

Statement of Michael Hammer
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Chile
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
December 11, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. It is a great honor and privilege to appear again before this Committee on this occasion as the nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Chile.

If I may, I would like to take a moment to recognize my family whose steadfast support has enabled me to serve our great nation over the past 25 years both abroad and at home. The Foreign Service is not just a career; it's a call to serve our country. And that call goes out to the whole family. With me here today is my wife Margret Bjorgulfsdottir, who has sacrificed career opportunities to support my life in public service. Margret has always been there for our three wonderful children, particularly when my duties took me away from the family.

We are so proud of our kids, who have been young diplomats in their own right: Monika, who is studying broadcast journalism at Syracuse's Newhouse School; Mike Thor, who just started engineering at Cornell; and Brynja, who will accompany us to Chile, if I am confirmed.

With the forbearance of the Committee, I would also like to acknowledge my parents, Mike and Magdalena. When I was a teenager, my father gave his life for our great country. It was my dad's idealism and commitment to advancing America's interests abroad and making the world a better place that motivated me to join the Foreign Service. My mother supported my quest every step of the way. Unfortunately, she could not make it from Spain to be here today but to her I say: gracias, Mami.

Having just served as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the State Department, I know the importance of American leadership in the world and recognize the need to partner with others, including countries like Chile, to address the global challenges we face. As Ambassador, I will work relentlessly to gain support for our policies, foster relationships that advance our interests, promote business opportunities that create jobs for Americans, and tell America's story.

I have been fortunate to serve at the White House under our three previous presidents. And, when I served at the White House at the beginning of this Administration, I traveled with President Obama to the Summit of the Americas in

April 2009, where he launched a new era of partnership with the Hemisphere based on mutual respect, common interests, and shared values; a partnership aimed at improving the lives of the citizens of the Americas by promoting economic opportunity, energy cooperation, citizen security, and human rights.

These goals provide the basis for our excellent relationship with Chile today. If confirmed, I intend to build upon those close ties and work further with Chile as a global partner for the United States. Chile has been and will be an increasingly valuable partner in our Hemisphere and around the world in three key areas:

- 1) Advancing democratic principles and human rights,
- 2) Promoting prosperity and economic opportunity, and
- 3) Enhancing security and advancing peace.

On democracy, Chile is a shining example of a peaceful transition from the Pinochet regime to open and transparent governance. In fact, this Sunday the Chilean people will elect their sixth president since the country's return to democracy. Given Chile's historical experience and solid institutions, it is well positioned to be a leader in democracy, both in the region and the world.

On economics, Chile is a reliable trading partner, is firmly committed to free trade, and acts as a key member of the OECD. Since the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement entered into force in 2004, bilateral merchandise trade has grown by 340 percent. While U.S. goods exports to the world increased 113 percent between 2003 and 2012, U.S. goods exports to Chile increased by nearly 600 percent, growing from \$2.7 billion in 2003 to \$18.9 billion in 2012. Together with Chile, the United States is now working to conclude the historic Trans-Pacific Partnership -- a high-standard 21st century trade agreement that will promote regional economic integration, prosperity, and opportunity for the people of all of the member countries. Furthermore, the United States recently obtained observer status in the Pacific Alliance, where we share with Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru an interest in expanding free markets, reducing inequality, opening trade, and welcoming foreign investment.

On security, our countries enjoy a strong defense relationship. Chile is a key contributor to the UN Mission in Haiti. Chile also trains dozens of police officials from Central American and Caribbean countries. Chile's Armed Forces participate in numerous bilateral and multilateral exercises annually, and Chile

serves as a model in the region for increasing accountability and transparency in its Ministry of National Defense through ongoing defense reforms. Defense trade with Chile is at an all-time high with current projects totaling above \$1 billion and serves as an important component of our economic partnership and basis for interoperability between our militaries. I hope to enable us to do more together to advance peace and stability in the region and around the world, particularly as Chile assumes its non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council in January.

Rest assured that if I am confirmed as Ambassador, I will be focused on ensuring the security and safety of Americans living and traveling in Chile. I would be extremely proud to lead our Embassy Santiago team, which includes representatives from a wide range of agencies. In fact, in preparing for this assignment, I have been thoroughly impressed by the range and scope of our programs in Chile as well as with the Embassy's high-caliber American and locally engaged staff that make invaluable contributions every day.

Mr. Chairman, let me close by saying how deeply grateful and humbled I am by the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have shown in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with you, your colleagues, and the Administration, to further deepen the partnership between the United States and Chile. Thank you.