

**Statement of Bruce Wharton
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Zimbabwe
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 12, 2011**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you. I am honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Having grown up in a home full of stories about and respect for the people of Africa – a legacy of my grandparents’ 35 years as missionaries in what was then the Belgian Congo – and having raised our own wonderful three children in Southern Africa during previous Foreign Service assignments in South Africa and Zimbabwe, the possibility of returning to lead a U.S. mission is a privilege that is full of personal as well as professional meaning for my wife and me.

With full recognition of the complex challenges Zimbabwe faces, I remain optimistic about the country’s future and believe that the United States has an important role to play in helping the people of Zimbabwe build a just, free and prosperous nation. The trajectory of Zimbabwe’s last 15 years should not obscure the nation’s tremendous potential. Though battered by more than a decade of political strife and economic decline, Zimbabwe retains a foundational human and physical infrastructure upon which it can build a strong future. It is in the interest of the United States to be a partner in that process and, if confirmed, I will

continue the work of building productive and respectful relationships with all Zimbabweans of goodwill.

The United States has shown its deep and abiding concern for Zimbabwe through the nearly one billion dollars in humanitarian relief and health-related assistance we have provided just in the last six years. There is no more explicit expression of our support for the people of Zimbabwe than our standing by them through their times of greatest need. But, we need to prepare to move beyond a relationship defined by aid. The people of Zimbabwe are fully capable of feeding themselves, meeting the nation's health and education needs, building a dynamic political system, and restoring what was once one of the strongest economies in Africa. Zimbabwe can and should be a nation of economic opportunities, of respect for the rule of law and the rights of all people. Those are values that reflect the core of what Americans share with Zimbabweans and that we should pursue together.

U.S. policy in Zimbabwe is not about regime change. Only the people of Zimbabwe have the right to change their government. Our policies support principles, not parties or people. However, when the right to self-determination is denied, as it has been in Zimbabwe through restrictions on citizen rights, through political violence, and fraudulent and mismanaged elections, the United States cannot stand idly by. We have taken principled steps to demonstrate our concern

about the actions of those responsible for, and those who profit from, miscarriages of the promise Zimbabwe offered at independence. We will always stand up for the rights of Zimbabweans to speak, write, read, meet, organize, and fully participate in their nation's political processes.

If confirmed, I will work to enable Zimbabwe to become a just, prosperous and democratic state that meets the needs of its people, contributes to development in the region, and plays an important role in world affairs. That was U.S. policy in 1980 when we were the first nation to recognize Zimbabwe's independence, and it continues to be our policy. We will not always agree with the government of Zimbabwe, but we will always attempt to maintain a respectful and open dialogue.

The United States stands ready to alter the current restrictions on our relationship with Zimbabwe and to forge stronger economic and political ties.

The full implementation of the Global Political Agreement, progress on the Southern African Development Community's roadmap toward elections, and well-managed and credible elections will be a trigger for the US to open a much more dynamic relationship with one of Africa's most important countries. The United States remains open and willing to work with the government to support free and fairly elections.

If confirmed, I will give special attention to the welfare of American citizens in Zimbabwe and to meeting with people from across the rich spectrum of

Zimbabwe's society, making an assessment of the situation there and offering recommendations on the best way forward. As we continue to urge democratic development, we must also continue to invest in the people of Zimbabwe – the health, education, humanitarian aid, and business development work – to preserve the human capital needed to re-build Zimbabwe in the years ahead. I have faith that with this support, once given the opportunity to communicate, organize, and express their will, the people of Zimbabwe will find the best path forward and pursue it successfully. Thank you for the chance to appear before you and I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.