

**Statement of Karen C. Stanton  
Ambassador-Designate to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste  
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
September 25, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee as Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. I am sincerely grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have shown in nominating me.

Mr. Chairman, if you will permit me, I would like to introduce my daughter Ellie, who is here today to represent my far-flung family. My husband Bill, a retired Foreign Service officer, is working in Taiwan, and my elder daughter Kate works in Australia. I joined the Foreign Service in 1980, in the midst of the Iranian hostage crisis. I spoke some French and had studied Western European politics, but reflecting the “world-wide availability” the Foreign Service prides itself on, the State Department sent me to Hong Kong. Since then, I have spent virtually my entire career supporting U.S. interests in Asia, mostly in consular and management positions, including as a consular officer in China during the Tiananmen Square protests. For the last four years, I have served as the Executive Director in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The Bureau’s Executive Office has been at the forefront of the State Department’s effort to increase efficiency and contain costs in our overseas management. If confirmed, I pledge to bring all my skills and abilities to provide the best possible leadership and management of the American Embassy in Timor-Leste.

My first experience with Timor-Leste was in 2002, when on an earlier tour in the East Asia Bureau’s Executive Office, I worked on the process for opening our then new Embassy in Dili. I can remember wondering how this new country would overcome so many daunting challenges, but since that time Timor-Leste has made significant progress. It is in many ways a remarkable success story.

The year 2012 alone was full of watershed moments for the country: free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections, successful transfers of

authority to a new president and a new coalition government, celebration of the country's tenth anniversary of independence, the conclusion of the U.N. integrated mission and the International Stabilization Force, and the first visit of a U.S. secretary of state. Timor-Leste has become a model young democracy and a significant achievement for UN peacekeeping.

The United States is committed to helping Timor-Leste build on its accomplishments in maintaining and increasing stability, institutionalizing democratic governance, expanding the rule of law and access to justice, and promoting prosperity. We are working to facilitate people-to-people exchanges between Timorese and U.S. citizens to reinforce appreciation for our shared values and communicate U.S. commitment to our partnership with Timor-Leste.

The U.S. military has an active program to support the ongoing professionalization of Timor-Leste's security and law enforcement agencies. The U.S. Pacific Command conducts exercises and exchanges. A U.S. Navy Seabee detachment works with Timorese military engineers to build or rehabilitate schools, clinics, and community centers, an effort which has been warmly received by the Timorese public. The Department of State supports the National Police in a number of ways, including through assignment of two U.S. police advisors in Dili. An array of U.S. agencies, including the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Bureau, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Coast Guard, works with counterparts in Timor-Leste to strengthen their law enforcement capabilities. If given the honor of serving as Ambassador, I will build on these efforts to achieve security sector reforms necessary for a lasting peace.

The United States also supports efforts to strengthen democratic governance, accountability, and justice institutions in Timor-Leste. We support expanding access to justice for society's most vulnerable groups, including women and girls, and promote efforts to eliminate the scourge of gender-based violence. We are contributing to efforts to build human and institutional capacity within the judicial, legislative, human rights, and accountability bodies. If confirmed, I will work hard to advance human and political rights and good governance in Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste has natural resource industries that are instrumental in developing its economy and lifting its citizens from poverty. Income from

the country's modest oil and gas reserves currently provides 95 percent of Timor-Leste's state revenues and 80 percent of its gross domestic product. Timor-Leste was the third country in the world and the first in Asia to become fully compliant with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Despite its financial assets, however, Timor-Leste lacks adequate human capacity. Approximately half of the population lives below the poverty line of 88 cents per day. Timor-Leste ranks near the bottom worldwide in terms of maternal and infant mortality and malnourishment. Timor-Leste will require additional technical assistance and foreign support to enable the government to effectively use its own resources to address its people's urgent needs.

Our assistance programs focus on reducing poverty, stimulating economic growth, and building the human and institutional capacity needed to sustain Timor's progress into the future. If confirmed, I will ensure that U.S. taxpayer funds are invested wisely to enable the Timorese to help themselves.

As we support stability and democracy in Timor-Leste, we are also developing an enduring partnership to promote democracy and human rights around the world. Time and again, the Government of Timor-Leste has joined with the United States in casting critical votes supporting core human rights principles at the United Nations.

Timor-Leste is an active international player, aspiring to ASEAN membership and at the cutting edge of the aid effectiveness movement. It is a model for fragile states and for nation-building in post-conflict areas worldwide.

The United States is honored to partner with the Timorese, in concert with its many international friends, to ensure that the country consolidates its gains and continues to advance. Challenges remain, but with our continued support, Timor-Leste will create a brighter future for its people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee for allowing me to appear before you today. I am pleased to answer your questions.