, and briefings. Members of the Chairman’s Circle and Directors’ Circle reflect Chicago’s diversity, including civic, corporate, and philanthropic leaders, and are an important source of ideas and advice for The Chicago Council. We gratefully acknowledge their leadership support.

To learn more about the benefits of supporting The Chicago Council on Global Affairs at the Chairman’s Circle or the Directors’ Circle level, contact Dawn Miller, executive director of major gifts, at 312.821.7541 or dmiller@thechicagocouncil.org.
Chairman’s Circle
(Contributions received through December 31, 2008)

The Chairman’s Circle recognizes total support of $25,000 or more annually. The following individuals are part of The Chicago Council’s core leadership, providing invaluable guidance to the organization, in addition to their most generous financial support. Italics denote members of the Board of Directors of The Chicago Council.

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(Contributions received through December 31, 2008)

The Chicago Council recently formed the Directors’ Circle to recognize unrestricted annual gifts of $10,000 to $24,999. The following individuals enjoy access to exclusive programs and discussions, in recognition of their organizational support. Italics denote members of the Board of Directors of The Chicago Council.

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Onyejike’s GCAF uses the arts to empower and educate young women in Nigeria where sons are often more highly valued than daughters, and many girls drop out of school at a young age. Performing and visual arts and creative writing programs are employed to build confidence, promote education and social rights, and help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

“We were delighted to honor Ada Onyejike and her groundbreaking use of the arts to empower youth in her country,” said Patricia Blunt Koldyke. “Motivating independent and empowered women isn’t an easy task in Nigeria, where women from all walks of life—rich and poor, educated and uneducated, urban and rural—face inequities and violence in their day-to-day lives. Ada’s creativity and dedication to providing unique opportunities for Nigeria’s rising generation are inspiring.”

Using painting, sculpture, music, and dance as catalysts for social transformation, Onyejike is demonstrating the unique power of art to foster independence and achievement. A GCAF Dance Fest, for example, focuses on inculcating positive HIV/AIDS practices. Youth involved with the foundation also participate in poetry, crafts, bead making, and ceramics, and a collection of their art is shown in the GCAF gallery and library.

Initially beginning in 2000 as a volunteer operation with no financial assistance, GCAF now has centers in three of Nigeria’s states and operates programs in more than 200 communities. Reaching thousands of young women between the ages of 8-25, GCAF receives support from the Nigerian and U.S. governments, as well as from international organizations such as Art for Global Development and the Alliance Française.

“The essence of Girl Child Art Foundation is for us to provide a forum for [girls] to be able to believe in themselves, be confident in what they can produce, think about what they can run in the future, and become better leaders for tomorrow,” Onyejike said during a major public address for The Chicago Council on Global Affairs on the evening of October 23, 2008.

During her visit in October, Onyejike met with education and civic leaders, philanthropists, government officials, and the media in Chicago. Her meetings included visits to the Young Women’s Leadership Charter School; Marwen, an organization dedicated to educating and inspiring underserved young people through the visual arts; and Northwestern University’s Center for Nonprofit Management, among others. Onyejike also was featured on WBEZ Chicago Public Radio’s Worldview with Jerome McDonnell and WTTW Chicago Public Television’s Chicago Tonight with Phil Ponce.

The Patricia Blunt Koldyke Fellowship is funded by the Koldyke family to recognize a leading social entrepreneur between the ages of thirty and forty-five from any region of the world, working to transform their society through creative innovations to social problems. This year the selection committee focused on primary and secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Exemplifying these qualities, Onyejike was selected from a large and extremely competitive applicant pool.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs will announce the 2009 Koldyke fellow this May and will welcome him or her to Chicago in October 2009.

To learn more about Chicago Council fellowships visit thechicagocouncil.org/fellowships.php
Chicago Council president Marshall M. Bouton and vice president Rachel Bronson, a noted expert on the Middle East and U.S.-Saudi relations, accompanied the group and provided their insights on three primary themes of the Study Mission: the region’s economic diversification, social transformation, and challenging political environment.

"Whether local leaders can achieve the vision of transforming the Gulf into a sustainable economic success story like Singapore, and whether they can bring their own population along with them, remain open questions," according to Dr. Bronson. “Very few countries ever get to rerun a social experiment. Regional leaders failed to harness great oil wealth once before. This time around, they are trying to build and invest more wisely to respond more successfully to an unprecedented second bite of the apple.”

In Doha, Qatar, delegates met privately with the Emir of the State of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. The delegates were briefed by U.S. Ambassador Joseph LeBaron, hosted a luncheon discussion about the business scene in Qatar, met with the editorial board of Al Jazeera, the Arabic-language media outlet, and with Akbar Al Baker, chief executive officer of Qatar Airways. Insights into educational development were gained through meetings with the Qatar Foundation and with the dean and students of Northwestern University in Qatar.

In the UAE, the delegation spent two days in Abu Dhabi, the federation's largest and wealthiest emirate, and three days in Dubai, the region’s financial hub.

In Abu Dhabi, delegates met with Her Excellency Sheikha Lubna, Minister of Foreign Trade, and with the Executive Affairs Authority, a government agency that oversees projects on behalf of the Crown Prince; participated in a panel discussion with representatives of the Mubadala Development Company, a leading business development and investment company; and joined in a roundtable with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. U.S. Ambassador to the UAE Richard Olson hosted the delegation for a private briefing, followed by a reception and dinner in his residence including local and expatriate guests. The delegates visited the Sheikh Zayed Mosque, a spectacular newly completed white marble structure honoring the first president of the UAE.

In Dubai, delegates discussed growth and progress in the region, social change, and regional security, with Minister of State Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimi, and with the Executive Affairs Authority, a government agency that oversees projects on behalf of the Crown Prince; participated in a panel discussion with representatives of the Mubadala Development Company, a leading business development and investment company; and joined in a roundtable with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. U.S. Ambassador to the UAE Richard Olson hosted the delegation for a private briefing, followed by a reception and dinner in his residence including local and expatriate guests. The delegates visited the Sheikh Zayed Mosque, a spectacular newly completed white marble structure honoring the first president of the UAE.
The mission concluded with two days in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. The Chicago Council delegation was accorded the extraordinary privilege of being welcomed as official guests of His Royal Highness King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who met privately with the group. The delegates were honored to meet with His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs, with whom they had a far-ranging discussion about international relations. In addition, they were briefed by the U.S. Embassy team and representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and met with the Governor of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, which implements the Kingdom’s investment strategy.

“I had not realized before the trip the importance of the strategic relationship with the United States for all of the countries we visited, as evidenced by the link of their currencies to the dollar,” said Leah Zell Wanger, treasurer of the Board of The Chicago Council and principal of Lizard Investors, LLC. “The other big takeaway for me was how the elites in the region are concerned about their dependence on hydrocarbons, which translates into a commitment to diversify their economies away from oil, with profound implications for their future societies.”

The Chicago Council strives to connect Chicago’s leaders to the world. Annual leadership study missions are an important part of this effort. Delegates gain new insights from direct interaction with leaders in key regions of the world, enhancing their understanding of global affairs and, in turn, sharing the knowledge and perspectives they bring back from their travels to enrich Chicago. In addition, top-level contacts made during study missions increase awareness of The Chicago Council among thought leaders around the world.

The Chicago Council is grateful to Baker & McKenzie, Qatar Airways, Underwriters Laboratories, and UOP LLP for their generous sponsorship of the 2009 Leadership Study Mission.