

Opening Statement of Marc Dillard
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar
and the Union of Comoros
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 30, 2026

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I appreciate the chance to appear before you this morning. It is a privilege to be here, and I am grateful to have been entrusted with this nomination by the President and Secretary of State. Before beginning, I would like to recognize my wife, Julia – also a Foreign Service Officer – and our children, Chase and Abigail, who are here with me today, my steady companions on this day as they have been over our past 28 years of diplomatic service, including eight overseas postings in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Our family believes in service to country and community: family members' service goes back to the Revolutionary War, and in this past century spans my grandfather's duty in World War II; Julia's father's army service in Korea and Vietnam; and deployments of uncles and cousins in the Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Growing up in the Midwest, I was surrounded at family events by doctors, nurses, teachers, school administrators, and social workers – builders of their communities. The call to public service runs deep in our family, and so it is the honor of my professional life to be nominated for this position. If confirmed, I would bring the relentless dedication our family would expect as a standard in this role, building American strength and prosperity through our engagement with the Republic of Madagascar and the Union of Comoros.

The United States opened our first consulate in Madagascar more than a century and a half ago, due to the possibilities of commerce and Madagascar's strategic location along trade routes around the Cape of Good Hope and through the Mozambique Channel. Today our cooperation touches maritime security, commerce, economic growth, mining, cybersecurity, health, and education.

Having come to the Department of State after teaching at a business school and being a consultant, I have spent much of my diplomatic career on economic policy, on breaking down regulatory barriers to U.S. trade and investment, and on

promoting commercial deals. With the U.S. government emphasizing trade, investment, and commerce as a foundation for our partnerships, I see significant potential in Madagascar and Comoros. If confirmed, delivering on that promise will be my mission.

More specifically, my priorities would start with the protection of U.S. citizens. In line with our historic mission overseas, embassies have no higher duty than the safety and security of Americans.

Commercially, I would focus on critical minerals and rare earth elements. Madagascar possesses deposits that are used by our manufacturing base and national security apparatus, and pairing American capital and expertise with Malagasy resources, in a way that is mutually beneficial, would make direct contributions to U.S. security and prosperity.

I would monitor Madagascar's post-transition governance, ensuring U.S. assistance is aligned with our strategic interests.

I would bring attention to our health programming. The United States and Madagascar signed a five-year, \$175 million agreement in 2025 that will support malaria prevention; maternal, newborn, and child health; polio eradication; and outbreak preparedness and response. Effective implementation of the health agreement will help save lives in Madagascar and keep America and the world safer and stronger.

And – in both Comoros and Madagascar – I would work to strengthen their geopolitical alignment with the United States.

Finally, having held senior leadership positions in our embassies in Hungary, Kenya, and South Africa, I know that it's not just what we do, but how we do it that matters. If confirmed, I would lead with an emphasis on integrity, respect, accountability, and proper stewardship of U.S. taxpayer resources, elements that are key to creating a high-morale and high-impact embassy team.

If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to delivering for the American people at this post — from our commercial initiatives to the safety of U.S. citizens, and to our strategic goals in Madagascar and Comoros.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.