

Statement of Patricia M. Haslach
U.S. Ambassador-designate to Ethiopia
Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 24, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, and distinguished members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today to seek confirmation as U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. I appreciate the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have shown in me by this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee, interested members of Congress, and other Americans to represent the United States in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is a vital partner to the United States in the Horn of Africa, sharing our interest in regional stability and strategic objectives. Participation in the African Union's counterterrorism efforts, for example, supports U.S. objectives in the region. Ethiopia deploys troops alongside the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and contributes nearly all of the troops that currently serve as the UN Interim Stabilization Force in Abyei (UNISFA). Ethiopia is also active in the Sudanese peace process, having facilitated negotiations between the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan in two summits. If confirmed, I intend to build on this partnership.

It is in the interest of the United States to promote sustainable economic development and liberalization of the economy in Ethiopia. Prosperity and economic freedom go hand-in-hand with good governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights. Ethiopia ranks among the ten fastest-growing economies in the world, averaging ten percent GDP growth over the last five years. If confirmed, I will work to facilitate economic reforms that can benefit U.S. trade and investment, while improving economic freedom and self-sufficiency for Ethiopians.

If confirmed, I will press the Government of Ethiopia to respect the rights of all its citizens regardless of ethnicity, clan, political views, or religious affiliation. Politically motivated trials, ongoing tensions between some in the Muslim community and the government, and restrictions on non-governmental organizations cause serious concern. If confirmed, I will work with the Ethiopian government to open political space, and advance reforms that promote freedom of expression, association, and rule of law.

If confirmed, I will be committed to promoting our efforts and policy approach on gender-based violence and discrimination against the LGBT community. Domestic violence, especially spousal rape and the lack of legal remedy or support for survivors, are challenging problems of critical focus. Encouragingly, Ethiopia's national prevalence of HIV/AIDS declined to 1.4

percent nationally since the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) began work with Ethiopia in 2005.

America's steadfast commitment to the advancement and protection of human rights and democratic principles around the world provides hope for many who seek positive change in Ethiopia. Although many problems exist and abuses occur, some recent events are encouraging. On June 2 of this year, for example, several thousand demonstrators calling for the release of political prisoners, an end to interference in religious affairs, action on unemployment and corruption, and an end to illegal evictions marched peacefully through the capital, without government interference. This was the first such political demonstration the Ethiopian government officially permitted since 2005.

If confirmed, a major priority will be to ensure that the talented men and women working for the U.S. Mission in Addis Ababa remain safe and have every opportunity to succeed as our representatives to Ethiopia. Of equal importance is the safety of American citizens living and traveling in Ethiopia.

I am proud to have served my country as a Foreign Service officer since 1986, first with the Foreign Agricultural Service and then with the Department of State. I have been honored to serve as U.S. Ambassador twice, first to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, then as U.S. Senior Official for the Asia-Pacific

Economic Cooperation forum (APEC). In my current position in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, I have become quite familiar with the challenges the United States faces in the east Africa region. If confirmed, I will devote myself to persuading the Ethiopian people and their government that commitment to human rights, liberalization of the economy, and a transparent, inclusive political process are central to our common future.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you. I am prepared to respond to any questions you may have.