

Helen Meagher La Lime
Ambassador-designate to the Republic of Angola
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
December 17, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, and Members of the Committee:

It is a great privilege and honor for me to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the honorable members of this Committee to advance U.S. interests in Angola. I am confident that based on my 33 years in the Foreign Service, I am prepared for the challenges of leading our efforts to encourage Angola to further expand its democratic space, to diversify its economy and strengthen our commercial ties, and to support the Angolan government in its efforts to increase economic opportunity for all Angolans and to improve the delivery of health services to its people after decades of war. Angola has a remarkably young population—it is estimated that more than 55% of Angola's people are under the age of 20. These Angolan youth are full of hope and promise, and through our partnerships in Angola our Embassy is working to build good relations so together we can lay the foundations for a more prosperous, democratic future for Angola's rising generation.

I have spent much of the last decade working in southern Africa – first as our Ambassador to Mozambique, then as the Consul General in Cape Town, South Africa and later as our Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d’Affaires in Pretoria. During that time, I witnessed the rise of Angola, from the ashes of war to a leader of the sub-region. Since 2011, as Director of Outreach for the United States Africa Command, I have observed Angola’s continued ascension to political, economic, and military leadership throughout Africa. It has been an extraordinary transformation, one of which all Angolans should be proud. And yet, Angola still faces challenges to realize its fullest potential as a prosperous, secure, and democratic nation playing an active and supporting role building peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Chairman, the advancement of democracy is an important component of our policy towards Angola. Positively, Angola held its first successful presidential elections on August 31, 2012. The ruling MPLA party won with a credible 72 percent of the vote, clearly a strong majority and enough to control the National Assembly, though noticeably down from the 82 percent the party won in legislative elections in 2008. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, in accordance with the 2010 Constitution, automatically became President when his party garnered the majority of votes. We commend the Angolan people, who voted peacefully in large numbers, in an orderly way, for this significant milestone in

Angola's young democracy. Despite this success, work remains in Angola to expand the space for democratic debate, to empower civil society and to reinforce democratic institutions. If confirmed, I will work to support Angola's efforts to build upon the gains of the last decade, to increase transparency and accountability and to address the persistent challenge of corruption. To this end, I applaud the Angolan government's decision to hold local municipal elections – currently projected for 2015 – to enable and encourage citizens to hold their governments accountable.

Mr. Chairman, Angola's rich endowment of natural resources – namely oil and diamonds – has fueled a strong economy and made it a major sub-Saharan trading partner with the United States. In fact, Angola's steady and reliable oil production, coupled with Nigeria's production issues in the Niger Delta, has resulted in Angolan parity with Nigeria as the two leading oil producers in sub-Saharan Africa. If the vast deep water pre-salt oil deposits prove viable, Angola has the potential to significantly increase its oil production in the coming years. U.S. companies such as Chevron and ExxonMobil have operated successfully for decades in Angola, benefitting from and contributing to Angola's strong economy. Other U.S. companies are now diversifying the U.S. commercial relationship with Angola, including General Electric, which signed an agreement early this year to supply 100 locomotives to Angola with U.S. content in excess of \$150 million. If

confirmed, I will work to promote expanded and diversified commercial ties between our two countries and to encourage Angolan authorities to continue their own program of economic diversification so that natural resource extraction is not the only engine for growth. I also look forward to engaging with leaders in the Angolan diamond industry as the country seeks to become the next vice-chair and ultimately chair of the Kimberley Process (KP). Angola's leadership of the KP would present a unique opportunity to address needed reforms and production issues in the diamond-mining areas near the Congo border while also contributing to Angola's ascension as an international leader.

One of the tragic consequences of the long Angolan civil war was the devastating toll it took on the nation's health delivery system. The United States has forged a productive partnership with the Angolans to rebuild their health system and to put it on a sustainable track. Largely drawing from the President's Malaria Initiative and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), our Mission in Luanda partners with other international actors and the Angolan government to support the development of an integrated, comprehensive, and sustainable health system capable of providing quality health care services to all Angolans. If confirmed, I will continue to champion these efforts as the government seeks to maintain focus on the key, cross-cutting theme of Sustainable Institutional Capacity Development by providing technical assistance to strengthen

the national health care delivery system with an emphasis on strategic information, reducing child and maternal mortality, raising the status of women and girls, and working towards an AIDS-free generation.

Mr. Chairman, whether in the form of U.S. support for the Angolan government's demining efforts, combating trafficking in persons, military-to-military cooperation, or outreach to Angolan youth, the U.S. government has a vested interest in helping Angola to reach its potential and to pursue our convergent strategic interests. If confirmed as our next ambassador to Angola, I will continue to promote U.S. interests and encourage Angola's further political, economic, and social development, while vigilantly protecting the safety of our embassy personnel and their families.

Mr. Chairman and Members of this Committee, I thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to answering your questions.