

Opening Statement for Robert J. Faucher
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 28, 2022

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Suriname and the Caribbean region.

I would like to introduce to you my wife, Noraly, who is here today. Noraly has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom through our years together. I would also like to express my profound thanks to our daughters Stephanie and Melissa, who cannot be here but are watching from Rotterdam. I would like to recognize their repeated personal sacrifices as they too have proudly served our nation as representatives abroad.

Suriname is a peaceful, young democracy that is among the most ethnically and religiously diverse in the world. Suriname's roots are intertwined with our nation's founding through English colonization in the early 17th century. With the 1667 Peace of Breda, the Netherlands traded its New York colonies including Manhattan for the English colony of Suriname. This was followed by the establishment of maroon societies in Suriname's interior alongside the indigenous Amerindians. In addition, enslaved Africans were freed in 1863, and contract laborers were recruited from China, India, and Java. As a result, Suriname enjoys a rich ethnic mosaic. It is a nation where Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and indigenous religions live peacefully and productively together.

Since independence in 1975, Suriname has strengthened its democratic institutions and traditions. Reinforcing democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Suriname. If confirmed, I will vigorously continue our efforts to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and will support civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders who play a critical role in this effort.

Suriname serves as a crucial nexus among South America, the Caribbean, and the transatlantic world. Suriname is a key U.S. partner in the region, and the United States is connected to Suriname through ties of commerce and geography. Decades of diplomatic relations between our two nations have

developed strong economic and security partnerships. Suriname currently holds the chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a regional body vitally important to regional development and security. Suriname has tremendous development potential, and if confirmed, I will work with Suriname's government to develop opportunities for economic growth and increased trade and assist its economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. As the biggest exporter to Suriname and its third-largest importer, the United States provides critical, high-value materials for Suriname's economy. Our partnership looks likely to expand as Suriname's economy continues to grow in the coming decades. If confirmed, I will deepen our economic and commercial relationship to advance both Surinamese and American prosperity and equitable economic growth, mindful of the threat of corruption.

Suriname is emerging as a global leader on the climate crisis response. More than 93% of its land surface is covered by protected native forests. It is one of a few carbon-negative countries in the world. Yet, problems persist. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting U.S. government efforts to curb illicit mining and deforestation and partnering with Suriname to support its efforts to expand its positive environmental record.

Suriname seeks greater military and law enforcement cooperation with the United States. A key member in the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, Suriname partners to combat narcotics and human trafficking. If confirmed, I will work to bolster security capabilities, fight corruption, and strengthen our security and law enforcement cooperation.

Finally, our Embassy in Paramaribo has an exceptional team that works to advance bilateral relations, protect U.S. citizens abroad, and work with the Government of Suriname to accomplish our foreign policy goals in the region. Ensuring it is safe, secure, and well-resourced, will be a top priority for me if confirmed.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.