

Statement of Earl Miller
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
August 23, 2018

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I would like to thank the President and Secretary of State for the trust and confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my partner, Michelle Adelman, and youngest son, Alexander, who just finished an internship at the State Department this week. I also want to recognize my son, Andrew, who is completing his studies at the University of South Florida. Their love and support over the years have been invaluable as they accompanied me around the world. It has been a privilege to serve the American people in eight countries across five geographic regions over the past three decades and see my sons grow into such smart, caring, accomplished young men and even consider following in Dad's footsteps.

It is an honor to be nominated to serve the United States in such a strategically important country at such a critical time for our bilateral relationship. As the world's eighth-largest country by population and third-largest Muslim-majority nation, Bangladesh is known for its moderate, secular, pluralistic traditions. With an annual economic growth rate of roughly six percent each year, Bangladesh aspires to soon become a middle income country and is an increasingly important trading partner and destination for U.S. investment. It is a vital nation linking South and Southeast Asia. It is a country of promise and opportunity, with a vibrant civil society, poised to play an even larger role on the regional and world stage.

We work closely with Bangladesh on a range of issues and hold regular structured dialogues on bilateral and regional issues, security and defense cooperation, as well as trade and investment. The United States is committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific, expanding our partnership with Bangladesh in support of good governance and fundamental rights and liberties, open access to seas and airways, peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes, and free and reciprocal trade. We cooperate closely with Bangladesh on counterterrorism, ensuring threats do not grow and threaten to destabilize the region. We do so in a manner consistent with the rule of law and respect for human rights. We seek opportunities to expand our

security and defense cooperation in recognition of Bangladesh's admirable contribution to regional security and active role in UN peacekeeping operations.

We also see increasing opportunities to expand our trade and commercial relationship. The United States is Bangladesh's largest export market, and Bangladesh economic growth routinely averages six percent yearly creating opportunities for U.S. firms. We are seeing encouraging gains by American companies in Bangladesh's energy, infrastructure, and ICT sectors among others. If confirmed, I will actively seek to promote U.S. commercial interests while furthering our efforts to strengthen labor rights and improve workplace safety.

Bangladesh faces significant challenges we can work together to address in partnership. One is the Rohingya crisis. The numbers are staggering, with Bangladesh hosting nearly one million refugees from Rakhine State in Burma. The largest refugee camp is now the fourth largest city in Bangladesh. We are deeply appreciative of the generosity of the Bangladesh government and people who have opened their borders and hearts to a Rohingya community that has suffered greatly. The United States, as always, is doing its part. We are the largest donor addressing this humanitarian crisis providing \$204 million since August of last year. We are grateful for Congress's funding and continuing support.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the attacks in Burma that drove so many Rohingya from their homes, it is clear the crisis requires sustained efforts. We will continue to work closely with Bangladesh, UN agencies, and our international partners to meet the urgent needs of the Rohingya while continuing to press Burma to create the conditions necessary to allow their safe, voluntary, and dignified return.

The upcoming national elections is an opportunity for Bangladesh to reaffirm its commitment to democracy and the rule of law by holding free, fair, credible, and participatory elections that reflect the will of the Bangladeshi people. To do so, all parties must be free to participate fully in the political process. Freedom of expression and the press is also vital for a healthy democracy. Media, civil society, members of opposition groups, and peaceful protesters must be able to express their views and advocate for change without fear of retribution. Ambassador Bernicat has been a superb champion of all voices in the democratic process and, if confirmed, I pledge to follow her admirable example.

The United States remains concerned about recent trends in democracy and human rights in Bangladesh. We remain troubled about reports of attacks on vulnerable

populations, political violence, and extrajudicial killings allegedly committed by security forces. If confirmed, I will work to support efforts to promote accountability and strengthen human rights and democracy in Bangladesh.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I would assume the responsibilities of my position with humility, dedication, and joy. I often tell my colleagues at our embassy in Botswana an American ambassador's greatest superpower is simply, and wonderfully, the ability to "do good." Throughout my career, including 24 years as a Special Agent with the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service, I have worked to ensure the safety and security of our embassies and people around the world in some very challenging environments. I appreciate this is a Chief of Mission's most serious responsibility and it will always be a top priority.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your strong interest in South Asia and the positive role the United States plays on that continent. If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to work with you, your Committee and other members of Congress to advance America's interests in Bangladesh and throughout the region. It would be a great privilege to once again represent the people of the United States of America.

I would be honored to answer your questions.