

**Statement of Michael J. Adler**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**May 24, 2022**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee: I am honored to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan. I would like to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee. I would also like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of family, colleagues, and mentors throughout my career. Words could not adequately express my deep appreciation to them or the gratitude I feel for the opportunities I have had to support American interests abroad as a Foreign Service officer.

Mr. Chairman, in its short history, South Sudan has faced and continues to face monumental challenges, including protracted violence, extreme poverty, and famine conditions. This new nation, already weakened by a transitional government failing to live up to commitments made first in 2015 and then again in the 2018 peace agreement, was hit by three years of flood waters that have never completely receded. The United Nations estimates that 8.9 million people, more than two-thirds of the country's population, will require humanitarian assistance this year. For too long, violence, suppression of voices from civil society and journalists, and massive corruption have taken a toll on the country's communities, its youth, and its economy. Overlaying these challenges are the intricate cultural nuances of competitions for dominance over local governance and control of scarce resources. South Sudan is a complex foreign policy challenge that is at risk of further destabilizing a region already grappling with violent conflict.

While the 2018 revitalized peace agreement contains many key pieces needed to advance political and economic transformation in South Sudan, it does not go far enough. We agree with the people of South Sudan who are calling for radical change to meet their long-deferred dream of becoming a thriving democracy where the country's immense resources are used for the benefit of its citizenry. The transitional government has simply failed to undertake essential democratic and economic reforms. This inaction lets down the South Sudanese people, South Sudan's neighbors who are guarantors of the peace agreement, and the broader international community. President Salva Kiir himself recently publicly committed to "free, fair, and credible democratic elections" and we should hold him to that promise. Working closely with our international partners and the

South Sudanese people, we must ensure that steps are taken to establish a framework that safeguards a future electoral process and ensures that the South Sudanese people's vision for their country is achieved through the ballot box. Together with our partners, particularly the United Kingdom and Norway, we can continue to urge the South Sudanese government to provide an inclusive constitution-drafting process, to adopt credible electoral legislation, to develop inclusive electoral institutions and to create a safe space for civil society and political parties to carry out their respective roles. Unifying national security forces and passing coherent security legislation are additional predicate actions the government needs to undertake immediately. We should seek to continue to help the South Sudanese people achieve their democratic aspirations while simultaneously avoiding expanded and intensified conflict that would risk weighing down neighbors across East Africa.

The State Department and the U.S. Department of the Treasury coordinate closely on a range of issues. These include financial sanctions, as well as efforts to urge the South Sudanese government to address serious deficiencies in its management of public finances in order to fight corruption and stop fueling the ongoing conflict.

Mr. Chairman, this is a crucial moment for the people of South Sudan and for U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will work with the leaders and the people of South Sudan and our international partners to help keep South Sudan moving toward a viable democratic government that respects human rights and affords the people in South Sudan the ability to pursue security and opportunity.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I assure you that, if confirmed, I am committed to focusing on the safety and security of American citizens abroad, as well as on the welfare of the American and local staff members of Embassy Juba.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee for this opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and my colleagues across the United States government to stand shoulder to shoulder with the South Sudanese people as they find their way forward and transform their country into the thriving and prosperous democracy that I know it can become. I welcome any questions you may have.