

**Testimony of Scot Marciel
Nominee for Ambassador to Burma
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
December 1, 2015**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Burma. I thank the President for the confidence he has placed in me by sending my name forward to the Senate for consideration, and also thank Secretary of State Kerry for his support. I am grateful to the members of the Committee for this opportunity to speak to my qualifications and intentions. I also want to acknowledge and express appreciation for the very important role that Congress has played on Burma policy for many years.

I also want to thank my family – my wife Mae, my daughters Lauren and Natalie, and my parents for all of their love and support. The Foreign Service is a family effort, and I've been very fortunate to have such a wonderful family by my side.

I joined the Foreign Service in 1985, and have had the privilege of serving and representing the United States in six overseas assignments, as well as in Washington. I believe deeply in public service, and have sought throughout my career to advance our country's interests and promote its values. If confirmed, serving as Ambassador to Burma would be an incredible opportunity to continue this work in a country whose people very much look to America to support their efforts to build democracy after decades of military rule.

The past half-century has not been kind to the people of Burma. A country that in the early 1960s was considered one of the brightest prospects in Asia suffered through many years of internal conflict, bad economic policies, occasional isolation, and repressive authoritarian rule, resulting in extensive poverty, weak institutions, and – perhaps most importantly – a deep and pervasive lack of trust between the people and their government, and between different communities. I visited Burma several times between 2005 and 2010, and it was evident that the country had dug itself a very deep hole.

In 2011, the current government began to open up. It released political prisoners, including democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, allowed significantly greater freedom of press, association, and expression, began economic reforms, and opened itself to a much greater extent to the international community.

After many years of very cool relations, the United States responded to Burma's opening by significantly stepping up engagement. We sent out our first Ambassador in many years, ramped up assistance, and sent a steady stream of senior visitors out to work with the government, opposition, and civil society. Our effort has been dedicated to promoting and supporting Burma's democratic transformation, increasing respect for

human rights, encouraging broad-based economic reform, and helping to advance national reconciliation by creating conditions to end the civil war that has plagued the country since its independence.

We focused significant energy on supporting Burma's efforts to make the November 8 parliamentary elections as good as they could be. We were aware of the numerous structural and constitutional flaws, but also saw that Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party, along with many ethnic-based parties and others, viewed the elections as the best opportunity to move the country toward greater democracy and reform. In the end, as everyone here knows, after a period of competitive, open campaigning, the elections themselves were reasonably well run, and the people turned out in droves to vote for change. Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party won in a landslide, and – importantly – many of the ruling party's candidates conceded defeat.

The elections represent an important step forward, but there remains an enormous amount of work to do, starting with ensuring a smooth and effective transition to the new government, with the next president expected to take office in April. Most of this is work the people of Burma have to do. They have to build their economy, overcome decades of distrust and prejudice to advance the national reconciliation process, build institutions, reform their security forces, strengthen respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, mold their constitution into a document more fitting for a democracy, and much more.

As they work on these enormous challenges, the people of Burma – at least the vast majority of them – want us there to support and, where possible, help them. We cannot fix their problems for them, but we do have an important role to play: engaging diplomatically to encourage progress, call out behavior that opposes reforms, and suggest ways forward; offering assistance to help develop the critically-important civil society, build institutions, and fight poverty and disease; and offering ideas and reaffirming key democratic values through our words and our deeds.

This is what we have been doing and, in my view, this is what we need to continue to do. If confirmed, I will continue America's very clear focus on supporting those people and organizations in Burma who are working so hard to build peace and democracy, increase respect for human rights, address the problems of human trafficking, promote broad-based economic development, and develop trust. It is also important that as the people of Burma take the courageous steps necessary to end the decades of ethnic fighting that the United States provides the support that will enable lasting reconciliation and peace.

We will need to engage the new Government of Burma right away to encourage progress on all these issues. We will urge the government and parliament to tackle structural problems that have not yet been addressed, and which marred the recent elections, and to continue broad-based reforms. We also need to continue to support Burma's critically-important civil society, and also do all we can to encourage the still-powerful Burmese military to support rather than impede progress.

We also need to continue our focus on the situation in Rakhine State. The situation there is deeply troubling. We have already made clear to Burma's authorities that the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, including the Rohingya, is critical for their efforts to bring true unity to a country that for too long has been divided along ethnic and religious lines. If confirmed, I will work with the government, civil society, and the international community to promote the joint stability and prosperity of all communities in Rakhine, including the Rohingya and the ethnic Rakhine populations, and that ensure all the people living in the country are able to enjoy dignity, justice, and their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We have long been and remain today a good friend to the people of Burma. With the recent reforms and elections, those people now have the best opportunity in generations to move toward a freer, more democratic, and more prosperous future. We can and should do all we can to support and assist them.

Thank you again for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.