

Statement for the Record
James Entwistle
Ambassador-Designate to the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on Africa
July 2013

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am honored today to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I would like to thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence they have placed in me and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and other Members of Congress to advance our relationship with Nigeria. In my thirty-two years in the U.S. Foreign Service, I have had the privilege of serving in a number of African posts, currently as the U.S. Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have found all of those assignments richly satisfying in that they presented an opportunity to work on fundamental issues of war and peace, alleviating human suffering, promoting democracy, and economic growth. In my view, nowhere else in the world does the United States have the opportunity to make a positive difference than in Africa, and I am deeply honored to have an opportunity to do just that once again. I would also note that my wife and I met and married in west Africa many years ago and thus on a personal level we are very excited about going back.

Mr. Chairman, I believe strongly that the success of our diplomacy depends on our people, and, if confirmed, I will make it my highest priority to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of our mission employees, and the American community in Nigeria. We have a robust and effective interagency presence in Nigeria, and we are committed to enhancing our engagement in the critically important and predominantly Muslim north.

Nigeria is a dominant economic force and political leader in west Africa. While Nigeria has accomplished much in the past 14 years of civilian rule, its prospects are tempered by many challenges, with good governance, civilian security, and accountability the keys to realizing the country's enormous potential. In 2011, Nigeria conducted its most successful and credible elections since its return to multiparty democracy in 1999, and we are eager to build on this achievement with the 2015 national elections being even more credible and peaceful. If confirmed, I will ensure that we deploy our resources and engagement in support of an inclusive and transparent process. In 2011 Nigeria passed a landmark Freedom of Information Act, allowing citizens to request information from government offices, and in recent years, Nigeria has joined and become compliant with the principles of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, providing greater transparency and accountability in the management of the country's natural resources. I will continue focusing U.S. efforts on partnering with Nigeria to develop measures to more effectively fight corruption and advance

transparent and accountable governance. Nigeria is the second largest recipient of American direct private sector investment in Africa, our largest trading partner in Africa, and our largest export market for wheat. I am committed to expanding bilateral trade and promoting U.S. investment in Nigeria as a vehicle for economic growth.

As one of the most influential members of the Economic Community of West African States and with more than 6,000 peacekeepers deployed worldwide, Nigeria has played a key role in helping to resolve major political and security disputes in west Africa from the Liberian and Sierra Leone crises in the 1990s to the political problems in Guinea, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, and Mali. Nigeria faces a real threat from extremist groups, including Boko Haram, which have killed hundreds of political and security officials and attacked civilians who have congregated peacefully in mosques, churches, and places of business. In order for Nigeria to continue to exercise leadership in the region, however, it must address the serious problems of development and security at home, particularly in the north. If confirmed, I will work with the Nigerian government to assist security forces to increase public confidence in its efforts to address violence and terrorism while addressing the legitimate economic needs of communities vulnerable to violent extremism.

U.S. engagement with the Nigerian government is done in the context of partnership, and reflects the comprehensive, whole-of-government approach we

have asked the Nigerians to pursue. The forum for this engagement is the U.S.- Nigeria Binational Commission. If confirmed, I am committed to using this body as a mechanism to advance our bilateral dialogue. We have a rich agenda with Nigeria, with many challenges and opportunities. If I am confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, I will be an active advocate for America as we advance our partnership with this strategic African country.

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome your questions.