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**Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Oversight of Trade Preference Programs**

On the plains of Moab, Moses told the Israelites: “If you see your fellow’s . . . ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him to get it to its feet.”

And in Montana’s Gallatin Valley, farmers apply the same good-neighbor policy. Once Montana families have harvested their crops, they help their neighbors to finish their work. They help because it’s the right thing to do. It’s just who we Montanans are.

In the global economy, just as in the plains of Moab and the valleys of Montana, good neighbors do what they can to help those in need. That’s why America has trade preference programs. That’s why we have the Generalized System of Preferences and the Andean Trade Preference Act.

Today we will review this important piece of our trade agenda — our trade preference programs.

Many Senators on this committee care deeply about these programs. Senator Bingaman has advocated enhanced trade preferences for Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas. Senators Cantwell and Hatch have worked hard to bring economic opportunity to war-torn Afghanistan and Pakistan. Senator Smith has advocated providing preferences for the world’s least developed countries.

Preference programs are the tools that we have. But as we continue to use them to help our neighbors, we need to ask: Are these the tools that our neighbors need? Are our preference programs the best way to help our neighbors?

With two preference programs expiring this year and the rest in coming years, we need to ask these questions of ourselves and of those whom we wish to help.

For us and for our neighbors, we cannot let these programs expire. But for us and for our neighbors, we must make our preference programs the best that they can be.

First, we must look at how we are helping. Can beneficiary countries utilize our programs? Or are they too complicated to be useful?

Do staggered and short-term extensions create too much uncertainty? Would longer-term programs be more effective? Or would longer-term programs reduce the incentive for countries to be better trade partners?

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Second, we must look at which countries we are helping. Are we helping those in greatest need? Do countries like Bangladesh and Cambodia suffer because America does not give them preferences as favorable as those that we provide to our African partners?

Should we continue to provide preferential market access to more economically advanced countries, like Brazil and Russia? Are we helping countries that could be doing more to help themselves?

Finally, we must look at why we are helping. Let us ask how these programs help our economy. Do these programs work for U.S. businesses? Do they create jobs here at home? Are American investments in beneficiary countries secure?

We do not want to help countries who refuse to help themselves. And we do not want to undermine America's goals in multilateral trade negotiations.

We help because it is the right thing to do. We do it because our programs help others to help themselves. We do it to help build sustainable economies in the developing world. And we help because these programs often work: Singapore, Chile, and Korea grew from being beneficiary countries to dynamic global economies.

Farmers in the Gallatin Valley in Montana have a few months until harvest. And we here have a few months until two of these programs expire.

Montana's farmers will use that time well. We must do the same.

Let us extend these programs the right way. Let us help to get our neighbor's oxen back on their feet. And let us help our neighbors to reap a plentiful harvest that we can all enjoy.

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