

**Opening Statement for Abigail Dressel
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of
Angola and to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 19, 2024**

Chairwoman Duckworth, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished Members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today. I would like to thank President Biden for this opportunity and for the trust that he and Secretary Blinken have in my ability to serve our country as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Angola and to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome & Principe. I am equally appreciative for this distinguished Committee's consideration.

I am deeply grateful to my husband and our two wonderful children for their constant love and support; as well as to my mother, father, sister, brother-in-law, and grandparents. I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the friends, mentors, and colleagues who have enriched this career and my life.

It has been an honor to serve and represent the United States for 22 years as a Foreign Service Officer. If confirmed, it would be a privilege to lead the team and encourage strong morale at U.S. Embassy Luanda, a dynamic and dedicated group working hard on the front lines of U.S. policy.

The United States has a robust and multifaceted partnership with the people and government of Angola. When I served in Luanda 16 years ago, it would have been difficult to imagine the paradigm shift in our bilateral relationship that has taken place in recent years. I am deeply fortunate to be nominated at a time of extraordinary potential for expanding that bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I would lead the embassy team to deliver on that potential for the benefit of the American and Angolan people.

In the past year, Presidents Lourenco and Biden met in the Oval Office and Secretary Blinken visited Luanda. U.S. firms and development agencies pledged billions in investment in Angola, showing their confidence in the benefit of stronger ties. We initiated an ongoing Defense Committee Meeting and Energy Security Dialogue, and we turned to Angola as a trusted mediator to bring regional peace and security.

If confirmed, I would build on this progress and support a more prosperous, democratic, and secure Angola. I would work every day to protect the people who serve at the U.S. Embassy Luanda and all Americans who live in Angola and Sao Tome and Principe.

If confirmed, I would support a more prosperous Angola by working to ensure that the recent transformational investments by U.S. companies and U.S. development finance agencies bring tangible benefits for both of our economies and people. I would prioritize identifying new avenues of economic cooperation while supporting the continued fight against corruption.

Since President Lourenço's election in 2017, Angola has made progress toward increasing transparency and implementing democratic reform, but work remains. If confirmed, I would support a more democratic Angola by working with our Angolan partners to continue to expand civic space and build the capacity of civil society, media, and the judiciary. I would build on our ongoing advocacy for local elections and protection of independent media, and work with the elected Angolan government while maintaining collaborative relationships with the full spectrum of Angolan political parties.

Twenty-two years after the end of its civil war, Angola has become a regional leader that promotes security and stability. Angola has worked to broker peace among Great Lakes countries, including between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. If confirmed, I would support a more secure Angola by increasing U.S. military training, helping Angola replace Soviet equipment with NATO-compatible defense articles, and expanding maritime security cooperation. I would also continue the invaluable support the United States provides as the largest donor to demining efforts in Angola.

If confirmed, I would have the honor of serving concurrently as the ambassador to Sao Tome and Principe. The archipelago plays a strategically important role in Africa, and its maritime exclusive economic zone is critical to Gulf of Guinea shipping lanes. Sao Tome and Principe is a democratic leader in Africa, yet like many small island nations, is still reeling from the economic effects of the pandemic. If confirmed, I would work with Sao Tomean partners, international financial institutions, and the international community to help Sao Tome and Principe stabilize its economy. I will also work to increase our security cooperation – especially maritime security – with this crucial geopolitical partner.

Madame Chairwoman, Ranking Member, my experience in Africa has shown me that the American people benefit when we invest in our relationships across the Atlantic. If confirmed, I hope I would have many occasions to work closely with this committee and host you and your colleagues in Angola and Sao Tome and Principe.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.