

Statement of Ramsey Day
Nominee for Assistant Administrator for Africa
United States Agency for International Development
before the Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
May 13, 2020

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today as President Trump's nominee to be Assistant Administrator for Africa at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). I would like to thank President Trump, former Administrator Green, Acting Administrator Barsa, and Secretary Pompeo for their support, and for the confidence they have placed in me to serve in this role.

I would like to take this opportunity to also thank Acting Assistant Administrator Chris Maloney, who has led the Bureau for Africa since January 2020. I also want to recognize my remarkably talented and dedicated colleagues at USAID and in the Africa Bureau, both here in Washington and overseas, with whom I have worked for the last two years.

I am thankful to have with me today – and every day – my wonderful wife, Charlotte. To say I “married up” would be quite an understatement, and I appreciate immensely her love and support.

Mr. Chairman, my love of Africa began nearly twenty years ago when I landed in Johannesburg, South Africa, as part of a year-long backpacking journey around the world. I spent several months exploring the continent, and I was completely captured by the natural beauty of the landscapes, the richness and diversity of the cultures, and, of course, the awe-inspiring wildlife – but most important, I fell in love with the people, particularly the many young Africans from whom I learned, and with whom I laughed and shared countless stories.

It was this experience in Africa, as well as living in New York City on September 11, that helped shape a vision for a career I never dreamed of as a kid growing up in Mississippi. Africa has truly changed the path of my life and career.

Upon my return home, I decided to leave the private sector and move to Washington to pursue a career in international development. I did so because I saw first-hand the impact USAID's work had on the people of the African continent. But I also have since gained a much greater appreciation for the critical nature of development work in advancing our national strategic, security, and commercial interests.

Over the past 15 years, I have been fortunate to serve at USAID multiple times and in multiple administrations, both in Washington and overseas. As the USAID Country Representative in the Republic of Montenegro, I learned how powerful American assistance can be in helping a country integrate into trans-Atlantic alliances and strengthening the Euro-American partnership. I also have worked for a USAID partner, the International Republican Institute (IRI). As the Country Director for IRI in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I worked on programs to empower women, strengthen citizen-responsive government at the local level, and help Jordanian leaders understand the importance of public opinion when making policy decisions.

For the last two years at USAID, serving in the Africa Bureau and, more recently, in the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning, I have had the honor and privilege of working alongside some of the most dedicated public servants I have ever known as we work together to address issues critical to our national interests.

I have learned over my career that what happens overseas can have an immediate and profound impact on our homeland and our way of life. Never is this more evident than today. As the pandemic of COVID-19 caused by the novel coronavirus continues to sweep across the globe, health institutions in developing countries, particularly in Africa, are ill-equipped to respond to the crisis. As we have seen in recent months, this virus can spread quickly. We will beat this outbreak in the United States, but it could well continue its spread as the Southern Hemisphere heads into Winter. USAID has been on the front lines in the fight against Ebola, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, and we will continue to lead the global response to the COVID-19 – even as we battle the disease at home.

To protect America's strategic and security interests even better, USAID must evolve. And under the leadership of former USAID Administrator Mark Green

and current Acting Administrator John Barsa, I believe we are building the USAID of tomorrow by integrating an organizing principle we call the Journey to Self-Reliance into all our work. We believe every program and every partnership into which USAID enters should strengthen the ability of a country's citizens to plan, finance, and implement their own development solutions to the challenges they face...not because we want to walk away from our friends, but because we believe in them. We want to transform these relationships from ones based on an aid to ones based on trade and investment, shared security and diplomatic interests, and mutual respect. It has been my experience in the Balkans, in the Middle East, and, certainly, in Africa, that our partners want to transform this relationship as well.

At USAID, we believe the goal of foreign assistance should be to end the need for it to exist. If I am confirmed as Assistant Administrator for Africa, I intend to work tirelessly in support of this goal, and my top priorities would be clear.

First, as always, would be the health and safety of all USAID staff members and their families. Many of our teams are working in difficult and even dangerous environments, so my number-one priority would be to ensure we are following every rule, practice, and protocol set forth by the Regional Security Officer at each U.S. Embassy in Africa. However, we will never be able to eliminate risk completely, because development professionals, by nature, want and need to be outside our Embassy walls so they can get to know the people we are helping, evaluate the progress of our programs, and learn how we can do better. This is the only way we can maximize the effectiveness of our programs on behalf of the American people. Balancing this risk versus effectiveness requires constant monitoring.

My second priority would be to maintain the highest level of financial integrity. Leaders at USAID are the stewards of hard-earned and precious taxpayer dollars. Congress and the American people are entrusting us to ensure we deploy these resources in the most efficient and effective way possible to advance American interests around the world.

Lastly, if confirmed, I also would be hyper-focused on ensuring every USAID program advances U.S foreign-policy objectives, reflects USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance organizing principle, and represents the best of American values.

Whether responding to natural disasters in the Republic of Mozambique and outbreaks of Ebola in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo, or tackling the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, helping brave citizens find their democratic footing in Ethiopia or Sudan, strengthening communities to fight back against savage terrorist networks in the Federal Republic of Somalia or the Sahel, or saving millions of lives from the ravages of chronic food-insecurity, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, or malaria, the women and men of USAID and our interagency partners represent the best of America overseas.

USAID's programs alleviate human suffering, lift up communities that are committed to their own development, champion the cause of democracy, empower women and girls to lead, and respond to some of the most complex natural and man-made disasters that affect millions of people around the world.

If I am confirmed, it would be a tremendous honor to lead the nearly 3,000 Civil Servants, Foreign Service Officers, Foreign Service Nationals, and Personal Service Contractors, and others that make up the USAID Africa family.

And I commit to you that, if confirmed, I will work closely and transparently with Members of Congress and your staff to integrate your perspectives, experiences, and priorities into our approaches to the development challenges faced by our African partners. Your viewpoints are crucial to the work we do on the ground, and I appreciate them greatly.

Thank you for granting me this hearing. I look forward to your questions.