



S. HRG. 114-612

# NOMINATION HEARINGS OF THE 114TH CONGRESS

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## HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

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FIRST SESSION—MARCH 10 THROUGH DECEMBER 2, 2015

SECOND SESSION—FEBRUARY 11 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 20, 2016

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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## NOMINATIONS

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THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2015

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

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Hon. Michele Thoren Bond, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Consular Affairs)  
Dr. Sarah Mendelson, of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Representative on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Corker, Isakson, and Cardin.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We thank you for being here.

Today the committee will consider two nominees, the Hon. Michele Bond to be Assistant Secretary of State of Consular Affairs, and Dr. Sarah Mendelson to be the Representative of the United States on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations with the rank of Ambassador, as well as to be the Alternate Representative of the United States to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs is responsible for issuing passports to Americans looking to travel abroad, issuing visas to people around the world trying to emigrate or to visit the United States, and assisting American citizens abroad in emergency and nonemergency situations. These duties also include the facilitation of international adoptions, and we certainly are very interested in that, and thank you for your work relative to that in the past.

Ambassador Bond is an accomplished consular officer and currently the Acting Assistant Secretary. I look forward to hearing her views on how to improve the passport and visa issuance processes and better serve Americans abroad. I appreciate Ambassador Bond's efforts regarding the suspension of exit permits and the DRC, especially with her visit this spring to press the Congolese

to issue permits to U.S. citizens who have adopted children there. One of our staffers, Sarah Downs, has spent inordinate amounts of time traveling there herself, and again we thank you for your efforts on behalf of so many people. I look forward to hearing about the Bureau's strategy to work to resolve this issue as the DRC Government reviews and approves adoption cases and embarks on implementing adoption reform legislation.

The U.S. Representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations—that is a mouthful—ECOSOC, represents the United States on intergovernmental bodies which oversee the U.N.'s work on economic, social, and human rights issues, and the U.N.'s field operations in the areas of development, post-conflict peace-building, and humanitarian assistance.

The Council's functions and powers include initiating studies and reports on human welfare and the quality of life which drives action at the U.N. General Assembly. Modern slavery is inflicted on as many as 27 million men, women, and children around the globe. Senator Cardin and myself and others have passed unanimously out of this committee a bill that we think can have transformative effects on this issue if we can all make it happen in the appropriate way, so we obviously are very interested in your nomination. It is obviously a very important issue. I look forward to hearing and learning more how you will address this in your new role, if confirmed.

Lastly, with the U.N. General Assembly voting on the Sustainable Development Goals in September, the United States will require strong representation. I hope you can provide some insights on how this process will affect U.S. interests.

I thank you for being here. I know you are going to introduce your families in just a moment. We welcome them.

And with that, I will turn it over to our ranking member.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Well, let me thank Senator Corker for arranging this hearing on two very important nominations. I thank you very much for accommodating this hearing. I know it is a very busy time for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but one of our principal responsibilities is to timely consider President Obama's nominees, so thank you very much for scheduling these hearings.

And, Mr. Chairman, I want to welcome two nominees that I have adopted and represent in the United States Senate, along with Senator Mikulski. You see, they are from the District of Columbia, and we have not seen fit to give them full representation here in the United States Congress. So Senator Mikulski and I, recognizing that the District is former Maryland land, we have adopted the residents.

The CHAIRMAN. Actually, I think that is a resolution to the issue, to become a part of Maryland and be done with it. [Laughter.]

Senator CARDIN. One of the problems that we talk about is adoptions, so maybe this is an issue that we will be able to take up.

Welcome to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I thank both of you for your public service and your willingness to serve our country in two very important positions during a very trying

time. And I thank your families, because this truly is a family sacrifice. I know at least in one case it has been a family effort; both serve in the Foreign Service. So thank you both, and thank your families for what you are doing.

The mission of the Bureau of Consular Affairs is to protect the lives and interests of American citizens abroad, and we thank you for that. There are a lot of challenges there. Foreign Service officers perform incredible service to our country. They deal with Americans who have trouble abroad, and that become a major problem for Foreign Service officers. They deal with foreign-sourced adoptions, which is an area that Senator Corker raised that we are very concerned about where some heart-rendering challenges have been imposed to prevent the completion of adoptions. And the visa processing system.

Mr. Chairman, I was just, last week, in Havana meeting with our Foreign Service officers as they were handling applications. I must tell you, that is an incredible chore. They are undermanned from the point of view of the resources that they have, and there is a lot of pressure that they get everything right, and I thank them very much for their service.

In regards to hostage situations, I just want to mention that, because President Obama came out last week with a comprehensive rewrite of how we are going to handle circumstances such as the Weinstein situation we had in Maryland where a USAID worker was kidnapped and ultimately he lost his life. The administration is reorganizing that. I have introduced legislation, along with Senator Cornyn, so that we have a single-point person in order to deal with it, and I am hopeful that we can adopt the administration's proposal but improve it with a single point of contact person that we can hold accountable for coordinating all activities, but it also gives the family an opportunity to have a single-point contact, which was very much missing in the Weinstein case. So we might want to talk about that also during the nomination confirmation process.

It is also a pleasure to welcome Ms. Mendelson to today's hearing. The U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Economic and Social Council plays an important role in the multilateral diplomacy to advance the U.S. interests in strengthening human rights, sustainable development, and effective humanitarian assistance.

I particularly want to focus on the Millennium Development Goals because that is very timely right now. I have had a chance to meet with Helen Clark of the United Nations. I also represent the United States Senate, along with Senator Johnson, at the U.N. as part of our mission, and I must tell you, I was encouraged and disappointed.

The Millennium Development Goals have been incredibly successful, saved millions of lives. It has produced a worldwide effort to use all resources, including nongovernmental resources, to achieve demonstrable progress on saving young people, babies, helping women, et cetera.

So the next Millennium Development Goals I hoped would get the same serious attention. Instead, I saw a list, I think it was 17 proposed goals, which is too many. I agree, there are too many. But number 16 is the one I think should probably be number 1, and

I am concerned it is getting lost in the shuffle, and that is the concern about corruption and good governance which is so corrosive globally and so responsible for so many of the problems that we face.

So I would hope that I will get a commitment here to make sure that we fight hard to make that part of the Millennium Development Goals and that we elevate its importance in our efforts to try to deal with that issue.

There are many other issues I could talk about. I will mention one other that concerns me, the United Nations Family Planning Association. I say that because the Senate Republican appropriators this week inhibited funding to the United Nations Family Planning Association. I mention that because that is a source of funding right now for what we do in Syria and Jordan that provides normal childbirth delivery services to refugee camps that I am concerned could be cut off that could affect the safety and lives of many maternal cases. I would hope that we would find a strategy to make sure that that type of vital link to child safety is maintained, and I would welcome Dr. Mendelson's comments on this issue and many others.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to our discussion.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cardin. I appreciate the way that we were able to work together and make things happen, and certainly coordinating this meeting is much appreciated, so thank you.

I will now turn to our nominees, the Hon. Michele Bond and Dr. Sarah Mendelson.

Our first nominee is Michele Bond, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister Counselor with nearly 40 years of experience. She currently serves as Acting Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs. Ambassador Bond has served in a range of posts at home and abroad, including Ambassador to Lesotho from 2010 to 2012.

Our second nominee is Sarah Mendelson, who currently serves as Senior Advisor and Director of Human Rights Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Prior to joining the CSIS, Dr. Mendelson was Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance at USAID.

We want to thank you very much for being here and sharing your thoughts. Your full statements will be entered into the record without objection, and if you would just give us about a 5-minute introduction, we will ask a few questions. I know you want to introduce your families, but thank you for being here, and we will start with Ambassador Bond.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. MICHELE THOREN BOND, NOMINATED TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS**

Ms. BOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members of the Foreign Relations Committee. It is the honor of a lifetime to be here with you this morning. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for the confidence and trust they placed in me by selecting me for this position.

I am proud to introduce three of our four children, Robert, Elizabeth, and Lillian Bond. My family is the center of my life. I could not have been successful without their love and support. My family is also one of dedicated public servants, and that is why my husband and our younger son cannot be with us today. My husband, Ambassador Clifford Bond, is a retired Foreign Service officer currently working at the U.S. Embassy in Kiev, Ukraine, coordinating U.S. aid to Ukraine. Our son, Matthew, is a Peace Corps Volunteer, teaching English in Indonesia.

My mother was the earliest and most influential inspiration for my life and for my career. She worked for the Department of State in post-war Stockholm when she was only 21, and years later at NATO and in Washington. She introduced me to public service. Through her, I met smart, dedicated Foreign Service officers and began to understand how diplomacy affects the lives of individuals and benefits our country.

I began working at State as a college student during summer breaks and served on my first crisis task force in 1974, the invasion of Cyprus. Our resources were rudimentary compared to what we have now, but the issues would be familiar to any of my colleagues today. Desperate families called seeking information about loved ones in Cyprus and Greece. We scribbled details and contact information on 3-by-5 cards. It is an extraordinary honor to lead a Bureau that has the same dedication and focus today that I first experienced more than 40 years ago.

Fortunately, we now have far more sophisticated tools, thanks in part to Congress' recognition of the vital importance of our work. The services we provide matter deeply and personally to our customers, your constituents. At its heart, Consular Affairs is about service. We provide assistance in small emergencies like lost passports, and large ones such as natural disasters. We are keenly aware that what we do is never routine for the people we serve. Given tens of thousands of daily opportunities to assist our customers, we are committed to meeting the highest standards of transparency, efficiency, and professionalism, creating lasting positive impressions of the United States and its government.

This week I was named the recipient of the 2015 Thomas Jefferson Award by American Citizens Abroad. I am honored and humbled by this award which recognizes commitment to the Department of State's highest priority, the protection of American citizens overseas. I am proud, too, of the values it represents, openness, listening and responding to the needs of our citizens, and meeting those needs with friendly, professional efficiency, values I pledge to uphold should I be confirmed.

Adoption, as you mentioned, Senator, is one of the most personal and sensitive issues in which we become involved, and it is one that matters to me deeply and has been a focus of my work for many years. My grandmother and her sister were adopted. I have worked on adoptions from behind the interview window overseas and at the policy table in Washington. I carry with me the stories of the families and children I have met. They inspire in me an abiding passion to bring greater transparency and accountability to intercountry adoptions. I am proud to have contributed to the United States leading role on the Hague Adoption Convention and,

if confirmed, I will intensify our efforts to make intercountry adoption a real option for vulnerable children everywhere who need a family.

Through careful adjudication of U.S. passport and visa applications, consular officers strengthen border security while facilitating legitimate travel that promotes economic growth, generates jobs across the country, and fosters good will and understanding about the United States across the world. If confirmed, I will ensure we continue to provide secure, efficient passport and visa services to protect our Nation, grow our economy, and unite families.

In Consular Affairs, we are one team with one mission. But, of course, we do not work alone. I am committed to a whole-of-government approach to serving our citizens. I take tremendous pride in leading a dedicated, talented team of over 13,000 professionals working in nearly 300 offices around the world. We come from all walks of life and all corners of our Nation. We proudly include hundreds of veterans, and my team works hard to ensure that we are a diverse one. We work closely with Congress on every issue in our portfolio. We engage with your staff daily on issues that impact your constituents and their communities. If confirmed, I will sustain and build on Consular Affairs' reputation as a model for cooperative, productive relations with Congress.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.  
[The prepared statement of Ms. Bond follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHELE THOREN BOND

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members of the Foreign Relations Committee, it is the honor of a lifetime to be here today. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for the confidence and trust they placed in me by selecting me for this position.

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#### *Bureau of Consular Affairs*

My Bureau, CA, directly touches lives across the globe. We serve on the front lines of U.S. diplomacy, and our work is central to the advancement of U.S. foreign policy. We guard against foreign and domestic threats by assisting U.S. citizens overseas and safeguarding our borders at home. We are committed to protecting the integrity of our processes and decisions. We are there for our citizens during the best and worst days of their lives abroad—assisting with overseas adoptions, aiding

those who have lost a loved one, or organizing an evacuation to get our citizens to safety. We open up the world to our citizens with one of the world's most coveted travel documents—the U.S. passport. The impact of our work is felt across the Nation. Our work affects the lives of everyone in this room and every one of your constituents.

Our most valuable asset, by far, is our staff. The members of the consular team are incredible public servants. I have seen how the Bureau has met the challenges of 21st century diplomacy, adapted technology to improve the speed, scope, and quality of our service, learned from experience and embraced innovation. Investment in CA's human capital is vital to engage, develop, and retain these talented professionals. If confirmed, I will build on the hard-won achievements of my predecessors by sustaining a well-trained, motivated, dynamic, and efficient workforce.

I pledge that the Bureau of Consular Affairs will continue to protect our citizens abroad and provide all available assistance for any U.S. citizen in need overseas. We will continue to vigilantly protect our Nation from those who wish to harm our citizens. We will further our efforts to make international adoption a real option for children who need permanent families, knowing they will be welcomed into American hearts and homes. Today I will discuss a few of the many achievements of our great team and how we develop leaders and innovators in foreign policy by furthering the vibrant culture of the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

*Overseas citizens services—CA's number 1 priority*

The safety and protection of U.S. citizens overseas is among the U.S. Government's highest priorities, and CA's number one priority. CA has assisted U.S. citizens affected by a number of recent crises, including earthquakes in Nepal, political strife in Burundi, and the influx of those fleeing Yemen to Djibouti and other countries. In FY 2014, CA evacuated U.S. citizens from areas affected by hurricanes, typhoons, and Ebola; continued our engagement on detainee and hostage cases; visited 8,600 prisoners; performed 30,000 welfare and whereabouts checks; documented 66,000 U.S. citizen children born abroad; and consoled 10,200 bereaved families. We assisted thousands of U.S. citizens affected by abuse, mental illness, and crime abroad.

We promote intercountry adoption as a viable option throughout the world. We work to prevent international parental child abduction and to seek the return of abducted children.

Over a third of U.S. citizens hold a U.S. passport. Increasingly, they travel to destinations off the beaten path and engage in more adventurous activities. Our job to protect their safety and welfare remains the same, but is now more challenging. We proactively reach out to citizens to deliver the information they need to travel safely and responsibly. Our Consular Information Program, including Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, and the Worldwide Caution, is the Department's primary tool for providing U.S. citizens with timely, accurate information about potential threats to their safety abroad.

We continuously harness new technologies to keep information flowing during rapidly changing circumstances or crises overseas. We are on duty 24/7 to respond immediately as crises arise. Our Office of Policy Coordination and Public Affairs works with colleagues overseas to send messages out through social media outlets including Facebook and Twitter. Constant engagement with the public through these venues allows us to get the message out quickly in times of crisis. Our goal is to provide our citizens with the information and resources they need to make their own appropriate decisions in real time.

CA understands the gravity of our responsibility to U.S. citizens traveling overseas, and we consult closely with interagency partners and Congress on policies and issues affecting our citizens' safety abroad. We have steadily increased our ability to inform and assist families during intercountry adoptions, for example.

*U.S. Citizen Hostages Policy:* CA played a key role in the interagency group tasked with a Presidentially directed, government-wide review of the management of overseas hostage cases. Based on the hostage policy review, the President has established a Washington-based, FBI-led interagency Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC), a National Security Council-convened Hostage Response Group (HRG) providing policy guidance to the HRFC, and a Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs at the State Department who will lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy and coordinate all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts. CA has assigned a consular officer fulltime to the HRFC as well as staff to support the Special Envoy's Office and to support hostage victims' families.

*U.S. Detainees Abroad:* In the Bureau of Consular Affairs, we continually monitor the cases of citizens detained abroad and work to obtain the release of those wrong-

fully held overseas. U.S. citizen detainee cases can be highly visible, resource-intensive, and difficult to resolve, especially in countries without U.S. embassies.

Three U.S.-Iranian citizens—Saeed Abedini, Amir Hekmati, and Jason Rezaian—are currently imprisoned in Iran. Abedini and Hekmati have been charged, tried, and sentenced; Rezaian has been charged but not tried. President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Under Secretary Sherman have raised these cases with their Iranian counterparts. Department officials also regularly raise the case of Robert Levinson, a former FBI agent who has been missing in Iran since March 2007.

*International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA):* CA is the U.S. Central Authority for the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Parental Child Abduction. We work closely with 73 Hague partner countries, and with authorities in non-Hague countries, to prevent situations where one parent wrongfully removes or retains a child away from his or her habitual residence, and to help left-behind parents seek return of, or access to, children who have been wrongfully removed or retained. CA recently released its first annual report under the Sean and David Goldman International Parental Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014. In 2014, 781 abduction and access cases were resolved. CA continues to encourage non-Convention partner countries to become party to the Convention. After years of diplomatic effort, CA and colleagues across the Department celebrated Japan's accession in April 2014.

*Universal Accreditation Act (UAA):* We are delighted Congress passed the UAA. CA has engaged adoption service providers, advocacy groups, and national adoption organizations to inform them of the changes UAA introduced, to train on practical aspects of implementation, and to address issues and concerns as they arose before and after the UAA entered into force last July. Before the UAA, the standards of ethical conduct embodied in the Hague Adoption Convention applied in fewer than half of all intercountry adoption cases. Now, all U.S. citizens adopting abroad benefit from uniform standards governing the conduct of all U.S. adoption service providers. UAA also provides for universal monitoring and oversight of service provider adherence to those standards. The UAA closed a critical gap in protection for U.S. adoptive families.

*Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Adoptions:* The Department is seeking to unite nearly 600 Congolese children adopted, or in the process of being adopted, by U.S. citizens with their new families. The Congolese Government abruptly suspended issuance of exit permits almost 2 years ago. Without exit permits, these children cannot join their families in the United States. We are addressing this issue on multiple levels. In addition to constant engagement by Embassy Kinshasa and Ambassador Swan, the Department's Special Advisor for Children's Issues, Ambassador Susan Jacobs, led a delegation to the DRC in December and pressed the Congolese Government on these issues. I visited Kinshasa in March, where I met government and parliamentary representatives, and some of the American parents who are living in Kinshasa with their children. I continue to follow this issue closely.

Secretary Kerry urged President Kabila to lift the suspension in May, August, and October 2014. Last August, President Kabila and Secretary Kerry agreed to establish a joint commission to discuss options to allow children with finalized adoptions to depart and to consult on adoption reforms. Some progress has been made; 10 children with life-threatening medical conditions have received exit permits and several other cases are waiting to be reviewed by DRC officials. We are working with the other countries affected by this suspension, including Canada, Italy, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, to press the DRC to resolve this protracted situation. We have met numerous times with congressional staff to keep them informed about this situation. If confirmed, I commit to you that I will continue to push for urgent resolution of these cases. These children belong with the loving families who have adopted them. We will continue to keep lines of communication open.

*Passports—safeguarding the most coveted travel document*

The Bureau of Consular Affairs opens the world to millions of U.S. citizens. Our passport agencies unlock the gate to global experiences and mutual understanding for U.S. citizen travelers. By accurately and efficiently adjudicating U.S. passport applications, U.S. passport agencies and fraud prevention teams reliably provide U.S. citizens with the world's most coveted travel document, and keep that document out of the hands of criminals. We know Congress shares our goal of continually improving the integrity of the passport issuance process, and in this regard, we trust Congress and staffers will do everything possible to ensure that we have access to all needed databases, including the full Social Security Administration death file, access to State driver's license information, and both Federal and State level incarceration information.

CA operates 27 domestic passport agencies, two document print centers, and two passport information and call centers across the United States. We have established 12 new passport agencies since 2008 to handle rapidly increasing demand. We adjudicated 14.1 million passport applications in FY 2014, delivering more than 99 percent of those products within their targeted timeframes. There are currently nearly 1 million applications in the system—the highest volume since 2009. In the last 2 fiscal years, passports generated nearly \$3 billion in revenue. There are approximately 123 million valid passports in circulation.

*Foreign Terrorist Fighters:* CA initiated policies and streamlined procedures to deny or revoke passports of U.S. citizens engaged in activities as Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) who pose significant threats to U.S. national security and foreign policy. CA works diligently with our federal partners to ensure that appropriate passport denial or revocation helps to keep the United States safe. We work closely with the FBI's Counterterrorism Division and other government departments and agencies to ensure broad familiarity with the availability and use of passport denial and revocation to prevent travel. We engaged with the Terrorism Screening Center and partnered with Diplomatic Security (DS) to provide assistance to the National Joint Terrorism Task Force.

To address the potential threat posed by other FTFs using the identities or passports of "unreported deceased" individuals, we implemented procedures to cancel the U.S. passports of deceased FTFs and of hostages killed by terrorists. Cancelled passport information is available to all overseas posts and passport agencies, and is provided in real time to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Interpol. We continue to work with the intelligence community and the National Counter Terrorism Center on potential passport revocation of suspected U.S. citizens serving as FTFs, and will facilitate revocation appropriately where sufficient evidence exists and the action is appropriate.

Our domestic passport agencies and overseas posts remain on alert for terrorism-related information in conducting adjudications and work with DS to share relevant information with our federal partners.

*Passport Surge:* The projected demand for passport applications for FY 2015 was recently revised to 14.5 million. We expect an unprecedented passport renewal surge in the coming years. To prepare for this, we are modernizing our information systems, including planning for online passport renewals, automated refunds, and additional payment options, to improve customers' overall experience and manage our workload more efficiently.

*Next Generation Passport:* CA will begin systemwide deployment of the Next Generation Passport in FY 2016. This upgraded document features security enhancements designed to prevent counterfeiting and fraudulent use of lost or stolen passports. The most prominent enhancement is a laser-engraved polycarbonate data page.

*Visas—uniting families, growing the economy, securing our Nation*

Secretary Kerry believes that foreign policy is economic policy and this is particularly true when it comes to visa policy. The Bureau of Consular Affairs directly affects businesses across the country by facilitating international tourism and helping local entrepreneurs recruit the world's innovators to help them develop the next generation of technology. Demand for visas to visit the United States has skyrocketed worldwide.

Others have recognized our achievements as well: the United States Travel Association awarded the Bureau's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services the "Distinguished Partner Award" in March 2015, writing that he "helped create an environment that welcomes international visitors to the United States, who bring with them spending dollars and good will that have helped advance the U.S. economy and American public diplomacy." In 2014, a record 75 million international visitors traveled to the United States, a 7-percent increase over 2013; they spent over \$220 billion. Tourism is America's largest services export and one that can't be outsourced.

Our investments to increase visa processing capacity and decrease visa interview wait times worldwide create jobs across the United States. International travelers support 1.1 million U.S. jobs. In a January 2012 Executive order, President Obama directed State to increase visa-processing capacity in China and Brazil by 40 percent in 2012 and to ensure 80 percent of applicants worldwide wait less than 3 weeks for their visa interviews. We exceeded both goals. CA reached the global target for wait times in August 2012, and wait times in key markets such as Brazil, China, India, and Mexico have rarely exceeded single digits since 2012. More than 95 percent of visa applicants requiring an interview receive an appointment in less than 3 weeks.

The United States will continue to attract tourists, businesses, students, and talent from around the world—in fact, President Obama's goal is to welcome 100 million international visitors annually by 2021. The vast majority of visitors travel to the United States with no malicious intent. However, some visa applicants are criminals or terrorists. Every visa decision we make, thousands of times a day, is a national security decision. Each of our consular officers understands this. CA is diligently working with DHS to expand visa reciprocity, the Visa Waiver Program, and the Interview Waiver Program, as appropriate, because these efforts allow us to focus our resources where the risks are highest.

*Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Programs:* We could not do our jobs overseas without the dedication and expertise of our locally engaged staff. Working for the U.S. Government sometimes comes at a personal cost to our staff and their families. In Iraq and Afghanistan, this work has placed some local colleagues in grave danger. CA works with the interagency to adjudicate and efficiently issue Special Immigrant Visas to colleagues in Iraq and Afghanistan who worked alongside our soldiers and diplomats.

As of December 14, 2014, we had issued all 4,000 Afghan principal applicant SIVs authorized for use by the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2014 (3,000 SIV numbers, available through September 30, 2015) and the Emergency Afghan Allies Extension Act of 2014 (1,000 SIV numbers, available through December 31, 2014). The FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act authorized 4,000 additional Afghan SIVs for use by March 31, 2017. To date, we have issued more than 800 of these SIVs. As of June 26, more than 13,000 Afghans are at some point in the SIV application review process. The Iraqi program has enough visa numbers available to respond to demand. Although we issued record numbers of SIVs in FY 2014, there remain some long-pending cases undergoing security vetting. We are working with the interagency to speed processing and resolve cases while steadfastly maintaining the security of our immigration system and of the United States.

*Visa Waiver Program and Interview Waiver Pilot Program:* The Visa Waiver Program is essential to achieve the administration's policy and security goals, and maximize efficiency for our customers. We work with DHS to expand the Visa Waiver Program as appropriate, with Chile joining in 2014. With DHS concurrence, we indefinitely extended the Interview Waiver Program, which allows us to waive interviews for applicants in certain low-risk populations—over 1 million applicants in 2014—allowing us to focus on higher-risk applicants. We continue to work with our partners to determine the feasibility of expanding the Visa Waiver Program, the Interview Waiver Program, and reciprocal visa validities in support of the President's goal to attract 100 million visitors to the United States annually by 2021.

*Foreign Fighters and the Visa Waiver Program (VWP):* The protection of U.S. borders is of the utmost importance to CA. We collaborate closely with DHS to support its mission of protecting the United States by promoting effective aviation and border security screening with our foreign partners through enhanced information-sharing. To travel without a visa under the VWP, an applicant must obtain authorization through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to boarding a U.S.-bound air or sea carrier. Should standard ESTA screening indicate that a traveler might be ineligible, that individual's ESTA application is denied, and the traveler is directed to the nearest U.S. Embassy or consulate to apply for a visa. In November 2014, ESTA enhancements went into effect that allow the U.S. Government to more effectively identify travelers who might pose a risk to the United States, including foreign fighters.

*Ten-Year Validity for Chinese Visas:* The Bureau of Consular Affairs was instrumental in negotiating and shepherding the expansion of Chinese visa validity, which President Obama announced in November 2014. Visa demand in Mission China has risen by more than 53 percent in the wake of the announcement and the Chinese are issuing visas with the same reciprocal validity to U.S. citizens. This has a significant impact on travel and tourism in both countries and helps boost people-to-people engagement. It will be a tremendous boon to U.S. businesses and have a significant effect on our economy. From January to May 2015, CA issued 1.5 million visas to Chinese travelers.

*Modernized Immigrant Visa:* As a global service organization, CA must constantly ensure that our processes meet the needs of our customers. We are working with DHS, private and nonfederal public actors, and technology experts to implement a streamlined, electronic immigrant visa process that will save time and money.

*Fraud prevention—facilitate travel, maximize security measures*

Fraud prevention and detection are a critical part of our operations. As the demand for our services increases, so do efforts by criminal elements, or those who think they can catch us off guard. We must remain vigilant in our work while still

maintaining efficiency. New tools and technologies help identify and malafide applicants. One of CA's priorities for 2015 is to develop programs and techniques to prescreen applicants prior to their interviews. Our global fraud tracking database allows us to more efficiently document and analyze fraud research. Our fraud prevention and detection efforts are successful in part because of increased collaboration across the U.S. Government, and access to better information and technology.

*CA systems—keeping up with demand in a changing world*

Stable technological systems are a top priority for CA. This is key to improving customers' overall experience and managing our workload efficiently.

**Systems modernization:** The growing demand for our services puts unrelenting strain on our aging systems. A systems outage in June disrupted service and caused considerable hardship for some customers across the globe.

A June 9 hardware failure halted the flow of biometric data for visa application security checks to posts overseas, preventing posts from issuing visas and processing new visa applications. The effort to switch to the standby system failed due to corrupted data. CA collaborated with private sector experts and the White House's U.S. Digital Services team and worked around the clock to restore service by taking a database with 6-month old data and merging the data from the failed production system into the new one. CA then reconnected posts to the central biometrics database in a staggered worldwide rollout, beginning with our largest nonimmigrant visa and immigrant visa processing posts. All visa-issuing posts were reconnected by June 26.

Taking into account the legal requirements to conduct security screening for visa applicants, CA explored every available option to facilitate legitimate travel during the outage. We secured strong cooperation with DHS/CBP on port of entry (POE) document waiver requests for cases with humanitarian or high-level U.S. national interest and for more than 250 critically needed temporary agricultural workers. We issued more than 3,500 visas for urgent and humanitarian travel in cases that did not require fingerprints, including visas for adopted children, diplomats on official travel, and some temporary workers. After the systems were restored, consular sections overseas worked extended hours and through the weekend to rapidly return to normal processing times.

CA is committed to modernizing consular systems to prevent future recurrences of these problems. We are migrating our databases to a significantly more robust combined hardware and software Oracle Exadata platform. We recently installed new servers in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai that can handle up to four times the workload. We will install the same servers in our busiest missions over the course of the year.

**ConsularOne:** We are in the development phase of ConsularOne, a major IT initiative to consolidate all consular applications into one integrated system. This will reduce inefficiencies and data duplication, improve our ability to track demand, and help us to better detect trends and anomalies across all consular services. ConsularOne is a key component of online passport renewal, which we plan to introduce next year.

*CA Budget and Resources—Responsibly Use Public Resources Without Burdening Taxpayers*

If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring we are fiscally responsible and shrewd stewards of our funds. CA is funded by consular user fees, not by taxpayers. In FY 2014, CA generated \$3.6 billion in revenue, which supports all consular operations in the Department and provides border security-related funding to some interagency partners.

**CA funds:** CA is fully fee funded, and collects and retains fees for certain visa and passport services pursuant to specific statutory authority. We do not collect fees for every service we perform. Under current fee statutes, we are allowed to retain approximately 80 percent of the fees we collect, with the balance going to the Treasury. Currently, CA has 12 Partner Bureaus with programs or positions directly supported through retained consular fees. If confirmed, I would ask your consideration in enhancing our ability to retain and spend the funds generated through consular fees. With added flexibilities, we can improve and expand our work to secure the safety and security of U.S. citizens abroad.

**Cost of service model:** CA's cost of service model uses activity-based costing methodologies to calculate the true cost of consular services, to recommend appropriate fees for services, and to inform CA's funding strategies so CA appropriately administers the Department's Consular and Border Security Programs (CBSP). Fee flexibilities included in the FY 2016 President's Budget Request will ensure future efficient and responsible disbursement of CBSP funds that is in line with how fees

are set. We will also create, implement, and institutionalize an authoritative CBSP plan and overarching governance process to guide budget planning, execution, and monitoring.

*Consular leadership—developing the workforce of the 21st century*

CA is a global operation with a significant footprint. We have a workforce of over 13,000 highly trained professionals including Civil Service employees, Foreign Service officers, and Locally Employed staff, in more than 300 domestic and overseas offices.

Our colossal and growing workload can only be managed by a first rate workforce that leverages cutting-edge technological and management tools. I have every confidence in my team and in CA's senior leaders. I am committed to fostering the culture of leadership, management, and innovation excellence that is a hallmark of the Bureau.

We run our operations as effectively and efficiently as possible. I would like to say that the Bureau of Consular Affairs is a well-oiled machine, but we are not machines. We are a compassionate, disciplined, and highly trained corps of individuals dedicated to the dual mission of protecting U.S. citizens overseas and protecting our Nation's borders.

To build a team of consummate, compassionate professionals and prepare the next generation of FSOs, we developed ICA: one Consular Affairs team. ICA is the Bureau's office of leadership, management, and innovation, a proactive effort to promote excellence in an environment of budgetary restraint and increasing demand for our services. ICA created a management framework based on private industry leading practices but customized for consular professionals. ICA has introduced a practical set of tools and resources that promote collaboration and help consular teams identify, prioritize, and resolve management and leadership challenges. Through these tools, our consular sections across the globe have increased adjudication numbers and reduced processing times and customer wait times.

It is my hope that CA will continue to foster a culture of leadership, sound management, and performance principles which exerts a broader influence across the Department. CA is proud to be the training ground for the next generation of Foreign Service officers. All entry-level officers serve in Consular Affairs on their first or second tours. The capabilities and skills of our diplomats are greatly enhanced by the tools they learn during their consular tours.

ICA has become a model for how the Department approaches the development of human capital. Recently, State rolled out the Department's Leadership and Management Principles, tracking closely to CA's tenets. Our success has inspired the creation of Teamwork@State, the Department-wide initiative that provides toolkits and resources on teamwork across bureaus, posts, and offices.

If confirmed, I will do my utmost to continue to equip my team with the tools and resources necessary to fulfill their duties. I will also continue to work with the Department to prepare our new diplomats for future global challenges.

*Relationship with Congress*

The work of Consular Affairs often touches our citizens on a deeply personal level. I am committed to ensuring your constituents receive the assistance they require from CA in a timely manner and that information is presented clearly and transparently. If confirmed, I am committed to strengthening the relationship between Congress and the Bureau of Consular Affairs. In FY 2014, CA conducted more than 150 legislative briefings, testified at three hearings, and cohosted the annual Immigration and Consular Conference for all congressional staff. We conducted domestic agency and border post tours for constituent services staffers. We want Congress to be well informed of our issues and wish to be available to you for any inquiries you may have. Two consular liaison officers have offices on the Hill to respond to congressional inquiries, connect you with our subject matter experts, and engage on consular matters via webinars, conferences, and briefings. We have a dedicated Web site for congressional staff—[travel.state.gov/congress](http://travel.state.gov/congress)—and dedicated congressional contacts at every overseas post, domestic passport agency, the National Visa Center, and the Kentucky Consular Center. During overseas crises, we establish a dedicated congressional email address for inquiries concerning constituents in the affected area.

*Whole of government approach*

If confirmed, I hope to amplify the cooperation among agencies, and with Congress, to use our resources as efficiently as possible, bringing a whole-of-government approach to serving the needs of our citizens. I will continue the close collaboration we enjoy with other bureaus across the Department and other government agencies

to fulfill our mission of protecting U.S. citizens abroad and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States.

*Conclusion*

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to ensure consular support for America's foreign policy objectives. If confirmed, I will continue to keep you informed of our resource needs, and work with you to ensure that the Bureau of Consular Affairs continues to meet its obligations to our citizens and to our Nation.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Mendelson.

**STATEMENT OF DR. SARAH MENDELSON, NOMINATED TO BE U.S. REPRESENTATIVE ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF THE U.N.**

Dr. MENDELSON. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. I am grateful to President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Ambassador Power for this opportunity and for their confidence in me.

I would like to acknowledge my husband, John Harvey, who is here with me today and whose own career has been defined by public service and the safeguarding of U.S. national security interests. I depend every day on his love and support.

I also want to acknowledge my family and friends watching from many different parts of the globe. As a first-generation American, it is truly an honor and privilege to be here. In my office I have a photograph of the shtetl in Lithuania where my father was born, which serves as a reminder of how far and how fast my family's journey has been.

Virtually my entire professional career has focused on advocating for democracy and human rights internationally. This work is not easy, nor does it bring quick results. I keep close a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In a world filled with cynicism, it is an important reminder of the United Nations' potential.

I know firsthand about the United Nations' imperfections. While at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, my intellectual home for many years, I investigated the trafficking of women and girls in and around peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. But this work also brought me into contact with brave U.N. officers dedicated to advancing gender equality and human rights.

I have seen firsthand that when the United Nations works best, we can effectively work with partners to promote our interests and values. During the 4 years I served at USAID in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, my colleagues and I responded to multiple Level-3 humanitarian assistance crises. I was exposed on a daily basis to the development, human rights, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, and democracy promotion challenges confronting various U.N. agencies, nearly all of which depend on vital U.S. leadership and support.

My service in government also coincided with the expansion of the digital era. From Brazil to Indonesia, from Mexico to South Africa, the spread of affordable information and communication technologies has helped to expose corruption and driven demand for

governments to be more transparent and accountable to their citizens. Initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership, launched by President Obama and seven other heads of state at the U.N. in 2011, reflect this growing international movement of civic-based activism.

This digital era has been met also with a backlash, a closing of public space around civil society where governments are threatened by the increased empowerment of citizens. There are many dimensions to closing space including onerous requirements on non-governmental organizations, the targeting of journalists, national legal measures targeting the LGBT community, the rise of anti-Semitism and targeting of religious minorities, and the murder of activists dedicated to exposing abuse.

I know from my travels around Africa, Asia, Europe, Eurasia, and Latin America just how much members of vulnerable and marginalized populations look to the United States and the United Nations for leadership and pushing back on such repression. If confirmed, I pledge to work with U.N. agencies and like-minded member states to mobilize support for and address this issue and give voice to those who have been silenced.

If confirmed, I will also continue the work I began over 15 years ago on human trafficking, elevating the need to combat modern slavery as a vital 21st century development challenge. The global movement has made great strides, yet as this committee has recognized under the chairman's leadership, there is more work to be done to strengthen international efforts to address human trafficking. The U.S. role, as this committee has also noted, is critical. The United Nations has an important role to play as a platform to expand and broaden constituencies engaged in ending slavery.

If confirmed, I will work with the leadership of U.N. agencies in New York to combat human trafficking, and support smart investments that lead to sound development outcomes and elevate the focus on women and girls. I will work with colleagues across the U.N. system to deliver assistance to those experiencing food insecurity and displacement, and join others in the quest for greater resilience in the face of disaster.

As the world finalizes its commitments for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, I will work with the leadership of U.N. agencies, funds, programs, and member states for meaningful implementation of the goals. We must never forget that inclusion, sound governance, sustainable environmental practices, and respect for human rights are the essential foundations for achieving and sustaining development.

And finally, across the full spectrum of the issues and activities in my portfolio, I will contribute actively to this administration's fight against the disproportionate bias that remains persistent in the U.N. system targeting Israel.

If confirmed, I would be honored to join the administration's commitment and efforts to make the United Nations live up to its potential and further American values and ideals. Working with this committee and others in the administration, I would do my utmost to help the U.N. address humanitarian challenges and meet opportunities to make the world more secure.

Thank you. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Mendelson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SARAH E. MENDELSON

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. I am grateful to President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Ambassador Power for this opportunity and for their confidence in me.

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My service in government also coincided with the expansion of the digital era. From Brazil to Indonesia, from Mexico to South Africa, the spread of affordable information and communication technologies has helped to expose corruption and driven demand for governments to be more transparent and accountable to their citizens. Initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership, launched by President Obama and seven other heads of state at the U.N. in 2011, reflect this growing international movement of civic-based activism.

This digital era has been met with a backlash, a closing of public space around civil society where governments are threatened by the increased empowerment of citizens. There are many dimensions to closing space including onerous requirements on nongovernmental organizations, the targeting of journalists, national legal measures targeting the LGBT community, the rise of anti-Semitism and targeting of religious minorities, and the murder of activists dedicated to exposing abuse. President Obama addressed government restrictions on civil society during the high-level week at the U.N. General Assembly in 2013 and 2014. The U.N. Human Rights Council adopted resolutions on the issue in 2013 and 2014. I know from my travels around Africa, Asia, Europe, Eurasia, and Latin America just how much members of vulnerable and marginalized populations look to the United States and the United Nations for leadership in pushing back on such repression. If confirmed, I pledge to work with U.N. agencies and like-minded member states to mobilize support for and address this issue and give voice to those who have been silenced.

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Thank you. I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both very much.

We will now have 5 minutes of questioning by each of the Senators who wish to do so.

Ambassador Bond, a number of American families adopting Congolese children are stuck in the DRC exit permit suspension. I know you are very aware of that. Yesterday there was an announcement where numbers of cases were going to be approved. They are waiting on authorization by President Kabila, I guess, at this moment.

Can you tell us a little bit about what you think the best strategy will be for you to deal with this issue with the DRC and getting adopted children out of the country?

Ms. BOND. Thank you for that question, Senator. As you may know, I visited Kinshasa in March and had an opportunity to meet with several of the waiting families who have actually moved to the DRC in order to live with their children while they wait for action by those officials. But there are hundreds of other families who are not able to do that and who are waiting in the United States to be able to bring their children home.

While I was in Kinshasa, I met with a Member of their Parliament and with a number of senior officials in the government to press them to take action now on these cases, and I emphasized to them the fact that it is not a matter of indifference. Every single day that passes is a cost, a real cost, and in some ways an irreparable one, to the children who are losing ground because they are not in the families that are waiting for them, who have adopted them and would give them the kind of love and support that every child needs.

As you say, there was a meeting yesterday between U.S. Embassy officials and the head of the DRC Adoption Inter-Ministerial Commission, and a member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also there. They reported that the Commission has approved a number of cases of children adopted by citizens of the United States, and also families from Canada, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. They say that those have been reviewed by the Commission and passed to President Kabila for his action.

They suggested that a decision could come as early as next week, and we are pressing that administration hard to make a decision on these children, the first tranche, but on every single case to get those kids home to their families.

It has been suggested by one of the members of the Commission that they believe that having succeeded in creating this first

tranche and moving those names and files to the President, that they will be able to move more quickly on subsequent cases. They have established their process now, and I hope that is true, but we are indeed going to be pushing them to recognize that this is an urgent matter. This is something that needs to be done in a matter of hours or days, not weeks and months.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Mendelson, can you tell us a little bit about ECOSOC's role in combating slavery and talk to us a little bit about how you plan to pursue this issue when confirmed?

Dr. MENDELSON. Thank you, Senator, and thank you for your leadership on combating trafficking. It is widely appreciated, and that of the committee.

ECOSOC is a broad portfolio. Trafficking is a global problem. We need a global platform to address it, and I think ECOSOC presents an excellent opportunity.

Very specifically, we need, as you have widely recognized, we need every Ambassador to be engaging on this issue. We need every mission to be thinking about this and being champions for this. The SDG process, the Sustainable Development Goals process, actually provides an opportunity. There is a lot of language particularly focused around ending the trafficking of minors, and I have seen how when countries commit to the goals, assistance follows. It is my expectation that, and I would be a champion if confirmed, to make sure that those commitments include a focus on combating child trafficking and raising this issue, using the convening power to bring missions together and leadership.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there some specific countries that you think would be best for us to work with? Name some of them. I know you cannot name all of them, but obviously we want to put together a global effort. Hopefully we have the beginning stages of that now. But what are some of the other countries around the world that you think care deeply about this issue which would be great partners for the United States?

Dr. MENDELSON. We have very close relations with the United Kingdom, with many Nordic countries. Surprisingly, those development agencies are not already committed to combating trafficking. In my travels in my job at USAID, I met with foreign officials many times urging that this be a focus, and there was some resistance. So I think there is work to be done. I think this platform will be, if confirmed, a wonderful opportunity to work with missions again through the commitment that is involved with the Sustainable Development Goals.

I think you are going to find that countries are going to turn to say, yes, we are going to commit to this, and it will come on to their radar, come on to their agenda. So Sweden, with whom we have very close cooperation, would be a target, other Scandinavian countries, and certainly the United Kingdom.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I thank both of you for your service.

Dr. Mendelson, you mentioned the vital U.S. leadership and support. That was particularly true in the Trafficking in Persons, the

TIP report, the gold standard. I look at that foreign beat with guests from other countries to see how they are doing, and the United States has really provided, I think, the international leadership to make a huge difference in trafficking.

I want to see us do the same thing on corruption. I was proud that in the State Department reauthorization that this committee took up, we started to take steps to require the State Department to analyze the status of corruption in countries around the world.

So I want to focus on the Millennium Development Goals just for one moment. If I had Ambassador Bond's husband, spouse here, I think he would tell us the problems in Ukraine was not so much the relationship with Russia and the European Union, it was more about corruption. After the revolution, people were very optimistic, but then they got a corrupt government, and that caused many of the problems. If we look at the deep problems in Russia today, the motivation there is more corruption than anything else, and I could go through so many other countries around the world.

So we have a chance with the Millennium Development Goals, and there is a commitment to deal with human rights and corruption, but it seems buried. So I would like to get your commitment to be a fighter on this issue. You have a great tradition on human rights. This is our opportunity.

So, are you going to be a fighter to make sure that we have this as a visible goal under the Millennium Development to make sure that we can make some progress internationally on this corrosive human rights issue?

Dr. MENDELSON. Thank you, Senator, for the focus on corruption. I very much share your sense of urgency on this issue. I think it is one that the human rights community in general is gradually beginning to spend more attention to. I note also that there is a large transparency and accountability community that does not always talk to the human rights community. You mentioned Ukraine and, of course, the Dignity Revolution. The Euromaidan was about precisely demanding transparency and accountability, and I think that there are very brave people today who are still working on these issues.

I promise you that in Sustainable Development Goal number 16, that has good governance, sound governance and anticorruption in it, it will be an enormous priority. It is something that I spoke to Ambassador Power about when we were talking about this possibility, and I know she shares the commitment. So, yes, I promise.

Senator CARDIN. How about getting in the top five rather than number 16? I hope that you will work for that.

Ambassador Bond, people who want to come to the United States, spend money, learn about our way, advance U.S. goals which are basically global values, we make it so tough. It costs a lot of money. It takes a lot of time. What vision do you have to make it easier for people who want to visit the United States to be able to get through the bureaucratic process of obtaining a visa?

Ms. BOND. Thank you, Senator. What a good question, because that is one of our primary goals too. We have to screen visitors who are applying to come to the United States because we need to know who they are before we can give them permission to come. However, we also want to do everything we can to facilitate legitimate

travel. We want to bring those travelers to the United States, and we want to encourage them to come back again and again.

So one of the things that we do is we try to make sure, and we have invested significant resources—people, training, real estate—into making sure that if someone notifies us that he is interested in getting a visa to the United States, we interview that person as quickly as possible at a date that is convenient for them.

As you may know, in November, President Obama and the President of China jointly announced that they were going to extend the validity of visas for tourists and business travelers from 1 year to 10. And since then, just in the months since November, we have seen a 53-percent increase in the number of new applications for visas to come to the United States. Millions of people are traveling to the United States, and because they will have a 10-year visa, they can plan ahead. They can say, hey, next year is our anniversary, and let's plan to go to San Francisco. Next year is whatever, 5 years from now is whatever.

So we are doing everything we can to encourage travelers who have been vetted and examined so that we know that they are not a risk to the United States. We want them to come and we want them to see as much of the country as they can and spend their money.

Senator CARDIN. Also take a look at your computer system. It has broken down many times. You need to have a more reliable way to be able to handle this. If it is not working, a person may have traveled overnight to get to one of our locations only to find they have to come back another day. It just makes no sense, and we have to provide better service.

I want to do the screening—we have to do that—but we could do it in a more friendly way, and I would just urge you to make that the highest priority.

Last point, Mr. Chairman, just to comment.

Thank you for mentioning your commitment for Israel. There is no question that there is only one country that will stand up to the discriminatory actions that the international community in this international organization has focused on Israel, and the United States must remain firm against those discriminatory actions taken in the international community. So, thank you very much for mentioning that today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator ISAKSON.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for calling this hearing today. I know U.N. Ambassador Power is very interested in Dr. Mendelson getting to New York as fast as she can, particularly with the U.N. session beginning this summer, so I hope we can move this forward, and I appreciate very much your willingness to call it.

I want to follow up on what Senator Cardin said, Dr. Mendelson. Your statement says, "I will contribute actively to this administration's fight against the disproportionate bias that remains persistent in the U.N. system targeting Israel," and I want to thank you for including it both in your printed remarks as well as your verbal remarks today, because there are significant biases against

Israel in the U.N. If we do not stand strong with our partner Israel, we could have some big problems.

In particular, I think it is U.S. policy, at least my recollection is it is our stated policy of this administration that any recognition of a Palestinian state should be negotiated between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, not determined by a third party. Is that correct?

Dr. MENDELSON. Thank you, Senator, for raising this issue. It is, again, a key issue that Ambassador Power and I discussed when this opportunity arose.

You are correct, and I will fight vigorously to oppose any possibility that erodes a two-state solution. I will fight for the inclusion of Israel in various fora and to normalize Israel's status at the United Nations. I will fight tirelessly to oppose the bias that you see across the system, including in one-sided biased resolutions.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, thank you very much for that commitment, because it is absolutely necessary. I know Samantha Power, Ambassador Power, feels exactly the same way.

Ms. Bond, you are going to be in charge of all passports. Is that right?

Ms. BOND. Yes, sir.

Senator ISAKSON. I have a question for you. Every time I turn on the television or read anything about ISIL and about lone wolves, I read about Americans going to Syria for training with ISIL or going into Iraq for training with ISIL. What is the State Department doing and what role can the State Department have through passports, visas, and the like to track people who are doing that, or to curtail the access to be able to do that for American citizens going to that part of the world for that purpose?

Ms. BOND. Sir, you have raised a very serious concern. We recognize fundamentally the right of U.S. citizens to travel and the importance of citizens who are interested in traveling abroad to be able to apply for a passport and get one quickly and efficiently.

At the same time, we also are carefully vetting every application for a U.S. passport for us to make sure that that person qualifies, is that person a U.S. citizen, and there are screens in place. We work very closely with law enforcement, with the intel community, in order to be able to identify travelers who may be planning to travel for illegal purposes, travel for terrorism purposes.

So there is a lot of coordination within the government to track known or suspected terrorists, and whether they are foreigners applying for visas or Americans who are traveling abroad on passports to make sure that we try to identify those people and try to interdict their travel if we can.

Senator ISAKSON. I hope you are successful at accomplishing exactly that, because it is a worrisome fact that as many Americans as are expected or that we anticipate are trying to find their way to Syria or to ISIL to be trained and come back to be a threat to this country. So your role in that will be critically important to our country's security, and I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors as far as Assistant Secretary of State, as I do with Dr. Mendelson at the U.N.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Look, I cannot imagine having two more highly qualified people for these positions, and we thank you both for your willingness to serve in this capacity and your commitment to the kinds of issues you are going to be dealing with for a very long time.

So, thank you for being here and having your families here. We will make this as painless as possible, getting ready to adjourn, and we hope other members will ask questions. We hope that those questions will be in by noon Monday, and then you would respond promptly to those.

But we thank you for being here. Again, we thank you for your commitment to these issues, to our country, and your willingness to serve in this capacity.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:45 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF DR. SARAH MENDELSON, NOMINATED TO BE U.S. REPRESENTATIVE ON THE U.N. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

##### REPRESENTATIVE-DESIGNATE MENDELSON'S RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CORKER

*Question.* Given the multitude of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which ones should the United States prioritize?

*Answer.* From the outset of the process, the U.S. Government has prioritized a universal Post-2015 Development Agenda to ensure it can drive real impact and results on the ground. The United States is supportive of the draft Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because they address a range of issues that were left out of the Millennium Development Goals yet which are critical drivers of development such as the role of sound governance. The United States also recognizes that this more robust understanding of development means having a larger set of goals and targets to work toward. The 17 goals and 169 targets articulated in the current draft SDGs document include U.S. Government priorities—such as the unfinished business of the MDGs; gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; sustainable energy; oceans and natural resources; inclusive and sustainable economic growth; governance and peaceful societies. The Department has prioritized 13 areas for the Post-2015 Agenda: including Goal 16 on peace and governance but also poverty, food security, health, education, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, economic growth, water, energy, natural resources, oceans, and global partnerships.

*Question.* How will the SDGs affect the way the United States approaches international development?

*Answer.* Policy decisions, priorities, and budgets of the United States will always be made by the United States. The SDGs offer global targets to help guide national development priorities while leaving individual countries the space to determine their own policies about how to meet those priorities. The draft SDGs and targets reflect issues that have long been components of U.S. foreign assistance, including combating human trafficking and modern slavery, fighting poverty and hunger, promoting education and gender equality, improving access to safe water and affordable and reliable energy, and support for transparent, responsive and accountable democratic institutions. As the agenda has not yet been adopted, it is too early to say how the final agreement will impact U.S. priorities and policies, and the allocation of U.S. resources.

*Question.* What is ECOSOC's role in the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) development agenda and how will the Council contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

*Answer.* The Millennium Development Goals were introduced in 2000 and span a 15-year period that concludes this year. The Post-2015 Development Agenda,

including the Sustainable Development Goals, are currently being negotiated through an intergovernmental process under the auspices of the General Assembly. The importance of a robust followup and review framework is one of the key lessons learned from the experience with the MDGs, and as the U.N. organ mandated to conduct followup and review of conferences and summits relating to development, economic, social, and environmental issues, ECOSOC will play a key role in monitoring implementation of the SDGs. Analysis of specific areas of the SDGs will occur throughout the year in ECOSOC's functional commissions and subsidiary bodies (e.g., Commission on the Status of Women or the U.N. Forum on Forests). ECOSOC will also conduct an annual review of the SDGs at the High Level Political Forum (except every 4 years when the High Level Political Forum will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly).

*Question.* What were the biggest hurdles to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and what lessons can be learned as the U.N. transitions to the Sustainable Development Goals?

*Answer.* In addition to being a powerful symbol of a global commitment to eradicating extreme poverty, hunger, and disease, the MDGs served as a motivating set of goals to drive common action and have helped reap remarkable progress for global development. Even when particular MDG targets were not met, such shortcomings served to catalyze additional global action. For example, on child survival, the 2012 Child Survival Call to Action, which resulted in a new pledge to end deaths of children under 5 by 2035, stemmed from a recognition that MDG 4 (reducing child mortality) would not be reached by 2015.

It is worth noting that overall, since 1990, extreme poverty has been cut by more than half with nearly 900 million people rising above the \$1.25-a-day line. Per capita incomes in the developing world more than doubled. A child born today is twice as likely to survive into adolescence as in 1990; malnutrition has been cut by 40 percent; youth literacy has been cut by 39 percent, and lack of access to modern energy services has fallen by a third.

The Millennium Development Goals helped advance the U.S. development agenda in a number of key areas. The MDGs helped pull people out of extreme poverty, especially those who were just below the extreme poverty line, but often not the most marginalized and extreme poor. In the follow-on effort, the United States will be working to incorporate additional areas considered key to the U.S. development agenda, including a focus on sound governance, institutions and peace, particularly in fragile and post-conflict states, in generating sustainable development, and on gender and environmental issues. One criticism of the MDGs was that they were too narrowly defined in that they did not take into account development writ large. In some cases, this led to siloed approaches rather than a more holistic, integrated approach. In the Post-2015 development agenda, the United States will work to ensure that issues that cut across multiple areas of focus, such as health, gender, transparency and accountability, and education, are addressed in an integrated manner.

*Question.* If confirmed, what will be your role in determining the success of the SDGs and more specifically, how do you think they should be measured and evaluated?

*Answer.* The United States is closely engaged in the efforts of the U.N. Statistical Commission to develop a comprehensive multilateral framework to measure, evaluate, followup, and review progress on the SDGs. The U.S. Government supports an indicator and monitoring framework that is science-based, with an elevated focus on data. It should also be practical and achievable; one that enables evidence-based decisionmaking in support of the agenda at all levels. Because implementing the SDGs will mean different things in different contexts, the monitoring and evaluation framework needs to be flexible rather than overly prescriptive, focused on outcomes, and one that accommodates different structures and challenges. Reporting and evaluation of progress should occur at the national, regional, and global levels, and it should be a collaborative effort between the U.N., its member states, and various subnational public and private actors, including nongovernmental organizations. The objective of follow up and review is to support decisionmakers, inform policy choices, and mobilize partnerships for implementation, thereby supporting the successful implementation of the goals.

The administration hopes to build on and improve its experience with the MDGs regarding followup and review, including by disaggregating data appropriately according to key demographic variables including sex, age, and disability status, and sharing data in an open, dynamic, real-time manner to maximize its relevance and the decisionmakers' ability to act on it. Increased availability and more effective use

of data to monitor and drive sustainable development in real time, including on issues that have not previously benefited from an elevated focus on data such as sound governance or combating human trafficking, have the potential to be the game-changing innovation of the next decade. If confirmed, I would actively participate in how implementation and evaluation decisions are shaped and contribute to decisionmaking about how to measure the success of the SDGs.

*Question.* ECOSOC Resolution 2008/33, "Strengthening coordination of the United Nations and other efforts in fighting trafficking in persons" urged ". . . all States, individually and through international cooperation, as well as the United Nations system, to increase, in a coherent, comprehensive and coordinated manner, efforts to counter trafficking in persons."

- ◆ Given that ECOSOC is on record with regard to combating human trafficking, what specific followup has ECOSOC taken with regard to this resolution and what additional steps can ECOSOC take to address human trafficking?

*Answer.* Thank you for the question, Senator. As you point out, the Economic and Social Council has been active on the issue of combating human trafficking and, if confirmed, I will continue that effort as I recognize we all have a long way to go in addressing this critical human rights issue. In 2006, the United Nations General Assembly set up an Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons ("ICAT"), comprising 17 U.N. agencies and related organizations, with ECOSOC coordinating on this issue within the U.N. system. The ICAT includes agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labor Organization (ILO), UNICEF, the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Attention to trafficking issues through the ICAT and at ECOSOC, its subsidiary bodies, and other U.N. organizations has provided a useful way to highlight best practices in addressing trafficking in persons. For example, earlier this year, the United States and other delegations cosponsored a panel discussion with the ILO on forced labor, the vulnerability of workers to exploitation, and the impact on national and global development.

Numerous other initiatives to counter trafficking in persons have occurred throughout the U.N. system. If confirmed, I will continue this sustained engagement, using the platform of the USUN mission to elevate the issue and highlight the need for additional action to combat trafficking. I appreciate very much the efforts of this committee to address the problem of human trafficking and modern slavery and, if confirmed, look forward to working closely with you to achieve impact on this important issue.

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