

**Opening Statement for William Flens
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Chad
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 30, 2026**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored by the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me with this nomination.

I am forever grateful for the love and support of my late parents Stanley and Virginia Flens, who I am sure are watching this hearing from Heaven. Without their sacrifices, I would not be sitting here before you today. I also want to thank my brothers and sisters – Dan, Joe, Peggy, Kathy, and Liz, and their families, for their love, support, and patience over the years.

After growing up on the South Side of Chicago and graduating from college, I began my career in public service by joining the Peace Corps. It was as a Peace Corps Volunteer in then-Zaire and in Congo-Brazzaville that I first lived and worked in Africa and recognized its tremendous potential. The years I spent helping Congolese fish farmers improve their livelihoods — not by giving them tools or money, but by teaching them new fish-farming techniques — reinforced for me the importance of partnership without dependency. After a career pivot to Asia, I eventually made my way back to Africa. I am blessed to have had this long career and to have an opportunity to extend it by serving as ambassador to Chad, if confirmed.

Allow me to say a few words about why Chad matters to the United States. Chad occupies a position of significant strategic importance. Bordering six countries, several of which face internal armed conflict, Chad sits at the crossroads of the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin — a region where instability, illegal migration, and transnational crime can directly threaten the American homeland if left unaddressed. Chad also possesses underutilized strategic resources, including critical minerals and hydrocarbons, that have the potential to advance our commercial relationship. I will also note that Chad hosts nearly 1.5 million Sudanese refugees and remains a significant beneficiary of American humanitarian assistance.

If confirmed, my top priority will be protecting American citizens in Chad, starting with the talented men and women serving alongside me at Embassy N'Djamena. I will safeguard U.S. interests by partnering with the Chadian government to curb illegal immigration to the United States and prevent misuse of U.S. immigration law by Chadian nationals. I will ensure our embassy team works in lockstep with interagency partners to disrupt transnational terrorist and criminal networks with ties that directly threaten the Homeland.

This administration is resetting how America engages the continent — moving from aid and dependency toward trade, investment, and mutual benefit. Chad holds significant, largely untapped reserves of critical minerals, including antimony, uranium, and tungsten, along with real opportunities in telecommunications and energy. If confirmed, I will work with the Chadian government and private-sector partners to advance concrete legal and regulatory reforms that improve Chad's business climate, so American companies can compete and win in these sectors with confidence.

Our interests are also served by encouraging regional participation in and support for the Multinational Joint Task Force headquartered in N'Djamena. Two U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations — ISIS-West Africa and Boko Haram — operate in the Lake Chad Basin. After decades of U.S. security assistance, Chad and other regional partners must take the lead in confronting these threats, reducing the need for direct U.S. involvement.

I am clear-eyed about the challenges ahead, but I also see real opportunity in Chad's relative stability, its capable military, and its people's admiration for American values. If confirmed, I will bring the full weight of American diplomacy to bear — advancing our security, our commercial interests, and our influence — to ensure our partnership with Chad delivers concrete results for the American people.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.