

## NOMINATIONS

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2020

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:30 a.m., by video-conference, Hon. Todd Young presiding.

Present: Senators Young [presiding], Gardner, Menendez, and Kaine.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TODD YOUNG, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator YOUNG. Well, this hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations will come to order. I want to thank each of our nominees today for their willingness to serve in these important roles and to my colleagues on this committee for joining this hearing.

One of this committee's most important tasks, I have discovered, is to review and evaluate the president's nominees to serve in critical posts around the globe, like those you aim to serve in.

These nominees serve as the world's window into America and to our universal values. The willingness of talented qualified individuals to serve has never been more valuable than it is today, as American leadership is crucial in bringing the world out of the shadow of COVID-19.

In advocating for American values, defending human rights, transparency, and economic freedom and in seeking to ensure a more secure, stable, and prosperous world where democracy and freedoms are able to flourish, we are all working towards that end.

And with that in mind, I wish to, again, thank our nominees for appearing and your willingness to continuing our nation.

Today, this committee will consider the nominations of six individuals to represent the United States of America. The nominees before us are Mr. William, or Doug, Douglass to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas; Ms. Melanie Higgins to be the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Burundi; Ms. Jeanne Maloney to be U.S. ambassador to the Kingdom of Eswatini—apologies; Mr. Michael McCarthy to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Liberia; The Honorable Manisha Singh to be U.S. Representative to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development with the rank of ambassador; and Mr. James Story to serve as U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Venezuela.

Thank you all again for your willingness to serve this country. Before I turn to my friend and fellow senator, Bob Menendez, I wish to underscore for our nominees the need for a passionate defense of American values in your future positions.

If confirmed, each of you will be presented with immense challenges. I know all of you are committee patriots and I hope that you will direct that spirit towards the preservation of peace, the expansion of opportunity, and a fervent enthusiasm for your posts and for the values that you represent.

I look forward to hearing how you will seek to do that very soon. I now wish to recognize my distinguished colleague and friend, Senator Menendez, for his opening comments.

Mr. Menendez?

**STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A moment before I address the nominees themselves, I am compelled to note for the record that this, unfortunately, is another in a series of hearings that Chairman Risch has noticed unilaterally.

It is also a violation of committee practice on Rule 3(d), which requires seven days notice and without a Democratic ranking member.

So while highly unfortunate, we have to acknowledge that the chairman has established a new set of precedents that will govern the running of the committee regardless of who is in the majority.

Senator YOUNG. If the gentleman will yield.

Senator MENENDEZ. Surely.

Senator YOUNG. I will respectfully note for the record also it is my understanding there was significant consultation between staffs before this hearing was noticed.

Senator MENENDEZ. I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.

Consultation, as someone who has been on this committee since I came to Congress 15 years ago—consultation is not the *modus operandi* of the committee.

It is consultation that, ultimately, arrives in an agreement between the chairman and the ranking member, whoever they may be. And so I appreciate that constant reference that has now been made to consultation. If there was a different majority, I am sure that consultation would take place the same way.

I am pleased, however, to see that we are considering today the nomination for our next U.S. ambassador to Venezuela.

As we heard at Tuesday's hearing on Venezuela, the situation in Venezuela requires our urgent attention. Despite the international community's unwavering support for interim President Juan Guaidó, the Maduro regime seeks to hold yet another fraudulent election.

A massive humanitarian crisis has displaced 5.2 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees. Armed groups, including Colombian guerrillas, paramilitaries, drug traffickers, and *colectivos* operate across Venezuelan territory with impunity, and the Governments of Cuba, Russia, China, and Iran have gone to significant lengths to prop up the Maduro regime and undermine American influence.

Against this incredibly complex landscape, I look forward to hearing from today's nominee about what steps the United States needs to take to better achieve our shared bipartisan policy objectives.

I am also pleased to see that the administration has reelected a new nominee for the Bahamas. Amidst the ongoing reconstruction related to the devastation from Hurricane Dorian last year, the U.S. must recommit to our bilateral partnership with the Bahamas and deepening the ties between our people to strengthening our work on maritime and counternarcotics issues to building on the economic links between our countries.

I look forward to hearing how the U.S. can expand our cooperations with the Bahamas.

Mr. Douglass, I understand you know the Bahamas well and we look forward to your insights today.

In many ways, Liberia is a success story. After decades of brutal civil war, President George Weah was inaugurated in 2018, making the country's first transfer of power between elected heads of state since 1944.

However, challenges remain. Liberia's economy has still not recovered from years of conflict. The devastating Ebola outbreak from 2014 to 2015 killed 5,000 people and plunged the country into recession.

Now Liberia is confronted with the prospect of a COVID-19 epidemic. If confirmed, Mr. McCarthy, your voice will have significant influence due to the unique relationship between the United States and Liberia, and I hope to hear today how you plan to use that voice to speak out on the issues related to transparency, good governance, and respect for political freedoms.

Ms. Higgins, the political situation in Burundi remains precarious. There have been allegations that this year's elections were marred by targeted attacks against opposition supporters, restrictions on freedom of speech and expression, hate speech, and widespread irregularities in the voting process.

More than 300,000 refugees remain abroad due to fears of violence and ethnic tensions remain high. The impact that COVID-19 is having on Burundi is unclear. But Burundi's weak health system, coupled with the Government's failure to impose a lockdown of any sort is cause for alarm.

Ms. Maloney, if confirmed—I am sorry, Ms. Higgins, if confirmed, you will serve in a country where civil and political freedoms are harshly circumscribed, press freedoms are severely restricted, where corruption and gender-based violence is rampant, and with the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the world.

So I look forward hearing from you as to how—both of you, actually—as to how you plan to meet the serious challenges ahead.

Finally, I also look forward to hearing from Ms. Singh about what she hopes to accomplish at the OECD, which has historically been an important tool for U.S. diplomacy and collaboration on global economic policy.

At a time of growing nationalist sentiment, we must nevertheless retain our leadership of international financial institutions and not cede them to China or Russia.

We must work with our allies to create a stronger, more inclusive global economy that benefits everyone and we must reinvigorate the instruments of economic diplomacy at home within Departments of State, Commerce, Treasury, and USTR to work in tandem to promote U.S. businesses and economic ideals across the globe.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you, Senator Menendez, and I too look forward to hearing from all our nominees. We will do so momentarily.

I will say, as the powerful chairman of the Multilateral Institutions Subcommittee—I say that a bit tongue in cheek but I am, indeed, chairman of that subcommittee—the OECD is of particular interest.

Congratulations again to all of you on your nominations to these important positions. Thank you to you and to your families for the sacrifices you have made and will continue to make in service to our nation.

Without objection, your full written statements will be included in the record. Given the size of our panel today, I ask that you summarize your written statement in no more than five minutes.

We will hear first from Mr. Douglass, the president's nominee to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the Bahamas. Mr. Douglass has worked as a businessman and an investor for over 35 years. He has led his own investment firm from 1994 until 2015.

He has managed the international business of several prominent securities and business organizations. He is an avid philanthropist both in the United States and overseas including in the Bahamas, and he has won numerous awards for his entrepreneurial and philanthropic endeavors.

Mr. Douglass, thank you for your appearance today. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS, OF FLORIDA, TO BE  
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE COMMONWEALTH  
OF THE BAHAMAS**

Mr. DOUGLASS. Mr. Chairman and Senator Menendez, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the president's nominee to serve as the next U.S. ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I commit to work closely with this committee and its staff and other Members of Congress to advance the national interest and deepen our already close partnership with the Bahamas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, my wife, Kristin, and children, Elizabeth and William.

For over three generations, my family has maintained connections to the Bahamas, its business leaders, and residents. The Bahamas is a proud independent sovereign nation, having gained its independence in 1973.

It is, therefore, one of the great honors of my life to be considered for the position of ambassador for the United States of the Bahamas.

The Bahamas were struck with back-to-back disasters of Hurricane Dorian and now the COVID-19 pandemic. Both are taking a severe toll on the Bahamian economy as well as affecting U.S. interests and pose severe economic and social challenges to the country.

The United States has proven itself a staunch and stalwart partner in assisting the Bahamas. If confirmed, I intend to continue working with the Bahamas to restore the country's economic strength and protect vital U.S. interests: trade, investment, tourism, and, importantly, security. It is in our interest that the Bahamas remains a strong and stable partner.

At its nearest point, the country lies just 45 nautical miles from the coast of Florida. Our countries have worked steadfastly together to intercept narcotics and reduce human trafficking.

If confirmed as ambassador, I will continue to advance these efforts. I have been visiting the Bahamas for more than 50 years. Over the past decade, I have witnessed firsthand China's efforts gaining a foothold in the Bahamas.

This has been a shared concern of both countries. China's presence is evident and has included road projects, port facilities, hotels, resorts across Nassau, and the use of their technology.

If confirmed as ambassador, I will not only seek to increase American investment and promote our countries shared values, but also clearly communicate the risks of dealing with China, which often comes with strings attached and limited employment value for Bahamian citizens.

The U.S. should be their country of choice for foreign investment. I strongly believe that American companies can compete when transparent regulations, practices, and the respect for the rule of law prevail.

In closing, I commit to you that I have the integrity, experience, and passion to lead our bilateral relationship with the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

If confirmed, I pledge to uphold the tradition and high standards of public service expected of a U.S. ambassador.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Douglass follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I commit to work closely with this committee and its staff, and other Members of Congress, to advance the U.S. national interest and deepen our already close partnership with The Bahamas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family—my wife Kristin and children Elizabeth and William—for all their support over the years, which has made this opportunity possible. For over three generations, my family has maintained connections to The Bahamas, its business leaders and residents. The Bahamas is a proud, independent, sovereign Nation having gained its independence some forty-seven years ago. It is, therefore, one of the great honors of my life to be considered for the position of Ambassador of the United States to The Bahamas.

In recent months, The Bahamas was struck with the back-to-back disasters of September 2019's Hurricane Dorian, the strongest in the country's history, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it is true that Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19 have both taken a severe toll on the Bahamian economy, I'm glad to report that the

country is now reopening. Both posed severe economic and social challenges to the country, and in both cases the United States has proven itself a staunch and stalwart partner in assisting The Bahamas to recover. If confirmed, I intend to continue working with The Bahamas to restore the country's economic strength in order to maintain our strong bilateral ties and protect vital U.S. economic equities including trade, investment, and tourism. This will be critical to ensuring The Bahamas remains a strong and stable partner in protecting our homeland from illegal drugs and irregular migration and a partner in promoting our shared goals and values internationally.

Since gaining its independence in 1973, The Bahamas has been a steadfast partner with the United States. Our shared interests and values, strong people-to-people ties, trade, and integrated security cooperation are second to none. At its nearest point, the country lies just 45 nautical miles from the coast of Florida. In recent years, our countries have worked together to significantly increase narcotic interdictions and increase the interoperability of our security forces. If confirmed as Ambassador, I commit to continue and advance these efforts.

The Bahamas has also been a strong partner with the United States within the Caribbean Community on our efforts to restore democracy and human rights in Venezuela. It was the first Caribbean country to join the United States in recognizing president Guaidó. In March 2019, the Prime Minister of The Bahamas joined President Trump at Mar a Lago where he reinforced his country's commitment to democracy in the hemisphere. Since then, the country has led on regional issues at the Organization of American States and in the United Nations. If not for the pandemic, The Bahamas would have hosted the OAS's general assembly in June. The Bahamas is also a strong advocate for democracy and human rights issues with regard to Nicaragua.

I have been visiting the Bahamas for more than 50 years. Over the past decade I have witnessed first-hand China's increased interest in gaining a foothold in The Bahamas. This has been a concern of many Bahamians and should give us concern. China's presence is evident and has included multiple road projects, a port facility in North Abaco, mega-resorts and hotels across New Providence, and large-scale development grants for economic and technical cooperation. I recently saw the Chinese build a port facility near Cooperstown, Abaco three years ago, which cost the Bahamians more than 40 million dollars and is still not operational. In addition, many Bahamian telecommunications industry platforms utilize Huawei hardware. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will not only seek to increase American investment and promote our countries' shared values, but also clearly communicate the risks of opaque Chinese deals that so often come with strings attached and limited employment value for Bahamian citizens.

For over thirty-five years, I have been blessed to be successful in business. I believe my business and management experience is integral in running a successful U.S. mission in The Bahamas and has well prepared me for the duties of Ambassador there. If confirmed, I would look forward to leading the efforts of 11 sections and agencies at our mission in The Bahamas to coordinate a whole of government effort to advance U.S. national interests. I would also ensure our Embassy platform runs efficiently to support our dedicated public servants and their families serving there.

If I am confirmed, I will also promote greater economic ties between the United States and The Bahamas. The Bahamas remains an attractive destination for U.S. businesses, U.S. homeowners, and I will work with the Government to provide stable and transparent regulations for increased trade and investment.

I will utilize a whole-of-government approach to link U.S. businesses to the many investment and U.S. export opportunities in the Bahamas. I strongly believe that American companies can compete when transparent regulations, practices, and respect for the rule of law prevail. If I am confirmed, I will ensure that the United States remains the commercial partner of choice in The Bahamas.

One of the strongest bonds between the United States and The Bahamas continues to be our people-to-people ties. If confirmed, I will also seek to expand our educational exchanges. I will work to broaden our engagement under the administration's U.S.-Caribbean 2020 strategy and to identify ways to enhance the region's resilience to natural disasters. Finally, as a matter of the highest priority, I would like to emphasize that I will have no higher priority as Ambassador than to protect U.S. citizens in The Bahamas, including U.S. Mission personnel.

In closing, I commit to you that I have the integrity, experience, and passion to lead our bilateral relationship with the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. If confirmed, I pledge to uphold the tradition and high standards of public service expected of a U.S. Ambassador. Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you, Mr. Douglass.

Next, we will hear from Ms. Melanie Higgins. Ms. Higgins is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of counselor. She served in the Office of Central African Affairs at the State Department as director since 2018.

Previously, she served as principal officer of the U.S. Consulate in Auckland, New Zealand, and as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Papua, New Guinea.

Additionally, in a career of over 20 years, she has served in Cameroon, Australia, Bosnia, and Indonesia, and filled many positions at the State Department here in Washington.

Ms. Higgins, thank you for your service and please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF MELANIE HARRIS HIGGINS, OF GEORGIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI**

Ms. HIGGINS. Chairman Young, Ranking Member Menendez, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is a great honor to appear as the president's nominee to be the next U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Burundi.

I would like to acknowledge my family members, especially my husband, Paul, who is a diplomatic security service special agent currently serving as the regional security officer at the U.S. embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia.

He may be half a world away right now in the African continent, but I know he is here with me in spirit and I could not ask for a more supportive spouse.

I would also like to mention my parents, Al and Jackie Harris, my sister, Heather Yates, brother-in-law Dave Yates, and nephews Justin and Ryan.

Mr. Chairman, I come from a family that believes deeply in service to the people of the United States of America. Nearly all of my relatives serve or have served in the military, law enforcement, or as teachers.

In early 1998, I chose the Foreign Service and was thrilled to get my first posting to the central African country of Cameroon, as you mentioned.

I have since loved every year that I have had the privilege of representing our country as well as representing my home state of Georgia.

I am grateful for the confidence President Trump and Secretary Pompeo have placed in me for this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with colleagues across the U.S. Government to advance and uphold U.S. strategic interests and ideals.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has important interests in the Republic of Burundi. This year on May 20th, they had elections in Burundi that were a significant step forward, though imperfect, because they represented the first time since Burundi's independence that a Burundian president entered office peacefully through a constitutional transfer of power.

I am inspired by the commitment of the Burundian people to peaceful elections. As we go forward, it is imperative that our bilateral dialogue and engagement respect Burundi's sovereignty and culture. But we must be direct in discussing our concerns, especially on human rights issues where the conversations can be difficult.

President Ndayishimiye's announcement of plans to fight corruption and COVID-19, and the dialogues he has launched with a broad range of political and civil society stakeholders are all positive signs that there is more work to do to bring the Burundian people the democracy they deserve.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Burundi's new government and all Burundians to advance mutually beneficial interests on behalf of the American and Burundian people.

Our interagency team in Bujumbura, together with our highly skilled and dedicated locally employed staff, are hard at work to advance America's interests. For example, the U.S. remains Burundi's key partner in addressing food insecurity and countering health crises.

If confirmed, I will be honored to lead embassy Bujumbura during a time when we will seek to redefine our bilateral relationship with Burundi.

I also promise that no goal will be more important to me than protecting the welfare of U.S. citizens living and traveling in Burundi. I will work closely with you and the members of this committee on behalf of the citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Higgins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MELANIE H. HIGGINS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is a great honor to appear as the President's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Burundi.

I would like to acknowledge my family members, especially my husband Paul, who is a Diplomatic Security Service Agent currently serving as the Regional Security Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia. He may be half a world away right now, but I know he is here with me in spirit. I would also like to mention my parents, Al & Jackie Harris, and my sister Heather Yates, brother-in-law Dave Yates, and nephews Justin and Ryan.

Mr. Chairman, I come from a family that believes deeply in service to the people of the United States of America. Nearly all my relatives serve or have served in the military, law enforcement, or as teachers. In early 1998, I entered the Foreign Service and was thrilled to get my first posting in the central African country of Cameroon. I have since loved every year that I have had the privilege to represent our country. I am grateful for the confidence President Trump and Secretary Pompeo have placed in me for this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with colleagues across the U.S. Government to advance and uphold U.S. strategic interests and ideals.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has important interests in the Republic of Burundi. I have seen first-hand during my career the impact the United States can have on people worldwide. In recent years in Burundi, we saw the promise of the 2000 Arusha Agreement for more peaceful political participation disintegrate during the April 2015 political and economic crisis. Despite every effort, the East African Community's Inter-Burundi Dialogue did not produce the results we had hoped for the Burundian people. Nonetheless, this year's May 20th elections in Burundi were a significant step forward for that country and represented the first time since Burundi's 1962 independence that a Burundian president entered office peacefully

through a constitutional transfer of power following a regularly scheduled election. As we see reflected in our own country, the road to freedom for all people is often not a linear path, but is rather a journey that requires constant vigilance and perseverance. I am inspired by the commitment of the Burundian people to peaceful elections, and if confirmed, look forward to working with Burundi's new government to advance mutually beneficial interests on behalf of the American and Burundian people.

Burundi sits in sub-Saharan Africa's Great Lakes region, which has seen much violence in recent decades. The United States remains Burundi's key partner in addressing food insecurity and countering health crises. Burundi is one of Africa's most densely populated countries, and Burundi's nearly 12 million people are mostly youth seeking economic opportunities that are imperative for Burundi's stability. A more prosperous Burundi and Central African region are in the strategic interests of the United States.

Burundi's new government has an opportunity to usher in a new, more vibrant era for the Burundian people. We look to the new government to fulfill the power sharing envisioned in the Arusha Accords and reverse the former government's lack of media freedom, political pressure exerted over civil society organizations, and quelling of dissenting voices. Under the previous government, opposition political parties and civil society faced restrictions, intimidation, harassment, arrest, disappearance, and even killings. The new government has an opportunity to demonstrate it will govern in a more just, open, and inclusive manner. President Ndayishimiye's announcement of plans to fight corruption and COVID-19, and the dialogues he has launched with a broad range of political and civil society stakeholders are all positive signs, but there's more work to do to bring the Burundian people the democracy they deserve. If confirmed, I will encourage government leaders to respect human rights and the rule of law. I will stress the importance of a dynamic civil society for national stability and how critical it is to strengthening our bilateral commercial ties.

Until 2015, the United States helped train and support Burundian peacekeeping troops deployed to Somalia as part of the African Union's operation there. It is in our interest to resume this much needed assistance to counter terrorism in Somalia to keep U.S. citizens safe. If confirmed, I will work with the Burundian Government to increase efforts to combat trafficking in persons as a necessary step to overcome Trafficking Victims Prevention Act restrictions.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is imperative that our bilateral dialogue and engagement respect Burundi's sovereignty and culture, but we must also be direct in discussing our concerns. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all Burundians to promote positive economic, political, and social developments in Burundi.

Our U.S. interagency team in Bujumbura, together with our highly skilled and dedicated Locally Employed Staff, are hard at work to advance America's interests. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead Embassy Bujumbura during a time when we will seek to redefine our bilateral relationship with Burundi. I also promise no goal will be more important to me than protecting the welfare of U.S. citizens living and traveling in Burundi, and I will work closely with you and the members of this committee on behalf of those citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Ms. Higgins.

Our next nominee is Ms. Jeanne Maloney, who is the nominee to the U.S. ambassador to the kingdom of Eswatini. Ms. Maloney is a career member of the senior Foreign Service, class of minister-counselor.

She currently serves as the foreign policy advisor for U.S. Army Africa. For nearly 30 years, she has held positions overseas in Kuwait, Portugal, Brazil, Iraq, and now in Italy.

She has led international security and counterterrorism efforts both here and in Washington and overseas, and has extensive experience in the Bureau of African Affairs.

Ms. Maloney, thank you for appearing today and please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF JEANNE MARIE MALONEY, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI**

Ms. MALONEY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege and an honor to appear before you today as the president's nominee to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the kingdom of Eswatini.

I appreciate the confidence the president and the secretary of State placed in me through this nomination. I would also like to thank my family for their love and sacrifice in support of my career.

The United States has enjoyed good bilateral relations with Eswatini since its independence in 1968. Though a small country, Eswatini has pursued an independent foreign policy.

It is currently the only country in Africa that maintains diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Eswatini has benefitted from decades of political stability and limited internal conflict, but there are areas that merit attention.

Fifteen years ago, the country enacted a new constitution that enshrined broader political freedoms and expanded the roles of the legislative and judicial branches. Progress has been made but more is needed.

If confirmed, I will continue to engage broadly on the need for political reform, open discourse, transparency, and inclusivity. I will seek to expand dialogue with youth, who make up more than half the country's population.

A second key area concerns health. HIV/AIDS has had a devastating impact on Eswatini. The country has the highest HIV prevalence in the world and over half of women age 30 to 44 are HIV positive.

Eswatini has made significant progress, however, with support from PEPFAR. Tens of thousands of lives in Eswatini have been saved thanks to the generosity of the American people and strong bipartisan support for health programs.

If confirmed, I will continue to focus efforts towards sustainable epidemic control while promoting self-reliance.

Finally, Eswatini also faces economic uncertainties. Even before COVID-19, the country had a tenuous fiscal position and the percentage of its population living in poverty remains stubbornly high.

It will be important to coordinate with organizations like the IMF and World Bank as well as with like-minded partners. To help Eswatini stimulate broad-based economic growth and opportunities for U.S. trade and investment.

If confirmed as the next U.S. ambassador to the Kingdom of Eswatini, I will continue to strengthen our partnership with the Government and the people of Eswatini in support of U.S. goals and interests.

I will promote an embassy team that reflects the diversity and the values of the United States and will prioritize the safety of our staff and U.S. citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Maloney follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JEANNE M. MALONEY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege and an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Eswatini. I appreciate the confidence the President and the Secretary of State have placed in me through this nomination.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize my husband, Andrew, a retired Foreign Service Officer, and our children, Kate and Daniel, who were part of our Foreign Service journey across four continents, for their love and sacrifice. I am grateful for the support of my brothers, Mike and Dan, and to my late mother and grandmother, who instilled in me the love of country and value of hard work.

In my 27 years in the Foreign Service, it has been a privilege to represent the American people and to support and protect American citizens and interests. Most recently, I served as foreign policy advisor to U.S. Army Africa. I've visited 17 African nations in the course of my work; I've witnessed the power of citizens to bring about positive change, and I've also seen the corrosive and dangerous ramifications of poor governance and human rights abuses and violations. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, I spent ten years in the private sector, which provided me broader perspectives on supporting U.S. businesses abroad. If confirmed, I will promote our national interests in Eswatini, and commit to working with you to that end.

The United States has enjoyed good bilateral relations with Eswatini—formerly known as Swaziland—since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1968. Although Eswatini is a small country, it has pursued an independent foreign policy; it is currently the only country in Africa that maintains diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Eswatini has benefited from decades of political stability and limited internal conflict, but there are areas of concern that merit attention.

Eswatini is a monarchy, governed by a unique combination of parliamentary and traditional structures. Fifteen years ago the country enacted a new constitution that enshrined broader political freedoms and expanded the roles of the legislative and judicial branches. Progress has been made, but more is needed. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to engage broadly on the need for political reform, open discourse, transparency, and inclusivity. I will also seek to expand our dialogue with the country's youth, who make up more than half the population.

A second key area concerns health. In today's interconnected societies, communicable diseases can have global ramifications. HIV/AIDS has had a devastating impact on Eswatini: The country has the highest HIV prevalence in the world; approximately 45,000 children have been orphaned, and more than half of women aged 30-44 are HIV positive. Over the last decade, however, Eswatini has made significant progress with support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). New infection rates have declined by a third, and the country has one of the highest treatment rates in sub-Saharan Africa. The generosity of the American people, including \$490 million of health sector assistance, combined with bipartisan support for these programs, has saved tens of thousands of lives in Eswatini. This is not a time for complacency, however, and if confirmed, I will continue to focus our efforts on achieving sustainable epidemic control, while promoting self-reliance.

It is too early to tell what impact the COVID-19 pandemic will have on Eswatini, but thanks to PEPFAR's investments in health infrastructure, the country is better equipped to conduct testing and contact tracing.

Finally, Eswatini also faces economic uncertainties. Even before COVID-19, the country had a tenuous fiscal position, vulnerable to external shocks. The percentage of its population living in poverty remains stubbornly high. If confirmed, it will be important to coordinate with international organizations like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, as well as like-minded partners to help Eswatini create an environment that fosters broad-based economic growth and opportunities for U.S. trade and investment. I am committed to working to improve democracy, governance, and transparency, in order to help create an economic climate that benefits the entire population.

If confirmed as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Eswatini, I will do my best to continue to strengthen our partnership with the Government and the people of Eswatini in support of U.S. goals and interests. I will promote an Embassy

team that reflects the diversity and values of the United States, and will prioritize the safety of our staff and U.S. citizens.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you, Ms. Maloney.

Next, we will hear from Mr. Michael McCarthy, nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia.

Mr. McCarthy is a career member of the senior Foreign Service, class of minister-counselor. He served as U.S. consul general at our consulate in Johannesburg, South Africa, since 2017.

Since 1990, he has additionally served overseas in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Uruguay, Eritrea, India, Germany, and South Sudan, there as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy.

He first got a taste for international service as a Peace Corps volunteer nearly 40 years ago.

Mr. McCarthy, please proceed with your—with your statement.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. MCCARTHY, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, and members of the committee, it is a great honor to appear before you today as the president's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia.

I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence that the president and Secretary Pompeo have placed in me with this nomination, and I welcome the opportunity to speak with you today, albeit virtually, from Pretoria, South Africa.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the members of this committee and your staff to promote and protect U.S. interests in Liberia.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to first express my deep appreciation for the love and support of my wife, Sandra Aceveto McCarthy, who is herself a Foreign Service officer.

I also want to acknowledge my deceased parents, John and Helen McCarthy, who raised seven children while serving in the Foreign Service for over 28 years, and my brother, Christopher, who served in the Foreign Service for 11 years before his untimely death.

It has been my great privilege in 34 years of public service to have worked as a Foreign Service officer, as a civil servant, and as a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo, West Africa.

I have served in South Sudan as deputy chief of mission and in other post-conflict countries in transition, and have worked on African issues for much of the past two decades, most recently as the consul general in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Mr. Chairman, Senators, I can think of no higher honor than to represent the American people as the ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Liberia, a country with which the United States shares a special bond rooted in our deep historical ties.

In 2017, Liberia achieved a new milestone in its post-conflict journey when it undertook the first peaceful transition of power between two elected presidents in over 70 years.

This achievement followed Liberia's success in combating the Ebola epidemic. Liberia is currently contributing military personnel to the United Nations' peacekeeping mission in Mali, making it symbolically an exporter of security and a contributor to regional stability.

These are tremendous achievements for a country still coping with the after effects of war and they signal the promise inherent in Liberia's democratic future.

If confirmed, I will lead our embassy's highly cooperative team of nine agencies to ensure that Liberia remains on a path to self-reliance and that ordinary Liberians see the benefits of private sector growth and accountable government.

I will work to attract private investment and technical assistance and I will strive to see that Liberia remains the United States' most steadfast partner on the continent of Africa.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and the other members of the committee, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McCarthy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. MCCARTHY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is a great honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia. I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary Pompeo have placed in me with this nomination, and I welcome the opportunity to speak with you today, albeit virtually from Pretoria, South Africa. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the members of this committee—in-person or long-distance—and your staffs to promote and protect U.S. interests in Liberia.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to first express my deep appreciation for the love and support of my family, friends, and colleagues who have shaped me into the person before you today. I want to especially thank my wife, Sandra Acevedo McCarthy, who is herself a Foreign Service Officer, my stepchildren Arman and Farah, and my daughters Camille and Claire.

I want to also acknowledge my deceased parents, John and Helen McCarthy, who raised seven children while serving over 28 years in the Foreign Service, and my brother Christopher, who served in the Foreign Service for 11 years before his untimely death. I would also like to thank my surviving siblings for their love and support: Dr. William J. McCarthy, Anne Percy, and John R. McCarthy, Jr.

It has been my great privilege in 34 years of public service to have worked as a Foreign Service Officer in the Department of State, as a Civil Servant in the Executive Office of the President, and as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Togo, West Africa. I have served in South Sudan as Deputy Chief of Mission and in other post-conflict countries in transition, and have worked on African issues for much of the past two decades, most recently as the Consul General in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Mr. Chairman, Senators, I can think of no higher honor than to represent the American people as Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Liberia, a country with which the United States shares a special bond rooted in our deep historical ties, and preserved through our commitment to democracy, human rights, economic prosperity, and greater security in the West African region. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen all facets of our bilateral relationship and ensure that the United States remains a steadfast partner as Liberia grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2017, Liberia achieved a new milestone in its post-conflict journey when it undertook the first peaceful transition of power between two elected presidents in over 70 years. This achievement followed Liberia's success, with the assistance of the United States, in combatting the Ebola epidemic. These are tremendous achievements for a country still coping with the aftereffects of war, and they signal the promise inherent in Liberia's democratic future.

But now another infectious disease, COVID-19, threatens democratic and development gains: schools were forced to close, endangering the educational gains nec-

essary for Liberia's next generation to succeed; an already-strained healthcare system is pushed to the brink, forcing difficult decisions between preventative and emergency care; and necessary lockdown measures have restricted hardworking Liberians from engaging in daily commerce, which could render half of the population food-insecure.

The Government of Liberia acted early to implement necessary emergency and mitigation measures. Critical investments by the United States and others in infection prevention and control measures to fight Ebola helped prepare Liberia to quickly ramp up testing, conduct thorough contact tracing, and isolate positive cases. In large part as a result of this legacy and these efforts, Liberia continues to have one of the lowest COVID-19 case-counts in the region.

Liberian public health authorities have cooperated closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Institutes of Health, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and others for years. These U.S. institutions bring a depth of experience, technical assistance and on the ground partnerships that cannot be replaced by other countries' public relations-driven donations. A protracted crisis poses very real risks to Liberia's ongoing development, both economically and democratically, but with continued support from the United States, Liberia's traditional partner, I believe the country will once again meet the challenge.

If confirmed, I will lead our embassy's broad and highly cooperative interagency team—which includes the aforementioned agencies, as well as the Department of State, Department of Defense, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Peace Corps—to ensure that Liberia remains on a path to self-reliance, that ordinary Liberians see the benefits of private-sector growth and accountable government, and that the country remains the United States' most steadfast partner on the African continent.

The United States has invested more than \$2 billion in rebuilding Liberia since 2003, including over \$225 million in peacekeeping operations between 2005 and 2017. These investments in the Liberian security sector have promoted self-reliance and regional stability. Liberia has contributed military personnel to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and plans to increase its contingent this year—making it, symbolically, an exporter of security and a contributor to regional stability. Since the March 2018 departure of the U.N. Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Liberian law enforcement, with U.S. support, has successfully maintained internal security while also showing a consistent willingness to assist the United States in fighting terrorism, countering drug trafficking, and investigating war crimes.

These security gains are a necessary prerequisite to the country's success, but they are not sufficient, and challenges remain. A lack of funding and technical capacity, stemming from entrenched poverty and the legacy of war, continues to impede critically needed gains in health, education, and human rights. The next test will come this December, as Liberia organizes the funding and logistics necessary to hold constitutionally required senatorial elections delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Longer-term, as the situation in Liberia normalizes, I will champion efforts to increase opportunities for U.S. businesses and promote inclusive economic development focused on job creation, which is crucial to securing Liberia's growth and providing much-needed opportunities for the country's growing youth population. I look forward to working with the International Development Finance Corporation and Prosper Africa in partnership with the private sector to encourage high-quality U.S. investment, a robust alternative to state-directed financing that often leaves countries saddled with debt. The Government of Liberia is focused on job creation and infrastructure development. If confirmed, I will promote these outcomes through, among other initiatives, USAID's five-year Country Development Strategy launched in June 2019. This strategy aims to foster Liberian self-reliance by spurring robust private-sector led economic expansion through job creation, especially for women and children, promoting greater accountability in governance, and achieving real gains in the health and education of the population.

At the same time, Liberia cannot and should not backtrack from the progress it has made to increase transparency and fight corruption, integral to establishing the conditions necessary for foreign investment. Liberia's growth and development will depend on increased trade and investment, which in turn will require that U.S. and international businesses are confident they can compete openly and fairly and that any concerns will find remedy in an honest and impartial justice system.

These same concerns will inform my approach to human rights, as the justice sector, strained by the pandemic, struggles to deal with reported cases of sexual- and gender-based violence, rape, child labor, and human trafficking. These abuses must

be confronted for their own sake, as well as to ensure a broader system of accountability, good governance, and rule of law.

If confirmed, I will also promote these objectives through the Millennium Challenge Corporation's five-year \$257 million Compact, which entered into force in January 2016 and will close in January 2021. The Compact has brought electricity and water to many Liberians, while also promoting transparent business practices. The Liberian Government has signaled its interest in a second Compact but understands it will need to pass the Scorecard and demonstrate continued progress. If confirmed, I will work through these frameworks, and others, to support sustainable development and targeted reforms especially in the business climate to attract private investment and technical assistance and foster openness and transparency. Closer ties between the U.S. and Liberian private sectors will expand markets for goods and services and contribute to greater American and Liberian prosperity. If confirmed, I will strive to expand commercial trade and investment between the United States and Liberia.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and the other members of the committee, and look forward to your questions.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you, Mr. McCarthy.

Our next nominee is the Honorable Manisha Singh, who has been nominated to represent the United States at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the OECD, with the rank of ambassador.

Ms. Singh has served as Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs since her unanimous confirmation in November 2017.

In that position, she has served as Acting Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment from September 2018 to June 2019.

She served in government both as an aide on Capitol Hill and formerly as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureaus of International Organizations and Economic Energy and Business Affairs. In between those roles, she has pursued a successful legal career.

Ms. Singh, thank you for your appearance before this committee and please proceed with your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. MANISHA SINGH, OF FLORIDA, TO  
BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT, WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR**

Ms. SINGH. Thank you.

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Menendez, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am very appreciative of the time from you and your dedicated staffs. I am deeply humbled to be considered to be the next permanent representative of the United States of America to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD.

I want to express my gratitude to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for the trust and confidence they have placed in me. It has been the honor of my life to serve in my present position as the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs.

I am incredibly blessed to have a loving family and great friends. My parents are watching from home in the Sunshine State of Florida, where I grew up. My sister, her husband, and their two daughters are cheering me on from northern Georgia.

I am especially pleased to be considered for a role in an institution which can serve as a valuable platform to propel our global economic recovery.

If confirmed, I will ensure that we fully engage with the like-minded members of the OECD to return growth and employment to pre-pandemic levels.

The predecessor to the OECD was created out of American dedication to post-World War II economic recovery as part of the Marshall Plan. We will see an important milestone this December, the 60th anniversary of the signing of the OECD convention.

It is an ideal moment to review how we work within the OECD to create a level playing field for American workers, to solve issues preventing our companies from accessing markets, and most importantly, how to return to a sustainable working economy in light of the pandemic.

As a leading voice at the OECD, we consistently share our best practices with both members and nonmembers. To create new jobs here at home, we need to have equal opportunities to export to foreign markets.

If I am confirmed, I commit to advocating for market-based principles, which create free, stable societies, and for policies which include everyone in the benefits of economic growth.

Our leadership is needed now more than ever to ensure that international organizations focus on their original missions.

Another important event is the upcoming selection of a new OECD Secretary General. It begins in less than a month on September 1st.

As the original visionary for this organization, it is incumbent upon us to play a strong and central role in the selection of new leadership.

In 1948, this committee issued a report for the administration of aid under the Marshall Plan. The report stated that "Provision should be made for representation of the United States in such organizations as may be established."

If confirmed, I will ensure that my representation on behalf of our country reflects the historic magnitude of the public trust which is being placed in me.

My initial engagement with the OECD began when I was a staff member with this committee more than 15 years ago. It was there, under the mentorship of the great statesman, Senator Richard Lugar, that I learned how important it is for diplomacy to succeed.

I have remembered the sentiment as I worked for the last three years with a very talented team of civil service and foreign service officers in the Economic Bureau.

If confirmed, I will be as fortunate to work with the excellent team at the U.S. mission to the OECD, and I look forward to collaborating with you and your staffs to promote American interests in this organization.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you and I welcome any questions that you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Singh follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF MANISHA SINGH

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am very appreciative of the time from you and your dedicated staffs.

I am deeply humbled to be considered to be the next Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

I want to express my gratitude to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for the trust and confidence they have placed in me. It has been the honor of my life to serve in my present role as the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs.

I am incredibly blessed to have a loving family and great friends. It is due to their support that I have been able to contribute as a public servant. My parents are watching from home in the sunshine state of Florida, where I grew up. My sister, her husband and their two daughters are cheering me on from northern Georgia. It is for American families that I am making sure our workers and companies can compete and succeed in the global economy.

I am especially pleased to be considered for a role in an institution which can serve as a valuable platform to propel a global economic recovery. If confirmed, I will ensure that we fully engage with the like-minded members of the OECD to return growth and employment to pre-pandemic levels.

The OECD is an institution created out of American dedication to sustainable economic recovery and prosperity in a time of crisis. In a 1947 address at Harvard University, Secretary of State George Marshall outlined a vision for cooperation among European nations to regain economic footing after World War II. During that time, Congress was considering funding and logistics for the economic aid we were providing to Europe. This committee, under then Chairman Arthur Vandenburg, issued a comprehensive report titled, "Administration of United States Aid for a European Recovery Program." This program would become known as the Marshall Plan.

The predecessor to the OECD, known as the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, was established in 1948 to administer the Marshall Plan. By 1961, recognizing the interdependence of economies, the organization became the present-day OECD with the United States joining as a member. Our vision for the mission of the organization as well as the growth of the Trans-Atlantic economy both became more significant.

We will see an important milestone this December—the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the OECD convention. It serves as an ideal moment to review how we work within the OECD to create a level playing field for American workers, to solve issues preventing our companies from accessing markets and most importantly, how to return to a sustainable, working economy in light of the pandemic.

There are important tools at the OECD which we use to accomplish all of these goals. One is the Anti-Bribery Convention which enables our private sector to compete under fair circumstances. Signatories commit to stop bribery abroad by their companies and citizens. It provides us with an important foundation to combat corruption, money-laundering and other illicit practices which result in a tainted business environment.

As a leading voice at the OECD, we consistently share our best practices and policies with both members and non-members. This is another method through which we promote a global marketplace in which our companies can succeed. In order to create new jobs here at home, we need to have equal opportunities to export to foreign markets.

The OECD has expanded to include member nations from Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Its membership constitutes about 60% of global GDP. Yet it is still compact enough a forum that we can use it effectively to address issues impacting our workforce. Outcomes in the OECD also affect our economic relationships with non-members. The OECD does not strive for universal membership; it is relevant due to its global impact.

Our new global digital economy is borderless and poses increasing challenges for regulators. As the nation which produces the greatest innovations, we can have discussions in the OECD to ensure that regulations are applied on equal footing.

If I am confirmed, I commit to advocating for market-based principles which create free, stable societies and for policies which include everyone in the benefits of economic growth. I commit not only to U.S. engagement, but to a constructive, cooperative approach to our membership.

Our leadership is needed, now more than ever, to ensure that international organizations focus on their original missions and are accountable to their members. A

return to economic health requires us to seize every available platform which can drive us forward.

Another important event is the upcoming selection of a new OECD Secretary General. The process commences formally on September 1. As the original visionary for the organization, it is incumbent upon us to play a strong and central role in the selection of new leadership.

Our focus on the effective functioning of the OECD is critical. If confirmed, I would work with representatives from other nations to establish a member-driven agenda. I would also advocate for budget discipline, increased transparency, and external evaluations, as is USG policy with respect to all of our international organization memberships.

The 1948 SFRC report I referenced earlier discusses the need to develop continuing organizations to disseminate plans for a sustained economic recovery. The report further states, "Provision should therefore be made for representation of the United States in such organizations as may be established." If confirmed, I will ensure that my representation on behalf of our country in this organization reflects the historic magnitude of the public trust which is being placed in me.

My initial engagement with the OECD began when I was a staff member at this committee more than 15 years ago. It was here, under the mentorship of the great statesman Senator Richard Lugar, that I learned how important it is for diplomacy to succeed.

I have used that sentiment for the last three years to work with a very talented team of civil service and foreign service officers in the Economic Bureau at the Department as well as thousands of officers serving in posts overseas. I feel incredibly lucky to work with them, and if confirmed, I will be as fortunate to work with the dedicated team based at the U.S. Mission to the OECD. And I look forward to continuing to collaborate with you and your staffs to promote American interests in this organization.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator YOUNG. And I thank you.

Our last nominee this morning is Mr. James Story, who has been nominated to serve as the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela. Mr. Story is a career member of the senior Foreign Service, class of counselor.

He currently serves as the chargé d'affaires for Venezuelan affairs at the U.S. embassy in Bogotá, Colombia. He previously served as the U.S. consul general in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He has, additionally, served overseas in Mexico and Mozambique.

In Washington, he has spearheaded counternarcotics, conservation, in security assistance efforts at the State Department.

Mr. Story, please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES BROWARD STORY, OF SOUTH CAROLINA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA**

Mr. STORY. Well, thank you—thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee.

I am greatly honored to appear before you today as the president's nominee to serve as United States ambassador to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

I deeply appreciate the trust and confidence shown by the president and secretary of state in asking me to take on this important responsibility to represent the American people.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and Congress in advancing our goal of a peaceful restoration of freedom, democracy, and stability in Venezuela.

Achieving this objective is key to maintaining the Western Hemisphere as a hemisphere of freedom and vital to providing for the security of the United States.

The opportunity to appear before you today would not have been possible without the unconditional support of my wife, Susan, who has been my partner in diplomacy since she agreed to move our wedding date to accommodate the Department of State over 22 years ago.

She and our son, Mac, have served the American people with distinction, and I am eternally grateful to them.

I come before the committee after serving nearly two years as a chargé d'affaires for Venezuela. I have been blessed to work with incredible teams in Caracas, in Bogotá, Washington, and throughout the interagency.

I would like to assure the committee that your dedicated public servants working on U.S.-Venezuelan issues are staunchly committed to their responsibility of representing the United States.

The United States is one of the first countries to recognize the new Venezuelan republic in 1835. Long the regional champion for liberation and democracy, Venezuela now faces its own fight for freedom from tyranny.

Our commitment to the Venezuelan people and democratic ideals upon which the Venezuelan republic was founded is unwavering. A failed economic ideology championed by Chavez led to its inevitable political descent to totalitarianism.

Totalitarianism masquerading as populism, with the active interference and participation by the Castro regime in Cuba and other malign actors, led to vast corruption and mismanagement that destroyed nearly every institution in the country.

Before U.S. economic sanctions were introduced, Venezuela's ability to deliver basic services was already in freefall.

Today, more than 5 million Venezuelans have fled their country to others in the region, the largest forced displacement in the history of Latin America.

In addition, another 7 million Venezuelans face malnutrition and are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

I want to thank Congress for its recognition to this crisis, its support through legislation, the resources, and its continued commitment to the Venezuelan people.

Because of this support, the United States is the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance for the Venezuelan regional crisis, providing over \$856 million in both humanitarian and development assistance to support programs inside Venezuela and in 16 neighboring countries.

While nearly all of Venezuela's institutions have been destroyed, the National Assembly of Venezuela, despite regime intimidation and the illegal and unconstitutional arrest of several of its members, continues to work to restore a fully democratic and representative government.

These efforts have been led by the president of the National Assembly and interim president of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, who was recognized by nearly 60 countries as the legitimate leader of Venezuela and who embodies the hopes and aspirations of all Venezuelans against the illegitimate Maduro regime.

I salute the bravery of interim President Guaidó and the members of the National Assembly, as well as journalists, NGOs, medical professionals, students, and others fighting for change.

Earlier this year, the United States proposed a pathway to resolving Venezuela's political crisis, the democratic transition framework.

A peaceful, political, democratic, and constitutional transition in Venezuela is in the interests of all Venezuelans, its neighbors, and the United States.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with my team to ensure the transition is successful. I look forward to once again raising the American flag above our embassy in Caracas.

I pledge to continue to work diligently with our Venezuelan and international partners to uphold the democratic principles we hold dear in the United States and to proudly represent the American people.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Story follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES B. STORY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, I am greatly honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I deeply appreciate the trust and confidence shown by the President and Secretary Pompeo in asking me to take on this important responsibility to represent the American people. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work with this committee and Congress in advancing our goal of peaceful restoration of freedom, democracy, and stability in Venezuela. Achieving this objective is key to maintaining the Western Hemisphere as the "Hemisphere of Freedom" and vital to providing for the security of the United States. A hemisphere of free people, living in liberty, peace, and prosperity, engaging in mutually beneficial trade, working together to combat common problems such as transnational criminal organizations, is good for the Americas and good for the United States of America.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, as you and the members of the committee well know, our families are the keys to our successes in our professional and personal lives. The opportunity to appear before you today would not have been possible without the unconditional support of my wife, Susan, who has been my partner in diplomacy since she agreed to move our wedding date to accommodate the Department of State over 22 years ago. She and our son, Mac, have served the American people with distinction throughout these last 22 years—17 for Mac—and I am eternally grateful to them.

I come before the committee after serving nearly two years as the Chargé d'Affaires for Venezuela: first, at the U.S. Embassy in Venezuela, and then, following the March 2019 suspension of operations, of the newly established Venezuela Affairs Unit in Bogotá, Colombia. I have been blessed to work with an incredible team in Caracas, Bogotá, Washington, and throughout the interagency—a team that has worked tirelessly to advance American values abroad and to engender justice and freedom for Venezuelans who have long suffered under a brutal dictatorship. While, as a team, we have faced significant challenges, I would like to assure the committee that your public servants in diplomacy remain staunchly committed to their responsibility of representing the United States.

*U.S.-Venezuela Relations*

The United States and Venezuela have a long history. We were one of the first countries to recognize the new republic in 1835, were among the first to help in developing its oil industry in 1914, and we have since developed a deep cultural affinity for shared pastimes, from baseball to barbecue. Venezuela is not only the birthplace of Simón Bolívar, but it has a long history of being a strong supporter of struggling democratic movements throughout Latin America, and a history of welcoming migrants and refugees from all over the Western Hemisphere and Europe. As a

friend to the American people, the Venezuelan Government gave us the statue of Simón Bolívar, El Libertador, that continues to stand proudly on Virginia Avenue, near the Organization of American States headquarters building in Washington, D.C. Long the regional champion for liberation and democracy, Venezuela now faces its own fight for freedom from tyranny. Our commitment to the Venezuelan people and the democratic ideals upon which the Venezuelan Republic was founded is unwavering. This commitment is important, now more than ever, as the Venezuelan people and these ideals are in crisis.

*Maduro's Man-Made Crisis*

A failed economic ideology championed by Chávez during times of high oil prices led to its inevitable political descent to totalitarianism. Totalitarianism, masquerading as populism, with the active interference and participation by the Castro regime in Cuba and other malign actors, led to vast corruption and mismanagement that destroyed nearly every institution in the country. Before U.S. economic sanctions were introduced, Venezuela's ability to deliver basic services such as electricity, water, food, and medical care was already in free fall. Today, more than 5 million Venezuelans have fled their country to others in the region, the largest forced displacement in the history of Latin America. In addition, another 7 million Venezuelans face malnutrition and are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance inside Venezuela. Today, the Coronavirus poses yet another dire threat to a country without the ability to provide even basic medical care. However, due to the herculean efforts of our colleagues in the U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration, and other bureaus and agencies, we have been able to help Venezuelans across the hemisphere and within Venezuela deal in some measure with this man-made humanitarian disaster.

I want to thank Congress for its recognition of this crisis, its support through legislation and monetary assistance, and its continued commitment to the Venezuelan people. Because of this support, the United States is the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance for the Venezuela regional crisis. Over the last three years, the United States has provided more than \$856 million in both humanitarian and development assistance to support programs inside Venezuela and in 16 neighboring countries. This assistance works to support our democratic partners in the hemisphere who are directly affected by Venezuela's forced displacement. Partners such as Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador have borne the brunt of caring for these refugees and other Venezuelans displaced abroad, but as good neighbors they have done so with generosity. Unfortunately, if left unchecked, the Venezuelan situation could prove destabilizing to the hemisphere: a dim prospect. In order to respond swiftly and effectively to life-threatening conditions, humanitarian organizations must be permitted full and unhindered access to reach all of the people in need in Venezuela. If confirmed, I will work with the international community and humanitarian assistance agencies of the United States to expand this reach to stabilize Venezuela.

I mentioned earlier that nearly all of Venezuela's institutions have been destroyed, yet throughout this entire struggle, a singular governmental structure has remained resolute in its support for democratic ideals, the National Assembly of Venezuela. Despite regime intimidation, the illegal and unconstitutional arrest of several of its members, and the forced exiles and attacks against their family members and friends, the National Assembly continues to work to restore a fully democratic and representative government. These efforts have been led by the President of the National Assembly and Interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó. Recognized by nearly 60 countries as the legitimate leader of Venezuela, Interim President Guaidó continues to work with the National Assembly, the only remaining democratic institution in Venezuela, to represent the hopes and aspirations of all Venezuelans against the illegitimate Maduro regime. I salute the bravery of Interim President Guaidó and the members of the National Assembly. Together with all those who are fighting for change—journalists, NGOs, human rights defenders, teachers, nurses, students—these democratic actors count on our support and that of the broader international community to tell their story.

*Framework for Change*

In order to make true and lasting positive change in Venezuela, the country and government must be returned to the Venezuelan people—and the people must be allowed to participate in free and fair presidential elections. Earlier this year, the United States proposed a pathway to resolving Venezuela's political crisis that is rooted in a peaceful, democratic, negotiated transition. This framework reflects the efforts of dozens of countries and regional organizations, such as the Organization

of American States, Lima Group, and European Union in seeking a peaceful political resolution to the Venezuela crisis. It builds on the Oslo Process negotiations. Together, we have called, and continue to call, on all who are truly interested in the welfare of the Venezuelan people to support this framework as a peaceful path toward a better future. I believe this framework protects the interests and equities of all Venezuelans who desperately seek a resolution to this dire crisis. We will continue to work with our partners to increase support for this framework and to intensify international pressure against the illegitimate Maduro regime to ensure that it, too, sees this framework as the best option out of this crisis. Free and fair presidential elections, convoked by a transitional government that represents all political equities, offer the best pathway towards a peaceful transition.

While Maduro and his allies have denounced sanctions as blocking aid from people in need, that is far from reality. Our Venezuela sanctions program maintains broad exemptions and authorizations that allow for the provision of humanitarian assistance, and we are vigilant in working to prevent overcompliance issues and addressing any concerns that sanctions are preventing humanitarian goods or services from entering Venezuela. The sanctions are doing what they are designed to do: block Maduro and his allies from profiting off of their ill-gotten gains. Additionally, the U.S. Government has been clear that these sanctions policies are intended to change behavior and that we will consider lifting sanctions if there are concrete meaningful actions to combat corruption in Venezuela, end human rights abuses, and restore democratic order. The democratic transition framework explicitly lays this out. Yet Maduro has refused to address the original sin of the fraudulent May 2018 presidential elections and consider a path towards reestablishing democratic governance, instead choosing to tighten his perceived grip on power by any means. Until he relents and there can be truly free and fair presidential elections, Maduro's regime will continue the policies of oppression, human rights abuses, corruption, ineptitude, and mismanagement. A peaceful, political, democratic, and constitutional transition in Venezuela is in the interests of all Venezuelans, its neighbors, and the United States. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with my team to ensure this transition is successful.

Following the institution of the transitional government and administration of free and fair presidential elections, the follow-on goal of U.S. policy is clear: to help Venezuelans return democracy and the rule of law to their country, and then bring mutual prosperity to our two nations. Recovery can only begin when the Government respects the rights of all Venezuelans, regardless of political party, economic status, or connections. When these conditions are met, Venezuela's talented population can retake its future and the millions of Venezuelans previously forced to flee their country will be able to return to their homeland—a land in need of healing, and open to opportunities and growth, refocused on its most important resources, its citizens.

If confirmed, I look forward to once again raising the American flag above our embassy in Caracas. In returning our full diplomatic presence to the country, it is my intent, in representing the American people, to promote democracy and the rule of law, to build respect for human rights, to facilitate U.S. support to the Venezuelan people through development and humanitarian assistance, and to assist Venezuela in its return to economic stability. I pledge to continue to work diligently with our Venezuelan and international partners to uphold the democratic principles we hold dear in the United States and to proudly represent the American people. In supporting a new, truly representative government in Venezuela to reopen its economy to the world market, U.S. companies will be able to reestablish their presence and be partners in building value for both countries. The scars left by the Chávez and Maduro periods will not heal quickly, but they can and will heal. And in the end, a truly free Venezuela, returned to its democratic traditions, as first espoused by Bolívar, can again be a stabilizing force in the region and a close friend and partner of the United States of America.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you, and once again, thank you all for your careers of service and for your willingness to be nominated for these posts.

We will now open up for questions. I do need to announce that we have a vote coming. I am told it is around 11:30, so we will not recess this hearing. We will forge on and continue with questions.

When I depart to vote, we will adjourn this hearing. I would like to remind my colleagues that we will be doing five-minute rounds. But please keep in mind we will be using the honor system, given our virtual environment.

I will defer my questions and hand it over to my colleague, the senior Democratic member on the Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Menendez, to lead us off.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I am so pleased to see so many career members of the Foreign Service up for these important positions.

Mr. Story, Section 151 of the VERDAD Act, which I wrote, called on the administration to lay out a coordinated international strategy to investigate assets stolen from the Venezuelan people by the Maduro regime—freeze those assets and recover them for the future reconstruction of Venezuela.

What is your understanding of the value of assets stolen from the Venezuelan people by Chavez, Maduro, and their cronies? Is it fair to say that it is in the tens of billions of dollars?

Mr. STORY. Senator, I believe it could be much more than that. Our assessment is hundreds of billions of dollars.

Senator MENENDEZ. All right.

And can you speak to the importance of these funds to the Venezuelan people, the hope that they be recovered?

Mr. STORY. Certainly, Senator. You are asking a very important question. We are working with the international community and others to locate these funds and protect these funds.

The reconstruction of Venezuela under a democratic government or through a transitional government will need these funds in order to rebuild the institutions that have been destroyed after two decades of dictatorship.

Senator MENENDEZ. Let me ask this. What additional steps—we had a hearing on Tuesday from the Special Envoy or Representative and—on Venezuela.

What additional steps do you think we need to—since you have been on the ground and working on this issue both as the chargé and—in Colombia.

What additional steps do you think we need to take on in countering the Cuban regime's activities inside of Venezuela? How do we change the calculations for Putin's maneuvering in Venezuela, for Turkey's transactions in Venezuela in blood gold?

Those are some of the countries that are helping to prop up—of course, China is as well—helping to prop up Maduro.

How do you see the dynamics if the secretary of state, the administration, we, in the Congress were to say to you help us devise a series of steps? What would your suggestion be?

Mr. STORY. Well, Senator, I think that, as Special Representative Abrams pointed out on Tuesday and, certainly, the actions we have taken, we have increased costs for bad actors, malign actors, in Venezuela.

We have to continue to consider other ways to do that. We are very concerned about the transport of gold bars to Iran for purchases of which we are unaware. Certainly, free export of diesel and oil to Cuba, propping up the Castro regime.

At the same time that the Venezuelan people need these resources, and it is something that is hard to fathom, I believe that we have to consider all opportunities to go after companies.

We have done that in the case of Russia and other entities such as Rosneft and TNK. I think we have to continue to focus in on those opportunities where we have them to continue to constrict the access that Maduro and his cronies have to funds that should be going to the Venezuelan people.

I know that we are working very closely with Washington on these issues and continue to look at other ways we can have an impact.

Senator MENENDEZ. Okay. I think some of the messages we should be sending, particularly, to the Russians and the Chinese, is that the investments you made if you want to ensure—I am talking about monetary investments—to ensure that they are there in the future, you should not continue to support a regime that cannot guarantee them at the end of the day. A democratic regime could do that but it will look at what you have done to date.

One last question to you, Mr. Story. In the hearing on Tuesday the administration admitted that the United States should do more to protect Venezuelan women and children. I want to come back to this topic because I am so troubled by the fact that Venezuelan women and girls are suffering high rates of sexual and gender-based violence.

Are you—as you seek to expand humanitarian access in Venezuela, will you increase U.S. support for reproductive health care as well as efforts to address gender-based violence?

Mr. STORY. Senator, I was heartened to hear in the explanation as well from Assistant Administrator Hodges on Tuesday that all of our program has a gender component to it. I think we have to continue to do that. We have to do more of that, and I will commit to focusing on that.

I have been in the hospitals inside of Venezuela. I have been in the hospitals on this border—on the border inside of Colombia as well. In Clcuta, for instance, 98 percent of live births are from Venezuelan women who have to flee into Colombia in order to receive health care.

I think these are areas in which we have to work across the humanitarian space. Certainly, the issues of gender are exceedingly important in Venezuela.

If confirmed, I commit to you that we will maintain that focus.

Senator MENENDEZ. All right.

Mr. Chairman, I have several more questions but I do not know what the time is. So I think I may be close to my five minutes.

Senator YOUNG. Well, I—there will certainly be an opportunity for you, Senator Menendez, for a second round, perhaps a third round. We are going to—we are going to have some opportunities here to go back and forth here.

So I would like to ask a series of questions for Ms. Singh, who is the nominee to serve as our representative at OECD, who also happens to have a Dick Lugar bullet point on her resume, which, in my estimation, does not hurt one's background, having served with—for Senator Lugar for a long period of time.

I have had several productive conversations with your colleague, Ms. Singh, over at E, especially Under Secretary Keith Krach, in considering what America's strategy should be as we think about competing with China through leaning into our strengths.

Your bureau's efforts on the future of innovation has been extremely valuable in this endeavor. I know my staff has enjoyed working with the entire team there.

To get us started, I introduced some legislation with Senator Schumer, the Endless Frontier Act, which will leverage America's technological expertise to invest in emerging technologies of the—of the future.

A major part of that legislation is working with trusted allies and partners to broaden the pool of knowledge and seek better outcomes at a faster pace and lower cost.

If confirmed, how will you seek to strengthen transnational science and tech partnerships within the OECD to increase the study and fielding of emerging technologies like AI, quantum computing, advanced biology, hypersonics, advanced manufacturing, material science, and so forth?

Ms. SINGH. Senator, thank you so much for that question, and I just wanted to say that I really appreciate the recognition of our joint service. I know that you are a mentee of Senator Lugar as well, and so I really—in his memory, I just wanted to thank you for that recognition.

And, Senator, when it comes to innovation and the economy of the future, this has been one of my priorities here in the Economic Bureau.

You may know, our bureau has held a series of innovation roundtables where we invite the technology industry in, whether it is artificial intelligence or robotics or quantum computing, advancements in 5G.

We have invited industry in to see how we, as government, can assist the private sector in providing the best platforms for them to be able to succeed.

We know that the best innovations in technology have come out of this country, and I want to make sure that it is American companies, and it is American workers at the forefront.

So these roundtables have been hugely successful. We have heard particularly from the private sector on what China has been doing that, basically, involves stealing our intellectual property, that involves forcing our technology transfer.

You know, they are advancing their 5G, their technology, with secrets that have been stolen from American industry. So we have made a strong effort to educate ourselves in the bureau and throughout the E line.

And, Senator, at the OECD, I commit to you that I would do that same sort of research and analysis, getting information directly from the private sector on exactly what we, as policy makers, need to know.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you.

What do you foresee, based on your experience, in leading the business and economic partnership initiatives of the department?

What are the greatest challenges that face our country so that we might spur more innovation in coming decades as it pertains to our interactions with other countries?

Ms. SINGH. Well, Senator, thank you for that question.

One of the things that we have strived to achieve is necessary, but not overly burdensome regulation. We would like to see a light-touch regulation atmosphere that enables our companies and our private sector to innovate.

We are also looking at regulatory burdens that have been imposed upon our companies by foreign countries. You may know, Senator, that many of the European member states have decided to impose a unilateral digital services tax, which unfairly targets American companies.

The OECD has been a forum where we can have a conversation with these member states so that we can solve this issue on a multilateral basis.

We are trying to find a consensus-based solution to this tax, which really does specifically target American technology companies, hampers their innovation, hampers their ability to succeed and hire more Americans.

I would ensure that this sort of conversation proceeds at the OECD.

Senator YOUNG. I think that is a really important priority, identifying some opportunities for regulatory harmonization, light touch regulation as it pertains to some of these frontier technologies.

Do you have any reflections on how we might, in certain circumstances, share data with trusted partners? You know, our data is the feed stock for machine learning and artificial intelligence, and, arguably, the Chinese, which do not have the same privacy inhibitions that our country does and the same limitations with respect to collecting data.

They might outpace the West as it relates to artificial intelligence, not because they have better engineers but because they have more data to run through their iterations.

So do you see opportunities there, Ms. Singh, to cooperate with our OECD partners in pooling data, assuming it is properly circumscribed and protected.

Ms. SINGH. Yes, Senator, absolutely. I think that we can encourage the free flow of data. Free flow of data is exactly what has enabled our companies to innovate.

As you have correctly observed, we need the advantage of being able to share data while also finding that balance of privacy. And, of course, we do not want our consumers' information to be compromised by any government.

In particular, we do not want the Chinese Government to be able to acquire privacy information, personal information about our citizens.

I think that the OECD is the perfect forum for us to find that balance of how we can encourage a free flow of data in a productive manner while still finding a way to ensure the privacy of our consumers.

We have had many conversations with our European Union trading partners about this issue, and if I am confirmed, I commit to

you, I will find a way to have that conversation to come up with the right balance.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Ms. Singh.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Story, one last question for you. On Tuesday, Special Representative Abrams confirmed for us that Colombian guerrillas, other criminal actors—ELN, dissident factions of the FARC, paramilitaries, drug traffickers, colectivos—are operating with impunity across Venezuela.

Is it—and a lot of that seems to be in an ungoverned space. Would it be your assessment that in the event of a potential transition a U.N. stabilization mission would be required in Venezuela, similar to what we have seen them do in the past in Haiti or Liberia, for example?

Mr. STORY. Well, Senator, you have asked a difficult important—and an important question. I have worked in ungoverned spaces as INL director in Colombia.

I ran INL programs—International Narcotics and Law Enforcement—for the Western Hemisphere. I served in Afghanistan. These are tough issues.

In addition to the state actors we talked about earlier, you do have all of these illegal armed groups inside of the country. We will—I will commit to you, if confirmed we will work directly with the interim government as well as with neighboring states, the international community, to come up with the best mechanism.

I do not know if it will be that mechanism or another mechanism that a newly democratically-elected government will come up with. But, certainly, it is an issue. It is a significant problem.

It affects not only inside of—the Venezuelans inside of Venezuela but, obviously, it is a—it is a danger to the neighbors and to the ultimate security of the United States of America.

Senator MENENDEZ. Yeah. I see large parts of ungoverned space with narco criminal activities and I see it is certainly a challenge for Venezuela and its future.

But I see it as a challenge within the hemisphere itself, and so we are looking forward to getting your continuing ideas as we move forward.

Mr. Douglass, you demonstrated generosity towards the Bahamian people after Hurricane Dorian devastated a significant part of the island.

You issued a statement calling on the administration to issue up to 10,000 work visas for Bahamians displaced by the disaster and I want to commend your compassion and willingness to speak in favor of common sense solutions.

I issued a similar statement and introduced legislation that would provide TPS to Bahamian nationals. Unfortunately, that has not advanced.

As I know that this type of principle stance has fallen out of fashion in the current area, can I have your personal commitment that, if confirmed, you will remain true to your beliefs and use your position as the U.S. ambassador to advocate for compassionate policies towards our Bahamian neighbors?

Mr. DOUGLASS. Absolutely, 100 percent.

Senator MENENDEZ. What efforts would you take to increase our support—our efforts in support of the Bahamians as they prepare for a response to future major storms and hurricanes?

Mr. DOUGLASS. So under the Caribbean Resilience Initiative that was started in 2016, we have given significant aid to the Bahamas to prepare for natural disasters, and following Hurricane Dorian we provided more than \$35 million in support for the Bahamian people, which included everything from transporting people to USAID.

Senator MENENDEZ. And one final question to you. What steps do you think we need to take—we have been a long time engaged in the Bahamas, of care of the Bahamas—in strengthening their anti-money laundering framework?

Mr. DOUGLASS. I know that they are taking steps to try to become more compliant with U.S. standards and I would seek to try to persuade them that that is the right thing for them to do and that the U.S. should be their partner of choice.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mm-hmm. Well, I hope we can work with them more robustly to achieve that because at this point they are a, from my perspective, an information and transit point in that regard. So they have done some things but I think there is a lot more to be done.

Mr. DOUGLASS. Absolutely. You are correct on that point.

Senator MENENDEZ. Ms. Singh, let me ask you, what do you view as the major goals the United States should be pursuing through the OECD? What do you think is the administration's major policy objectives that should be accomplished through the OECD?

Ms. SINGH. Senator Menendez, thank you for that question.

I think a major goal we should be pursuing is cooperation with our like-minded partners at the OECD in creating a level playing field for American companies. The OECD is a nimble enough forum where we can have conversations with our European allies on regulatory standards which may hamper market access for our companies.

We want a free flow of goods and commerce, particularly in light of the COVID pandemic. We want to see uninterrupted supply chains.

We do not want artificial barriers erected for our companies and for our workers to be able to compete and succeed globally.

I also think, longer term, we should be working within the OECD to look at the economy of the future. The digital economy is not—I should say, not just the future, but it is here and now. We want the OECD to transition into a forum where we can have conversations with our allies about the technologies that will run the future.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, I appreciate that. But as you may know, the administration has decided not to seek any funding for the OECD in fiscal year '21. So I do not know how one ultimately pursues a very valid mission that you just stated without any funds.

Are there reform efforts, to your knowledge, the administration is seeking at the OECD and should we be reconsidering a zero amount of money in the midst of a global pandemic?

Ms. SINGH. Senator, we are seeking reforms at the OECD and, in fact, many of our like-minded partners in the OECD would like to see similar reforms.

We would like to see accountability. We would like to see transparency. We would like to see an external evaluation of the OECD as is customary with all of our international organizations, and I think that the OECD will receive the support and resources that it needs from the United States Government.

I commit to you that I would work with our like-minded partners to make sure that the reforms make the OECD into a stronger, better organization for the American taxpayer.

Senator MENENDEZ. Yeah. I appreciate that. I would just simply say that at zero there is not much that cannot be done. I mean, we are for transparency. We are all for openness anywhere, any institution. But I am trying to determine whether there are specific reform efforts.

One final question, if I may, for you and then I will yield back to the chairman. I have other questions for other candidates but I will yield back to the chairman.

As the response to our pandemic crisis continues globally for the next several months and maybe even extending a year or more, how will you advocate that governments and international actors ensure that their responses to the COVID crisis are implemented according to international standards and best practices on social due diligence, human rights, and transparency in the midst of all of this?

Ms. SINGH. Senator, thank you. I think the OECD is an organization where the United States does share best practices, and we learn from our partners and member states on how they are handling the response to the crisis.

For instance, one of the things that we in the U.S. Government have been trying to do is restart international travel and tourism as a part—as an essential part of our economy.

At the OECD, I will plan to have conversations with our European member states on how we can get transatlantic travel and trade not just started again, but booming as it was before the pandemic.

Senator MENENDEZ. All right.

Mr. Chairman, I want to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement from myself with reference to today's hearing.

Senator YOUNG. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT  
MENENDEZ, RANKING MEMBER

I have twice raised the fact that today's hearing was noticed in violation of committee practice under Rule 3(d), which requires seven days' advance notice for committee meetings. Each time, the Majority has responded that Rule 3(d) requires only that the Chairman consult with the Ranking Member prior to waiving the 7-day notice rule. The Chairman indicated that he did consult with me but, when we were not able to reach agreement, he simply went ahead over my objection.

That is one way to run the committee, but it is not the way other SFRC chairmen, Democratic or Republican, have done so. While Rule 3(d) does speak only of "consultation," committee practice has been for chairmen of both parties to secure the agreement of the Ranking Member before waiving the 7-day rule. Moreover, the

Chairman seems to have taken this step without regard to the requirement under Rule 3(d) that there must be "good cause" to hold a committee meeting without 7 days advance notice. Like the broader unwritten rule of comity that governed our actions until the 116th Congress, committee practice under Rule 3(d) helped ensure that we worked together to advance committee prerogatives and U.S foreign policy.

The Chairman has the power to act unilaterally and to ignore committee practice and the views of the Minority. In doing so, however, the Chairman has set new precedent that will be used to run the committee by future Democratic and Republican chairwomen and chairmen.

Senator YOUNG. Ms. Singh, I would like to pick up on Senator Menendez's line of questioning. I, too, am interested in the OECD and its effectiveness, as are you. I noted it lacks strong enforcement mechanisms and compliance mechanisms.

So it is going to continue unless things change to rely on the power of persuasion to effect change. I think the OECD and every single multilateral organization of which the United States of America is a member and to which the United States sends taxpayer dollars ought to be scrutinized.

It ought to be scrutinized for its efficacy. It ought to be scrutinized for how it utilizes taxpayer dollars, opportunities for improvement, just as we would scrutinize domestic programs.

So I expect Senator Menendez and others who may be watching these hearings will agree that we need to scrutinize these multilateral organizations.

I happen to believe that the Multilateral Review Act is deserving of bipartisan support and, unfortunately, we have not received such traction.

But the Multilateral Review Act, once we receive a report, we look forward to implementing whatever recommendations might be forthcoming so that we can improve the OECD's operations.

So should that piece of legislation pass, Ms. Singh, do I have your commitment to work with me and other members of this committee to assess some of the recommendations and implement those that might improve the operation of OECD?

Ms. SINGH. Yes, Senator. Absolutely. You have my personal commitment. I share your view that multilateral organizations should be subject to scrutiny and to accountability.

Many of them have grown beyond their original mandate, and I think in order to make them more effective and a better use of time for all of the investment that we put in these organizations, we do need to review, and we do need to scrutinize them.

And that is why I mentioned the external evaluations that are United States Government policy with respect to the OECD and every organization.

You have my absolute commitment that I will work closely with you and the committee to ensure proper reviews of all organizations.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Furthermore, do I have your commitment, should I remain chairman of the Multilateral Institutions Subcommittee, to appear at a hearing pertaining to this very topic of reforming multilateral institutions pursuant to any reports we receive like those embodied and called for by Senator Risch's Multilateral Review Act?

Ms. SINGH. Yes, Senator. I commit to you that I will—I will do what I can to appear.

Senator YOUNG. Fair enough. Fair enough.

Mr. Douglass, The Bahamas risk being exploited by criminal enterprises, terrorist organizations, and state actors seeking to evade sanctions and financial regulations.

You know this is a problem because you have studied the country. You have made multiple visits to the country. How would you seek to work with the State Department and Treasury to ensure American interests are served through a more transparent financial sector in the Bahamas?

Mr. DOUGLASS. Thank you for the questions, and following up on Senator Menendez's question, I do realize that they need to really adopt our much stricter policies in the banking sector to account for, you know, money laundering, et cetera, and the irregular transfer of moneys that may be in those banks accounts there.

And so I would push for them to adopt our policies with greater strength.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir.

Pivot to China, a highly over utilized phrase, but one appropriate here. China's Belt and Road Initiative is coming to America's doorstep in the Caribbean Basin. Although Bahamas have not signed a cooperative agreement with China, to my knowledge, Chinese-controlled firms have undertaken major infrastructure projects, including the valuable container facility in Freeport.

Do you have any concerns about Chinese investments this close to home?

Mr. DOUGLASS. Absolutely. I think it is a significant concern for the United States' security. Freeport is the port of first entry for the United States of America. Having the Chinese funding and half own a port of first entry into the United States that is about 60 miles from our border is a concern.

Senator YOUNG. So how do you look at such issues? The fact that a port is being built I suppose it is not by definition a bad thing, right.

It is advantageous to the citizens in the Bahamas. It is advantageous to the Government. Is it the terms and conditionality of individual infrastructure investments that are of concern to you or is it—or is it just the fact that these investments are being made by China and that becomes a piece of a broader narrative that the Chinese are beneficent, good actors on the world stage when, in fact, they do not share our values and, in fact, their form of government is antithetical to the values in which we believe?

Mr. DOUGLASS. The problem is that the deals that have been done, which include the largest hotel complex, the Baha Mar, that was more than a \$4 billion project, is wholly owned today by the Chinese.

The Hilton Hotel, which is across the street from Paradise Island and near our mission in downtown Nassau is wholly owned by the Chinese and funded by the Chinese Government.

They built a port in the northern sections of the Abacos and Cooper's Town, which cost the Bahamians \$40 million and was built with Chinese workers, and it is still inoperable.

The port in Freeport is operable and is operating, but it is something for us to be aware that the Chinese do have probably significant interests in it.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Douglass.

My time has expired and we have been joined by Senator Kaine, who, if he is ready—he just—the nature of these jobs is we move from meeting to meeting. So—

Senator KAINE. Mr. Chairman, can you hear me?

Senator YOUNG. I can, indeed. I will defer to you, Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Young and Senator Menendez, and thanks to all the witnesses.

I have actually been viewing and hearing you for the last about 40 minutes. It is just that I was not able to be seen or heard by you, which is to your benefit.

It is all a plus that I can see and hear you and I can assure you it is a plus for you that you cannot see and hear me.

So, anyway, and the questions that both Senators Young and Menendez have asked have been fairly thorough.

Mr. Story, it is good to see you again. I think we worked together in the spring of 2019 and I just really want to follow up on one of the many tough issues dealing with Venezuela and that is the challenges that Venezuela posed to Colombia.

So just to state the reason that I am asking it this way, you know, I think Venezuela is almost a text case for the world that if you—if you align with authoritarian nations like Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, here is what your life is going to be like.

If you—if you allow an authoritarian to run things into the ground and just use the revenues of a, frankly, fairly wealthy nation to pad the pockets of the cronies that will then stick by you and everybody else suffers, then look what you are going to get and look who is aligned with Venezuela.

You are going to get the same thing in Iran, the same thing in Russia, the same thing in China, same with Turkey is also propping up Venezuela, as is Cuba.

On the other hand, right next door you have a perfect counter example. If you try to go down the path of democracy, solving tough internal issues like a longstanding civil war, if you try to invest more in parts of the country that had been disinvested in for decades, if you align with the democracies of the world like the United States in that effort, the path for you citizens is also going to dramatically change for the better.

We have made huge investments in Colombia, administrations of both parties supported by congresses under the control of both parties and we have achieved so very, very much, and I almost think that just a spotlight on Colombia and a spotlight on Venezuela is about all you need to know in order to decide which path you would rather pursue.

However, that means that the investments that we and other democracies have made in Colombia need to be continued and there are, certainly, vulnerabilities to Colombia's progress posed by the massive migration of folks from Venezuela and other challenges, including Venezuela allowing, you know, remnants of Colombian rebel groups to seek safe haven there.

So talk to me a little bit about sort of your role in Venezuela but also your understanding of this really important relationship between these two neighbors that are important in and of themselves but also painting such a clear distinction about life under

authoritarianism and life under democracies for the rest of the world.

Mr. STORY. Well, Senator, thank you very much for that question. I will try to be brief. I think this is one that we could spend a week talking about and not even scratch the surface.

And my job running the narcotics and law enforcement office here from 2010 to '13 was precisely just to help Colombia force the FARC into negotiations so they could get past over 50 years of civil war.

The investment by the American people in Colombia and how that investment has also allowed us to work with the Colombians in Central America and Mexico and other countries of South America, extraordinary opportunity, and I salute the Colombian people for their—for their ability, their working with us.

And now they are facing this difficult situation from Venezuela, that now home there in Colombia to over 2 million immigrants from Venezuela. I call them immigrants. I think it is—there is a better term for that.

They have been forcefully displaced from Venezuela in a very difficult environment right when Colombia is attempting to get past, you know, over five decades of internal strife. They are now met with having to figure out how to clothe and feed and provide schooling and hospitals, medical care for large numbers of people. And add onto that that without opportunities these become rich breeding grounds for illegal armed groups as well.

So I think Colombia has done an extraordinary job, very difficult circumstances. I applaud Congress and the U.S. Government for all we have done to support Colombia in other countries in the region dealing with the situation from Venezuela.

I can tell you the biggest impact we can have and the biggest help we could give to Colombia, the region, and to the United States is to restore democracy in Venezuela.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Story, thanks for that answer. I look forward to working with you on that matter together with my colleagues in both parties.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back to you because I have not voted yet.

Senator YOUNG. I have also not voted and we will soon be adjourning this hearing.

Okay. I want to give Senator Menendez and opportunity to ask another question and I will ask one pointed question to wrap things up. But we will each have to head down to vote very soon.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So when you say adjourn, you are going to adjourn the hearing? Not recess it but adjourn it?

Senator YOUNG. I will adjourn and recess. I will do this at the same time. Yes. So it is—

Senator MENENDEZ. So come back here is what I am saying?

Senator YOUNG. No.

Senator MENENDEZ. Is the hearing going to continue or no, the hearing is not going to continue?

Senator YOUNG. No, the hearing will not continue. I regret—the parliamentary stuff I am still, you know—

Senator MENENDEZ. No, that is okay. I just want—I just want to—

Senator YOUNG. You wanted clarification. Yes, sir.

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. For our time frame.

Senator YOUNG. Yeah.

Senator MENENDEZ. So I am going to, evidently, have some questions for the record. I would just say to some of the nominees who I have not been able—will not be able to get to it is not for lack of affection for what you are—the post that you are going to but it is because of time.

So but I do want to go to Mr. McCarthy for a moment. President Weah's election marked the first transfer of power. He ran on an anti-corruption inclusive economic growth campaign but there is a lot of dissatisfaction with him, increasing scrutiny to high-profile scandals.

What is your assessment of the Government's willingness and capacity to address corruption and what would you do, if confirmed, to press the Government to adequately address the corruption issue?

Mr. MCCARTHY. Senator Menendez, thank you for that question.

Yes, it is a very important issue and I would approach that from a three-pronged approach.

Number one, we have embedded U.S. personnel experts, administrative experts, in various ministries throughout the Government of Liberia who are teaching their counterparts the proper administration of public funds.

At the same time, if confirmed, I would publicly recognize governmental and nongovernmental organizations that are focused on pushing for anti-corruption. This is the Anti-Corruption Commission of Liberia and the auditor general of Liberia, and hopefully support those organizations whenever feasible.

But third, and most importantly, I would highlight to the president and to the Government how essential it is to change the perception of corruption in Liberia not just for private investment but for also—for things like the Millennium Challenge Corporation if they are interested in additional compacts.

They are just wrapping up the first MCC compact, \$257 million in Liberia that is doing the kinds of things that the president and the people have been asking for: additional electricity, additional fresh water, and new roads.

However, to get a new compact with the MCC they will have to pass the MCC's scorecard, which, as I am sure you are aware, they have not passed for the past two years.

So I would highlight the absolute essential importance of taking on corruption as a problem and resolving the problem and the perception of the problem if they wish to move forward.

Thank you, sir.

Senator MENENDEZ. All right.

And so to you on free press issues there, Ms. Higgins, I have questions about the human rights abuses investigation that the U.N. Human Rights Council approved and what has been done in that regard, in your view, on sanctions, and in this regard I would like to hear some substantive responses from you on those.

And Ms. Maloney, I want to talk to you about the ban on political parties. Has it been lifted and what impact does the ban have on regards to people exercising political rights as well as women's rights in Eswatini.

So I will submit those for the record. If you would give me a substantive response I would appreciate it.

I now yield back to you.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Senator Menendez.

Ms. Higgins? Ms. Higgins is still with us?

Ms. Higgins?

Ms. HIGGINS. I just—yeah.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. I just have one line of questioning that will be fairly brief and then we will be adjourning this hearing.

I, too, will be submitting some questions for the record. Ms. Higgins, following the recent elections in Burundi that resulted in a new president, Evariste Ndayishimiye, and the death of former President Pierre Nkurunziza, you and the State Department have made a case for taking a hard look at rebooting the U.S.-Burundi relationship.

Does not the country's poor showing on the trafficking in persons reporting, for instance, preclude any real partnership in the near term? How do you envision this working?

Ms. HIGGINS. Thanks very much, Chairman Young.

The new president came in—election [Audio Glitch] last election in 2015. He is also the first time there has been a peaceful transfer of power in this country since its independence.

These are positive signs, but there is much that remains to be done. The new president has had several important steps such as talking about his willingness to fight corruption and fight COVID. We want to use those opportunities where we can find common ground to see how we can work together.

You are absolutely right, Chairman Young, that the trafficking in persons Tier 3 designations under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act precludes much of our assistance such as training of their military.

Nonetheless, there is a significant amount of USAID assistance that goes towards important programs such as our humanitarian assistance for refugees and internally-displaced people as well as health, which is very important not just in this COVID era but most recently to prepare for Ebola since there was a two-year Ebola epidemic just across the border, and also, as we look forward on fighting things like malaria since Burundi has the highest malaria rates in the entire world.

I do believe those kinds of assistance can continue and, yet, I do look forward, if confirmed, to working with Burundi to raise issues of human rights and especially trafficking in persons so they can do better on that very important issue.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you for being responsive to that line of inquiry.

Again, I will have some additional questions that I will submit to some of our nominees for what I hope is a fulsome response. I want to thank you again for appearing before this committee, for your desire to serve our nation in these important positions.

For the information of members, the record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow, Friday, August 7th, including for members to submit questions for the record.

Thanks again to each of you. Congrats to you and your family. This hearing is now adjourned.  
[Whereupon, at 11:53 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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## Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* The Constitution of The Bahamas does not allow women to transmit citizenship to their children born abroad on an equal basis with men. In May, the Bahamas' attorney general appealed the Supreme Court's decision allowing children born out of wedlock to Bahamian fathers and foreign mothers to acquire citizenship at birth. Gender discrimination in Bahamian nationality law is a persistent human rights challenge that puts children at risk of statelessness:

- If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to promote gender equality in the Bahamas, and to publicly encourage law reforms to ensure gender-equal nationality rights?

*Answer.* Recognizing that every nation has the inherent right to determine the qualifications for citizenship, I was disappointed last year when the Bahamas' attorney general supported the discriminatory scheme allowing Bahamian fathers to transmit citizenship to their children born abroad to foreign mothers, but disallowing Bahamian mothers from transmitting citizenship to their children born abroad to foreign fathers. If confirmed, I will work to promote gender equality in The Bahamas by inviting local civil society stakeholders to share with the Ambassador and the Mission their ideas for effecting change. I will also consider what role my team and I might play, along with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, in advocating for gender-equal nationality rights. I will draw on our Embassy's cultural and press outreach, social media campaigns, and exchange programs to show by example how the United States strives to overcome gender inequities.

*Question.* The Bahamas lacks an asylum law and, in the wake of Hurricane Dorian, allegations of mistreatment and abuse of migrants—especially Haitians—have increased. Particular concerns include the refolement of Cubans, lack of due process in expedited removals, and poor conditions at the Carmichael Detention Center. If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to improve protection of refugees and vulnerable migrants in the Bahamas?

*Answer.* I will do all I can to encourage the Bahamian Government to treat refugees and vulnerable migrants with respect, dignity, and compassion. Though there currently is no legislation outlining asylum procedures, I understand there is draft legislation—put on hold due to Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19—to address some of the gaps in the country's immigration laws. Currently, immigration officials follow a standard procedure to make a refugee status determination. If an individual does not qualify, the authorities forward his or her case to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in The Bahamas for its review. If confirmed, I would like to explore asylum training opportunities for immigration officers. This would assist the Bahamian Government in processing asylum seekers.

*Question.* It is increasingly evident that criminal organizations across the Caribbean are becoming more reliant on money laundering, which in the absence of an adequate anti-money laundering framework, facilitates their ability to operate and profit from drug trafficking. If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to support the Bahamas in strengthening their anti-money laundering framework?

*Answer.* I understand that The Bahamas, as an international financial center, is vulnerable to money laundering in several sectors. The Bahamas has engaged with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to address deficiencies in its anti-money laundering regime, and has made progress in remedying these deficiencies. If confirmed, I will engage the Bahamian Government at the highest possible levels to ensure this progress continues. I will also offer the full support of the U.S. Govern-

ment to assist in achieving this important goal, including engagement with U.S. law enforcement entities to collaborate and provide guidance on preventing, investigating, and prosecuting money-laundering and other illicit transactions.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit that the U.S. Embassy will not take any such action. I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

*Answer.* Yes. It is absolutely imperative the Mission be run in an open, respectful, collegial environment. I would have no tolerance for those who engage in retaliatory behavior. I commit to make clear to all Embassy employees that retaliation has no place in federal government and I would not tolerate it. If confirmed, I would hold accountable anyone found to have engaged in such retaliation in accordance with U.S. federal labor law and regulation.

*Question.* What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

*Answer.* I am fully committed to promoting, mentoring, and supporting staff from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups. If confirmed, I will work to ensure all members of my team have the support they need to perform to the best of their abilities. I will work with our leadership team to ensure Embassy Nassau remains a safe, productive, and inclusive work environment. It has been one of my life's great joys to have promoted, mentored, and supported staff of all backgrounds without prejudice in my career in the private sector and working with nonprofits.

*Question.* Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

*Answer.* Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be conveyed through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

*Answer.* Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are averse to U.S. interests?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* My interest in democracy and human rights started when I was young, having seen the contributions my grandparents and parents made to society through their hands-on charitable endeavors: they were not only generous, but rolled up their sleeves. Through my own work and my own considerable charitable history, I have been a staunch supporter of those less fortunate and I have worked to guide them to a better station in their lives. I believe my contributions as part of the response following Hurricane Dorian are a recent example of my efforts to help others.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in The Bahamas? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* The Bahamas has enjoyed a strong parliamentary democracy since its independence in 1973. Challenges remain with corruption within the Government and in the private sector, and with government transparency. I believe the last election, which resulted in the largest change in government in its history, with the opposition party taking 34 out of 39 Senate seats, was a referendum to tackle corruption. I believe further work needs to be done to improve the treatment of undocumented migrants, particularly of Haitian decent. Additionally, there is progress to be made on women's rights. Greater acceptance and protection are needed for persons in the LGBTI community.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in The Bahamas? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would prioritize issues of democracy and good governance in our relations with The Bahamas. Working with my Embassy team, I would draw on the expertise and resources of the U.S. Government to support those efforts where appropriate. I would also work with civil society to promote transparency and good governance. I would ensure that the U.S. Embassy speaks out for and models democratic principles. My team and I would also focus on local issues including the separation of powers within The Bahamas' Government, corruption, and the role of civil society.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would explore options to help bolster civil society and assist the Bahamian Government in addressing the issue of irregular migrants already in The Bahamas. The U.S. Embassy is already helping the Bahamian Government more aggressively address corruption—there are anticorruption bills under consideration—but there may be an opening to supplement existing U.S. Government programs.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in The Bahamas? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to meet with civil society members, human rights, and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in The Bahamas. I am not aware of efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society in The Bahamas. If I learn of such efforts, I will bring them to the attention of the responsible local officials and request that restrictions be removed so these organizations can carry out their missions.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* Yes, I commit to meeting with democratically oriented political figures and parties. The Bahamas enjoys a vibrant multi-party system that allows its citizens to choose their leaders and representatives. If confirmed, I will ensure the Em-

bassy continues its dialogue with all members of the political society to ensure this democratic process continues. If confirmed, I will consistently and fairly engage actors and parties across the political spectrum. I will advocate access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties, and will encourage government officials and political figures to take the necessary steps to ensure a true democratic process. Question 18: Will you and your embassy team actively engage with The Bahamas on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in The Bahamas?

Answer. Yes to both questions. If confirmed, my embassy team and I will engage with The Bahamas on freedom of the press and address any government efforts to control or undermine press freedom. I commit to meeting with independent local press in The Bahamas.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in The Bahamas?

Answer. Yes. Embassy Nassau regularly engages civil society and government counterparts at the highest possible levels on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors. I understand that the entire staff, as directed by the Public Affairs Section, works tirelessly to counter disinformation and propaganda when detected. If confirmed, I will prioritize the dissemination of accurate and timely information, and provide whatever support my staff requires to ensure we adequately equip ourselves to immediately address any disinformation or propaganda disseminated in country.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with The Bahamas on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, my embassy team and I will actively engage with The Bahamas on the freedom of association, including the right of workers to form and join trade unions. U.S. Embassy Nassau regularly engages with the Bahamian Government and relevant stakeholders on labor rights, including for independent trade unions. The Bahamian Government maintains a robust dialogue with domestic labor groups, including trade unions, and regularly engages them on critical issues related to the rights and protections of Bahamian workers. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to continue this dialogue, and support our Embassy staff in their efforts to engage with labor groups, as well as identify any issues that might require U.S. technical assistance and support.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in The Bahamas, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in The Bahamas? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in The Bahamas?

Answer. Yes. Promoting, protecting, and advancing the human rights of everyone—including LGBTQ persons—has long been and should remain the policy of the United States. LGBTQ people in The Bahamas face stigma and discrimination, and lack the protection of laws forbidding discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation. If confirmed, I will support the Department's efforts to protect LGBTQ persons from violence, criminalization, discrimination, and stigma.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Human Rights*

*Question.* What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. My interest in democracy and human rights started when I was young, having seen the contributions my grandparents and parents made to society through their hands-on charitable endeavors: they were not only generous, but rolled up their sleeves. Through my own work and my own considerable charitable history, I have been a staunch supporter of those less fortunate and I have worked to guide them to a better station in their lives. I believe my contributions as part of the response following Hurricane Dorian are a recent example of my efforts to help others.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in The Bahamas? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in The Bahamas? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* The Bahamas is a constitutional, parliamentary democracy with a long history of respect for the rule of law and human rights, and effective civilian control over the security forces. Nevertheless, several human rights issues deserve attention. If confirmed, I will engage with the Government on working to ensure due process for irregular migrants and rights of the Haitian community, judicial system reforms, improving conditions in prisons and detention centers, and ending gender-based violence.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in The Bahamas in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

*Answer.* The Bahamas' challenge is to use its limited resources to promote respect for the rule of law while respecting human rights in a high-crime environment. If confirmed, I will work with my Embassy staff to augment existing training programs for Bahamian justice-sector officials. I would also champion existing Embassy and U.S. Government programs designed to promote human rights in the country.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in The Bahamas? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

*Answer.* Yes. I am committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and nongovernmental organizations in the United States and The Bahamas. Promoting democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms advances our national security. If confirmed, I would champion existing Embassy and U.S. Government programs designed to promote human rights in the country, as well as comply with all requirements under the Leahy Law.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with The Bahamas to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by The Bahamas?

*Answer.* Yes. The latest State Department's Human Rights Report states there were no political prisoners or detainees in The Bahamas in 2019. If confirmed, I will work actively with the Embassy team to address any cases that arise of political prisoners or persons unjustly targeted by government entities to ensure their rights and fundamental freedoms are respected.

*Question.* Will you engage with The Bahamas on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I will engage with the Government of the Bahamas on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance.

#### *Diversity*

*Question.* Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to foster a culture of inclusion and a representative workforce. I will encourage promoting Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in the hiring process through standardized interview procedures. I will promote the expansion of workplace flexibilities, including telework and alternative work schedules, and Leave Without Pay (LWOP) options, similar to "boomerang talent" programs in the private sector. I will learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform to encourage discussions on diversity and inclusion and the Department's new Centralized exit survey for employees leaving the Department.

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in The Bahamas are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering an environment of inclusion. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for retaining diverse talent. I will promote Diver-

sity and Inclusion Best Practices and tips for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and how they can be bolstered.

*Conflicts of Interest*

*Question.* Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in The Bahamas?

*Answer.* My investment portfolio includes a broad range of asset classes, some of which may hold interests in companies with a presence in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. My investment portfolio also includes security interests, including stocks, in companies, some of which may have a presence in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. I also own a personal residence in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

*Corruption*

*Question.* How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in The Bahamas specifically?

*Answer.* Corruption saps economic growth, hinders development, destabilizes governments, undermines democracy, and provides openings for dangerous groups like criminals, traffickers, and terrorists. The Department has made anticorruption a national security priority and works across the globe to prevent graft, promote accountability, and empower reformers. The Bahamas faces continued challenges in addressing corruption and lack of transparency, and Prime Minister Hubert Minnis has indicated that anticorruption efforts are a priority for his administration. If confirmed, I commit to addressing this issue.

*Question.* What is your assessment of corruption trends in The Bahamas and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

*Answer.* According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception indices, the Bahamas ranks 29 out of 198. Prime Minister Hubert Minnis of the Free National Movement won elections in a landslide in May 2017 on an anticorruption, pro-reform platform. The Prime Minister has stated his intent to instill greater transparency and accountability in government operations, reduce the debt and grow the economy, and improve citizen security. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Bahamian Government to implement needed reforms.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in The Bahamas?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would work with my country team to support these efforts, consulting with civil society where appropriate. I would ensure that U.S. Government anticorruption and governance programs in The Bahamas are well-managed, and that we properly monitor and evaluate programs in order to maximize their impact. I would continue to support efforts such as our International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) program with the International Development Law Organization to improve the prosecution of cases involving corruption, and training and mentoring for the Royal Bahamas Police Force to build their capacity to investigate complex financial crimes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO MELANIE HARRIS HIGGINS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* In December 2015, The United Nations Human Rights Council approved an Independent Investigation on Burundi to look into violations and abuses of human rights in Burundi in the wake of the controversial 2015 election that was characterized by violence, and widely condemned by the U.S. and others as not credible. The investigation found “abundant evidence of gross human rights violations as well as human rights abuses by the Government and people whose actions can be attributed to the Government.” It recommended a number of actions on the part of the Government, including participation in a genuine dialogue that could lead to a political settlement, disarming the youth militia, stopping use of police and intelligence for partisan purposes, and strengthening the independence of the judiciary:

- To your knowledge, have any of those recommendations been implemented?

Answer. No, not to my knowledge.

*Question.* Do they remain important?

Answer. The 2015 Independent Investigation on Burundi was created when the United States was an active member of the Council and was later replaced in 2016 with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi. The Commission is currently the only independent international mechanism investigating human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. Its findings were based on more than 1,200 statements of victims, witnesses, and alleged perpetrators of human rights violations. Although the United States withdrew from the Human Rights Council in June 2018, the State Department remains engaged with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi. With a new government recently elected, it will be important to see if the Imbonerakure, agents of the National Intelligence Service, the police, and local authorities continue to commit serious human rights violations and abuses in Burundi and act with impunity or if the new government will hold those responsible accountable, strengthen institutions, and support an independent free press and civil society.

*Question.* What more needs to be done, and how could you, if confirmed, lend your voice to seeing to their implementation?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate publicly and privately for human rights and democracy as essential for Burundi’s prosperity and stability with Burundian officials, international partners, civil society organizations, and business leaders. Consistent with applicable authorities and restrictions, including under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will also seek to include efforts to promote human rights and democracy in U.S. programming and foreign assistance.

*Question.* The United States has had a variety of targeted financial sanctions and other aid restrictions in place since the 2015 political crisis. Eleven individuals have been targeted for sanctions under Executive Order. Burundi’s eligibility for U.S. trade preferences under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has remained suspended since 2015. In FY2019 and FY2020, the administration fully applied legal restrictions on aid to Burundi under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

- Are those sanctions still justified?

Answer. The language in the renewal for Executive Order 13712 is the same language from President Obama’s declaration of a national emergency with respect to the situation in Burundi by Executive Order 13712 on November 22, 2015 for the violent political repression that occurred in 2015 after the attempted coup d’état, and re-election to a third term, of then Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza. The new Burundi Government came into office less than two months ago; I will need more time observing and working with that government before I can properly evaluate the sanctions and their effects.

The recent inauguration of President Ndayishimiye was a historic moment for Burundi that demonstrated the continued commitment of Burundians to a peaceful transfer of power, but there were also election irregularities. For example, the State Department’s June 5, 2020, statement on Burundi’s elections called on the Government of Burundi to “address reports of electoral fraud and investigate and pursue accountability for all allegations of voter intimidation before, during, and after the elections. We also urge the release of any authorized party representatives and other election observers who were unjustly detained or arrested for engaging in election observation activities, including possessing voting information after polling stations closed, to promote electoral transparency.” In our June 18, 2020, statement on the inauguration of President Ndayishimiye, we again called on the Burundian Government “to release members of political parties, civil society, and journalists arbi-

trarily arrested for election-related activities; and to investigate and pursue accountability for allegations of voter intimidation.” The new government has an opportunity to usher in a new period in Burundian history. If confirmed, I will engage with the Burundian Government, including on efforts to address trafficking in persons, human rights, and other criteria related to African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) eligibility, foreign assistance restrictions, and financial sanctions.

*Question.* What actions should the Government take in order to obtain sanctions relief?

*Answer.* The State Department’s 2020 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report provides prioritized recommendations for how the Burundian Government can better meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s minimum standards. Some of the main priorities for the Burundian Government should be to implement the anti-trafficking law, significantly increase efforts to more effectively investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, and to develop a national-level data collection on law enforcement and victim identification efforts. If confirmed, I will prioritize engagement on TIP related issues with the Government to increase efforts to combat trafficking in country and abroad in order to meet the “minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.” The current Tier 3 ranking, “not meeting the minimum standards” has restricted nonhumanitarian and nontrade-related foreign assistance to the Government.

Other types of sanction relief are not solely determined by the State Department but would include demonstrated improvements in areas such as democracy and human rights. The political space to discuss human rights and opposition to government policies continued to shrink throughout the Nkurunziza presidency. If confirmed, I will advocate and press for the continued release of individuals detained for political activities during this and past election periods, for fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression and the press, and the release of detained journalists. I will also continue to advocate for international nongovernmental organizations seeking reduced government interference in their activities to support Burundian civil society.

*Question.* In June, Human Rights Watch issued a statement that alleged that “Burundi’s Government is failing to communicate fact-based information on the Covid-19 pandemic and preventing doctors and nurses from responding adequately:”

- Is there accurate information readily available about the spread of the corona virus in Burundi?

*Answer.* Not to my knowledge, but I welcomed President Ndayishimiye’s July 1, 2020, announcement declaring the coronavirus pandemic Burundi’s “biggest enemy” and pledging to make testing widely available, which marked a significant change from previous government policy under then President Nkurunziza which called on Burundians to rely on prayers.

*Question.* What prompted the Government of Burundi to expel a World Health Organization official from the country?

*Answer.* The May 12, 2020, note verbale was sent to the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa and provided no explanation for the expulsion. The announcement came two days after the WHO sent letters to the Minister of Public Health requesting information on the COVID–19 response, reminding Burundi of its responsibilities as a State Party to the International Health Regulations, and pushing for implementation of adequate prevention measures.

*Question.* Can the healthcare system in Burundi handle an outbreak or an epidemic?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for and support U.S. Government initiatives to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, and COVID–19 and support Ebola preparedness. The U.S. Government has invested in Burundi’s capacity to respond to outbreaks through technical assistance to the Burundian Government to strengthen the health system and improve delivery of services. Since fiscal year 2012, through PEPFAR, the U.S. Government has invested over \$95 million to support Burundi’s HIV response and strengthen the country’s health system. In 2017 and 2019, USAID funds supported responses to malaria epidemics, working to bring the epidemics under control and build systems to better prevent future epidemics. Previous Ebola preparedness efforts supported by the United States and others improved the country’s ability to handle an outbreak or an epidemic, but there is more work to be done. The U.S. Government has provided more than \$5.8 million in support of the COVID–19 response, including an additional \$2 million to public health partners through USAID who have shifted their work from Ebola to COVID–19 preparedness; \$1.5 million in humanitarian assist-

ance to support water, sanitation, hygiene, and protection activities; and \$2.3 million in assistance to assist refugees and displaced persons vulnerable to COVID-19.

*Question.* What steps will you take, if confirmed, to press for accurate, transparent information?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to work with like-minded governments, organizations, and multilateral organizations to engage the Burundian Government and advocate for policies that support and advance U.S. interests. I will also continue to support accuracy in the Department's reporting and public reports such as the Human Rights Report and Trafficking in Persons Report.

*Question.* Will you advocate for the Government to allow the WHO to have full representation in the country?

*Answer.* To my knowledge, the World Health Organization (WHO) has not approached the United States seeking support to advocate on its behalf to allow the WHO to have full representation in the country. An interim WHO representative recently arrived in Burundi and is working closely with the Minister of Public Health and his staff to improve testing and treatment for COVID-19. If confirmed, I will continue to work with like-minded governments, organizations, and multilateral organizations to advocate for policies that support and advance U.S. interests, including good global public health.

#### *Oversight*

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will comply with all relevant federal laws, regulations, and Department policies, and will raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels. As the Ambassador, I will take seriously my responsibility to set the highest professional standards for the entire mission. Under my leadership, prohibited personnel practices will not be tolerated. I will make sure this is communicated to employees by holding town halls, meeting with section chiefs, and other appropriate means. I will also encourage all employees to complete relevant State Department training, in addition to the mandatory training required for employees.

*Question.* What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

*Answer.* I believe deeply in promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace environment, and as the most senior official within the Embassy, it will be my responsibility to set an example for fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive. If confirmed, fostering such values at Embassy Bujumbura will be a priority, and I will also make myself available to Embassy staff on this important issue. If confirmed, I will embrace opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion amongst our whole embassy team. I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to foster a culture of inclusion and representative workforce. I will encourage promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the hiring process through standardized interview procedures. To the extent possible, I will promote workplace flexibilities in accordance with State Department overseas employment guidance. I will learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform and the Department's new centralized exit survey.

*Question.* Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to responding promptly to requests for information by Members of the SFRC through, and in accordance with, the guidance of the Bureau of African Affairs and State Department's Office of Legislative Affairs, and long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I will take seriously any allegations of attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, and I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

#### *Democracy/Human Rights*

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I have promoted human rights and democracy throughout my 22-year Foreign Service career, starting with my first posting in Cameroon where I engaged human rights leaders and religious activists countrywide and advocated with traditional rulers to stop Female Genital Mutilation. During my time at U.S. Embassy Jakarta (2010-2013), I was the key interlocutor for activists and religious leaders in the breakaway region of Papua and engaged in honest conversations with government officials about the need for accountability for human rights abuses and violations in that region.

As Deputy Chief of Mission at U.S. Embassy Port Moresby (2013-2015), I led a multi-agency team that advocated on preventing and eliminating gender-based violence, including a successful campaign by Embassy personnel to partner with religious and traditional leaders to prevent women from being accused of witchcraft and burned alive. Our integrated programming also strengthened non-governmental organizations advocating for survivors of gender-based violence and trained female candidates to successfully compete for seats in Parliament.

If confirmed as Ambassador to Burundi, I will uphold U.S. values and advocate for democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all Burundian citizens.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Burundi? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Since the 2015 political and economic crisis, there has been a clear decline in respect for human rights and the rule of law in Burundi, which affects all its citizens' rights and raises concerns about fair and transparent governance. The steady decline of civic and political space has been a source of critical concern. Per the State Department's 2019 Human Rights Report, reports of human rights violations and abuses include unlawful killings, forced disappearances, torture as well as substantial interference with the rights of freedom of expression and association, and the right to peaceful assembly.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Burundi? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advocate publicly and privately for human rights and democracy as essential for Burundi's prosperity and stability with Burundian officials, international partners, civil society organizations, and business leaders. Con-

sistent with applicable authorities and restrictions, including under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will also seek to include efforts to promote human rights and democracy in U.S. programming and foreign assistance.

Bringing together stakeholders including those who fled the country in the aftermath of the 2015 political and economic crisis as well as building trust, and influencing change with few incentives, will all likely be challenges in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general. There are other international partners ready and willing to engage without advocating on human rights and democracy concerns, as we do. Despite the decline in bilateral engagement in the aftermath of the 2015 political and economic crisis, the United States and Burundi have a long history of partnership and cooperation. Recently elected President Ndayishimiye has expressed interest in improving relations with the United States. If confirmed, I look forward to deepening relationships with the Burundian Government, international and domestic partners, and all Burundians to advocate for tangible advancement in respect for human rights, empowerment of civil society, commitment to democracy, and the increased prosperity of both the United States and Burundi.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will engage publicly and privately with a wide range of stakeholders on matters of human rights, including civil rights, and governance and will offer support where appropriate. I will also seek to have the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura, in coordination with other foreign missions, lead advocacy on matters of human rights, democracy, anti-corruption, and good governance. Consistent with applicable authorities and restrictions, including under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will also seek to include these efforts in U.S. programming and foreign assistance, especially in the areas of freedom of expression, including for journalists, and strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Burundi? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* Civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations all play important roles in advancing democratic governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition to U.S.-based and Burundi-based organizations, many Burundi-focused organizations also operate from outside of the country. If confirmed, I will engage publicly and privately with a wide range of stakeholders on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance and will offer support where appropriate.

I will also seek to have the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura, in coordination with other foreign missions and international NGOs, lead efforts to continue to proactively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures, especially when those restrictions would place U.S. implementing partners in a position of potentially violating U.S. laws to comply with the restrictions. The State Department in coordination with USAID has closely tracked the measures first announced in 2017 for international NGO oversight and regulation, coordinated with donor organizations in Burundi, issued statements and raised it in multilateral fora, and engaged publicly and privately with the Burundian Government at the highest levels on this issue. If confirmed, I will continue to make this a priority.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue the Embassy's practice of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including political opposition figures and parties. Bringing together stakeholders including those who fled the country in the aftermath of the 2015 political and economic crisis as well as building trust, and influencing change with few incentives, will all likely be challenges in advancing political competition. The steady decline of civic and political space has been a source of critical concern. Recently elected President Ndayishimiye has expressed interest in improving relations with both domestic and international interlocutors, including the United States. If confirmed, I look forward to deepening relationships with the Bu-

rundian Government, international and domestic partners, and all Burundians to advocate for tangible advancement in respect to empowerment of civil society, including access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth, commitment to democracy, and the increased prosperity of both the United States and Burundi. Consistent with applicable authorities and restrictions, including under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will also seek to include these efforts in U.S. programming and foreign assistance.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Burundi on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Burundi?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed along with the Embassy team to meeting with independent, local press in Burundi. If confirmed, I am also committed to coordinating with like-minded missions and to continuing to press the Burundian Government to address cases of key political prisoners, including journalists, and other persons who have been unjustly targeted by the Government. Most recently, the State Department has privately engaged through high-level discussions and publicly called for the release of persons, including journalists, unjustly detained during the May 2020 elections. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing to engage with the Government of Burundi about our concerns, and I will ensure a dialogue on this and human rights remains a priority in our bilateral relationship. I will also collaborate with like-minded missions, multilateral organizations, and civil society to speak with a united voice that represents all Burundians committed to a democratic future for their country.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Burundi?

*Answer.* The United States believes that malicious activities in cyberspace can undermine national security and economic prosperity. If confirmed, I will engage with like-minded missions, civil society, and international partners to respond to disinformation efforts and underscore the importance of a credible, independent, professional media to a free and democratic society.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Burundi on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue our embassy's efforts to promote workers' rights. I would advocate for continued improvements in this area, and document progress in the Human Rights Report. As noted in the 2019 Human Rights Report, Burundian law provides for the right of workers to form and join unions with restrictions, but the Burundian Government did not effectively enforce applicable laws and placed excessive restrictions on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Burundi, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Burundi? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Burundi?

*Answer.* Since 2009, consensual same-sex sexual conduct and same-sex marriage between adults is illegal in Burundi. Same-sex sexual conduct is punishable by up to two-year imprisonment and a fine of up to 100,000 Burundian francs. The law does not prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ persons in housing, employment, nationality laws, and access to Government services such as health care and societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was common. In 2017, the Burundian Government passed an international NGO law, which imposed severe restrictions and scrutiny on the ability of LGBTI organizations to register and work effectively. If confirmed, I commit to engaging on human rights for all Burundians and will promote diplomatic and engagement efforts that are inclusive of all people, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. When engaging with civil society members, I will be cognizant of the risks faced by LGBTI persons in general.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO MELANIE HARRIS HIGGINS BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Human Rights*

*Question.* What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* I have promoted human rights and democracy throughout my 22-year Foreign Service career, starting with my first posting in Cameroon where I engaged human rights leaders and religious activists countrywide and advocated with traditional rulers to stop Female Genital Mutilation. During my time at U.S. Embassy Jakarta (2010-2013), I was the key interlocutor for activists and religious leaders in the breakaway region of Papua and engaged in honest conversations with government officials about the need for accountability for human rights abuses and violations in that region. As Deputy Chief of Mission at U.S. Embassy Port Moresby (2013-2015), I led a multi-agency team that advocated on preventing and eliminating gender-based violence, including a successful campaign by Embassy personnel to partner with religious and traditional leaders to prevent women from being accused of witchcraft and burned alive. Our integrated programming also strengthened non-governmental organizations advocating for abused women and trained female candidates to successfully compete for seats in Parliament. If confirmed as Ambassador to Burundi, I will uphold U.S. values and advocate for democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all Burundian citizens.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in Burundi? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Burundi? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* Since the 2015 political and economic crisis, there has been a clear decline in respect for human rights and the rule of law in Burundi, which affects all its citizens' rights and raises concerns about fair and transparent governance. Per the State Department's 2019 Human Rights Report, human rights violations and abuses include unlawful killings, forced disappearances, torture as well as substantial interference with the rights of freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and association. If confirmed, I will advocate publicly and privately for human rights and democracy as essential for Burundi's prosperity and stability with Burundian officials, international partners, civil society organizations, and business leaders. Consistent with applicable authorities and restrictions, including under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will also seek to include efforts to promote human rights and democracy in U.S. programming and foreign assistance.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Burundi in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

*Answer.* If confirmed, challenges in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general may include bringing together stakeholders including those who fled the country in the aftermath of the 2015 political and economic crisis, building trust among stakeholders, and influencing change in a context with an active and influential presence of international actors who do not share the same human rights and democracy concerns we do. The steady decline of civic and political space has been a source of critical concern. Recently elected President Ndayishimiye has expressed interest in improving relations with the United States. If confirmed, I look forward to deepening relationships with the Burundian Government, international and domestic partners, and all Burundians to advocate for tangible advancement in respect for human rights, empowerment of civil society, commitment to democracy, and the increased prosperity of both the United States and Burundi.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Burundi? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

*Answer.* Civil society members, human rights organizations, and other non-governmental organizations all play important roles in advancing democratic governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition to U.S.-based and Burundi-based organizations, many Burundi-focused organizations also operate from outside of the country. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with all individuals and organizations for the benefit of U.S. goals, development objec-

tives, and policy advocacy and to further deepen our partnership with the Burundian people and government.

The United States and Burundi have a history of security cooperation, for example with the AU Peacekeeping Mission to Somalia. Previous efforts focused on professionalization of Burundi's military and training, including human rights training, for the country's peacekeeping troops. The Burundian military has previously acted swiftly to address allegations of gross violations of human rights through proper AU and U.N. channels. Due to the current restriction on non-humanitarian, nontrade-related assistance under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, Embassy Bujumbura is limited on the kinds of further professionalization assistance it can provide at this time to address this important issue. The Leahy Law helps ensure that we do not furnish U.S. assistance to security force units where there is credible information that the unit committed a gross violation of human rights. If confirmed, I will act in accordance with our law and policy, and maintain existing processes at Embassy Bujumbura for Leahy vetting, and I will encourage the Burundian Government to continue to address credible allegations of gross violations of human rights through transparent investigations to ensure the perpetrators are held accountable.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Burundi to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Burundi?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to engaging along with the embassy team to continue pressing the Burundian Government to address cases of key political prisoners, as well as journalists, and other persons who have been unjustly targeted by the Government. Most recently, the State Department has privately engaged through high-level discussions and publicly called for the release of persons unjustly detained during the May 2020 elections. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing to engage with the Government of Burundi about our concerns, and I will ensure a dialogue on this issue specifically and on human rights more broadly, remain a priority in our bilateral relationship. I will also collaborate with like-minded missions, multilateral organizations, and civil society to speak with a united voice that represents all Burundians committed to a democratic future for their country.

*Question.* Will you engage with Burundi on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will engage publicly and privately with a wide range of stakeholders on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance and will offer support where appropriate. I will also seek to have the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura, in coordination with other foreign missions, lead advocacy on matters of human rights, democracy, anti-corruption, and good governance. Consistent with applicable authorities and restrictions, including under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will also seek to include these efforts in U.S. programming and foreign assistance, especially in the areas of freedom of expression, including for journalists, and strengthening of civil society organizations.

#### *Diversity*

*Question.* Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will embrace opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion amongst our whole embassy team. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to foster a culture of inclusion and representative workforce. I will encourage promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the hiring process through standardized interview procedures. I will promote workplace flexibilities in accordance with Department overseas employment guidelines. I will learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform and the Department's new Centralized exit survey.

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Burundi are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

*Answer.* I believe deeply in promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace environment, and as the most senior official within the Embassy, it will be my responsibility to set an example for fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive. If confirmed, fostering such values at Embassy Bujumbura will be a priority, and I will also make myself available to Embassy staff on this important issue. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently under-

taking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering a culture and environment of inclusion. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for retaining diverse talent. I will promote Diversity and Inclusion Best Practices and tips for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and how they can be bolstered.

*Conflicts of Interest*

*Question.* Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Burundi?

*Answer.* My investment portfolio includes diversified mutual funds, including a foreign stock index fund, which may hold interests in companies with a presence overseas, but are exempt from the conflict of interest laws. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

*Corruption*

*Question.* How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Burundi specifically?

*Answer.* Political corruption negatively influences democratic governance, the rule of law, and efforts to foster economic growth, improve the delivery of public services, and pursue effective development policies in many countries. Corruption further undermines efforts to foster participatory policy making, implement effective policy, and facilitate service delivery. In Burundi specifically, the anti-corruption law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but according to the 2019 Human Rights Report, the reluctance of police and public prosecutors to investigate and prosecute cases of government corruption and of judges to hear them in a timely manner resulted in widespread impunity for government officials, their supporters and proxies. I intend to engage with the Government of the newly-elected president of Burundi to advocate for improved governance and the rule of law.

*Question.* What is your assessment of corruption trends in Burundi and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

*Answer.* In 2019, Transparency International ranked Burundi 165 out of 180 countries, and it scored 19 points out of 100 on the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index. Since 2010, Burundi's Corruption Perceptions Index has remained in the 17-22 range. Burundi's late former President Nkurunziza enacted an anti-corruption policy in 2010, but corruption remained pervasive.

President Ndayishimiye was inaugurated on June 18, 2020. In a June 30, 2020, address to the Burundian parliament, the president announced his commitment to combat corruption in public services and embezzlement of public funds. As a first step to combatting corruption, citizens can now anonymously report corruption at suggestion boxes in local administrative offices. On July 3, 2020, the Minister of Finance announced new measures the Burundian Government plans to use to monitor the management of the state budget and revenue collection. If confirmed, as the U.S. Ambassador to Burundi, I will advocate for a comprehensive, systemic approach to combat corruption that empowers the people to report without fear of retaliation and promotes inclusive governance and transparency in Burundi's Government.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Burundi?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage publicly and privately with a wide range of stakeholders on good governance and anticorruption efforts and will offer support where appropriate. I will also seek to have the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura, in coordination with other foreign missions, lead advocacy on matters of human rights, democracy, anti-corruption, and good governance. Consistent with applicable authorities and restrictions, including under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I will also seek to include these efforts in U.S. programming and foreign assistance, especially in the areas of freedom of expression, including for journalists, and strengthening of civil society organizations.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO JEANNE MARIE MALONEY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* A 1973 decree bans political parties, and in December, police in Eswatini arrested the head of the largest opposition party along with several other politicians and activists, seizing electronic devices and other materials. The African Union called on Eswatini to lift the ban on political parties in the context of the 2018 parliamentary elections. Ambassador Lisa Peterson is on record calling for the same. To your knowledge, has the ban on political parties been lifted? What impact does the ban have with regards to people exercising political rights?

Answer. Political parties openly exist in Eswatini, but conditions for their operations, particularly in elections, are undefined, legally unclear, and/or culturally restricted. Although candidates from several political parties competed in the 2018 elections, the constitution requires candidates for public office to run on their individual merit, as independents. Political parties may not offer slates of candidates, and a candidate's party affiliation does not appear on ballots.

While government officials assert that the 1973 decree banning parties ended with the adoption of the new constitution in 2006, the Government has not issued any official declaration to clarify its assertion, and political parties and NGOs remain skeptical. Additionally, sociocultural taboos associated with overt political party affiliation (especially in rural areas) continue to limit organized political engagement. In 2019, political parties conducted the first national political marches and rallies in support of multiparty democracy since the 1973 decreebanning political parties. Later the same year, however, a town council prohibited a proposed political march.

*Question.* What steps will you take, if confirmed, to address the problems identified not only in the Freedom House report, but which to a large extent are echoed in the State Department Country Report for Human Rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Eswatini Government to define and expand the space for political parties to operate, including by encouraging the Government to take regulatory and/or legal action that removes the ambiguity surrounding the 1973 decree banning parties and establishes a clear framework clarifying both the ways in which political parties are permitted to operate and the manner in which party candidates may participate in elections. I will emphasize the importance of making measurable progress on these issues as a condition precedent to qualifying for Millennium Challenge Corporation assistance, to which Eswatini aspires, as well as maintaining its AGOA status. I will engage Swati authorities, international partners, civil society organizations, and business leaders to work together toward these goals.

*Question.* What is your assessment related to the status of women's legal and civil rights in Eswatini?

Answer. Despite significant progress in recent years, including a handful of recent court rulings and the 2018 enactment of the Sexual Offenses and Domestic Violence Act, women continue to occupy a subordinate role in society. Although the constitution provides for equal protection under the law and guarantees dignity for all persons, Eswatini's dualistic legal system, which incorporates common law and traditional Swati laws and customs, has tended to complicate the protection of women's rights. Recent court decisions have clarified and expanded women's rights.

Girls and women face heightened discrimination in rural areas, where Swati culture and tradition often receive primacy over constitutional freedoms and legal guarantees of rights. Boys receive preference in education, and women are more likely to be employed in the informal sector.

*Question.* What impact has this had on the HIV/AIDS epidemic? Does the United States have programs aimed at expanding and protecting the rights of women in Eswatini?

*Answer.* Studies show that improved gender equality and greater legal protection for women, especially adolescent girls and young women, correlate to reduced vulnerability to HIV infection. This correlation applies in Eswatini as well.

The United States supports several programs to expand and protect the rights of women in Eswatini, including by helping Eswatini to amend its Legal Practitioner's Act to improve access to justice for women and other underserved populations. The U.S. Government is also launching a women's economic empowerment project to assist with post-COVID recovery, and to mitigate restrictive economic, legal, and cultural barriers to facilitate women's meaningful participation in the economy.

Under PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief), the DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) program new HIV diagnoses among adolescent girls and young women have declined by 25-percent or more in nearly all of the areas where the program is taking place. Peace Corps supports similar objectives through its GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) clubs. Both of these programs help young women know their HIV status, learn how to negotiate safe sex, work on future aspirations and plans, and build financial literacy.

USAID's regional ARISA (Advancing Rights in Southern Africa) program also provides support to women in Eswatini to assist with land rights, and other access to economic activity.

*Question.* What do you plan to do, if confirmed, to advocate for greater rights for women in Eswatini?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will leverage my position and my convening power to engage both publicly and privately to advocate for greater respect for the rights of women in Eswatini. I will explain and emphasize the fact that greater respect for women's rights is essential for Eswatini's future growth, economic diversification, and security. I am committed to working with the Eswatini Government, like-minded missions, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations to advance these important areas.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the state of media freedom in Eswatini?

*Answer.* Although the constitution and law guarantee freedom of expression, including for the press, the Government restricts media freedom, particularly on matters concerning the King and/or the monarchy. Self-censorship, harassment and intimidation of journalists who criticize the King, and reprisals are rampant.

Although Eswatini's two daily newspapers increasingly criticize government actors for corruption, inefficiency, and other transgressions, they strictly avoid criticizing the King and other members of the royal family. An independent monthly magazine occasionally criticizes the royal family, including the King, as well as the Government, but self-censorship remains a concern for all Eswatini-based journalists. Independent online media and blogs of widely varying degrees of credibility and professionalism, published primarily by individuals based outside of Eswatini, are harshly critical of the King, royal family, and government. Online media, including social media, is sometimes monitored but never disrupted or censored. Broadcast media remains firmly under state control. Most people in Eswatini obtain their news from radio broadcasts. Access to speak on national radio is generally limited to government officials, although the University of Eswatini has a radio license to broadcast university events.

*Question.* Does the U.S. currently have any programs to support media freedoms?

*Answer.* The USAID-funded regional program "Advancing Rights in Southern Africa" promotes media freedom in Eswatini.

*Question.* What if anything should the U.S. be doing to support journalists in Eswatini?

*Answer.* We can do more to support journalists through boosting professional exchanges, expanding targeted training programs, and increasing engagement with the Government, civil society, like-minded missions, and the private sector to address media freedoms and expand the space for professional journalists to operate. We could also consider trying to attract more international media attention for Eswatini, both through private media houses and respected U.S. institutions such as Voice of America. Shining a brighter light on Eswatini could improve understanding of its challenges and opportunities and, in doing so encourage better journalistic practices.

*Question.* As of 2018 in Eswatini, of those living with HIV, 92% knew their HIV status, 86% were on treatment, and 81% were virally suppressed. This puts Eswatini close to achieving the UNAIDS so-called 90-90-90 goals, which call for countries to achieve 90% for each of these measures. This is a remarkable achievement given that, as of 2018, Eswatini had the highest HIV adult prevalence rate in the world. However only 76% of children are on treatment. Do you have any idea what accounts for the disparity in terms of treatment rates for children? What should the U.S. be doing to address the disparity?

*Answer.* The disparity in treatment rates between children and adults is due to non-universal implementation of pediatric testing strategies and frequent changes in caregivers aside from the biological parent. This raises issues of consent for HIV testing and disclosure if the caregiver does not have legal custody. Additionally, there have been persistent issues with parental adherence to testing schedules for exposed children.

Owing to the successful implementation of the mother-to-child-transmission reduction program, PEPFAR support has facilitated Eswatini's approach to eliminating infant HIV. The number of HIV positive children under the age of five is now very low, and all are identified and on treatment.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I commit to making clear that prohibited personnel practices has no place in the federal government and will not be tolerated. As a career foreign service officer, I have treated and will continue to treat all employees with respect and professionalism, and I will make that clear to all employees under my leadership. I agree that those found to have engaged in retaliation should be subject to accountability and discipline consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Department policy.

*Question.* What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will embrace every opportunity to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. I would ensure the Embassy devotes resources to mentoring and support for all staff, including those from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups. Diverse teams are richer in creativity and perspective, and I believe all leaders should embrace a wide range of inputs, viewpoints, and backgrounds. I will make sure that employees understand this by holding town halls, meeting with section chiefs, and other appropriate means.

*Question.* Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

*Answer.* Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

*Answer.* Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all federal laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* For the past five years of my career, I have prioritized the promotion of human rights in Africa. As Foreign Policy Advisor at U.S. Army Africa, I worked together with my military colleagues to impress upon African counterparts the imperative to observe the rights of individuals—and to transparently investigate and decisively act when an allegation of a human rights abuse or violation is made.

Previously, as the Director of the Office of Security Affairs in the Africa Bureau, I was responsible for ensuring that U.S. peacekeeping training and security assistance recipients were appropriately vetted in accordance with the Leahy law. Our programs included training on human rights, the protection of civilians, and countering sexual exploitation and abuse. With our support, troop performance improved.

Earlier in my career, while serving as Desk Officer for Angola, I worked to implement the Department's democracy and human rights priorities in our bilateral engagement. The Department continues to prioritize democracy and human rights, which has supported impressive reforms over the past few years. If confirmed as Ambassador, I look forward to advocating for human rights and democratic principles in Eswatini.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Eswatini? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* The most pressing challenges to democratic engagement and development in Eswatini are lack of transparency, inclusion, and the freedom of expression. Lingering practical and cultural restrictions on political participation cause significant problems. While government officials assert that the 1973 decree that banned political parties ended with the adoption of the new constitution in 2006, the Government has not issued any official declaration to clarify its assertion, and political parties and NGOs remain skeptical.

While political parties exist in Eswatini, conditions for their operations are legally undefined, and/or culturally restricted. The constitution requires candidates for public office to run on their individual merit, as independents. Political parties may not offer slates of candidates, and a candidate's party affiliation does not appear on ballots. One result of the limited space for political party participation has been that lawmakers are hindered from forming coalitions around shared ideas, which fundamentally weakens the Parliament as a counterweight to the other two branches of government. While legal reform following enactment of the new constitution in 2006 has opened up some additional space for increased and improved political engagement, government officials, political actors, and civil society alike have been slow to transform democratic reforms on paper into tangible progress on the ground.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Eswatini? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will encourage the Eswatini Government to define and expand the space for political parties, including by taking regulatory and/or legal action that removes ambiguity surrounding the 1973 decree banning parties and establishes a clear framework clarifying both the ways in which political parties are permitted to operate and the manner in which party candidates may participate in elections. I will emphasize both publicly and privately that respect for political rights and democratic engagement should be a critical component to Eswatini's efforts to improve its international reputation, attract foreign direct investment, and enhance its security. I will emphasize the importance of making measurable progress on these issues as a condition precedent to qualifying for Millennium Chal-

lenge Corporation (MCC) assistance, to which Eswatini aspires. I will engage Swati authorities, political parties, civil society organizations, business leaders, and international partners to work together toward these goals.

Potential impediments to progress are likely to come from Eswatini's deeply entrenched cultural and traditional institutions. By engaging with a wide array of actors, demonstrating respect for sociocultural traditions that are not antithetical to human rights, accentuating the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the text of Eswatini's own constitution, and leveraging the eligibility criteria of flagship U.S. Government trade and development programs like MCC and AGOA, I hope to chip away at these impediments.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* U.S. Government assistance to Eswatini currently advances democracy and governance through several avenues, including by providing assistance to advance electoral reforms, enhance fiscal transparency and accountability, and promote increased participation by women in the political process. Additionally, the United States supports the introduction and expansion of good governance within financial administration and service delivery systems, which bolsters transparency, citizen participation, and accountability within planning and financial management processes. If confirmed, I will continue to engage within the Department and with interagency partners to support the establishment and continuation of complementary and expanded programs that advance U.S. interests in Eswatini. I also will emphasize the importance of making measurable progress on democracy and governance as a condition to both maintaining the country's AGOA eligibility and qualifying for Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) assistance, to which Eswatini aspires.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Eswatini? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* Human rights NGOs—local, regional, and international—are active in Eswatini. Civil society organizations, regardless of where they are registered or where they operate, can be critical allies in advancing democratic governance, expanding human rights and fundamental freedoms, and assisting the United States to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral relationships. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging broadly to help advance these objectives. I will leverage our strong relationships in Eswatini to communicate privately or publicly (as the situation dictates) to proactively address efforts to restrict or penalize civil society through legal or regulatory measures.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* Restrictions on political participation remain one of Eswatini's most enduring challenges. Although there has been measurable progress in recent years thanks to important legal reforms and expanded rights of assembly, speech, and association, much work remains to be done.

If confirmed, I will work with the King and his advisors, the host government, civil society, and like-minded missions to secure and expand upon this progress. I will emphasize the importance of promoting diverse viewpoints and supporting an open arena for peaceful, good faith discussions of political differences. I commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties, and I will advocate openly in support of human rights for all individuals in Eswatini, including women, minorities, and youth.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Eswatini on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Eswatini?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will engage with media practitioners, like-minded missions, civil society, government, and international partners to underscore the importance of an independent, professional, and open media to a free and democratic society. I will seek resources to continue support to Eswatini's media, including profes-

sional exchanges, targeted training programs, and seminars to educate journalists and media stakeholders about their rights. Swati journalists have participated in U.S. Government-sponsored professional exchange programs on investigative reporting, safeguarding freedom of expression, and the media's role in strengthening democratic institutions.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Eswatini?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will engage with civil society and government actors on countering disinformation and malign propaganda by foreign state and non-state actors. As Taiwan's last diplomatic ally on the African continent, Eswatini finds itself in a position that is particularly vulnerable to disinformation and malign propaganda campaigns. I will commit to working with like-minded partners in Eswatini to counter such campaigns.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Eswatini on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* The United States has a long and proud tradition of supporting the rights of workers, including to form labor organizations, internationally. If confirmed, I will commit to engage with unions, relevant government offices, and the private sector to support labor rights.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Eswatini, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Eswatini? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Eswatini?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Eswatini, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity. I will seek ways to support the efforts of LGBTI NGOs in Eswatini, including through advocacy, leadership development opportunities, and programmatic support.

Eswatini has seen recent progress in this space, although clear challenges remain. While there are colonial-era common law prohibitions against sodomy, no penalties are specified, and there has never been an arrest or prosecution for consensual same-sex conduct. The law does not prohibit discrimination against LGBTI persons in housing, employment, nationality laws, and access to government services such as health care. Societal discrimination against LGBTI persons remains widespread, and LGBTI persons generally conceal their sexual orientation.

Despite these barriers, in 2019, the LGBTI community organized and held the country's second Pride Parade in as many years, both of which received positive media attention and occurred without incident.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO JEANNE MARIE MALONEY BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* For the past five years of my career, I have prioritized the promotion of human rights in Africa. As Foreign Policy Advisor at U.S. Army Africa, I worked together with my military colleagues to impress upon African counterparts the imperative to observe the rights of individuals—and to transparently investigate and decisively act when an allegation of a human rights abuse or violation is made.

Previously, as the Director of the Office of Security Affairs in the Africa Bureau, I was responsible for ensuring that U.S. peacekeeping training and security assistance recipients were appropriately vetted in accordance with the Leahy law. Our programs included training on human rights, the protection of civilians, and countering sexual exploitation and abuse. With our support, troop performance improved.

Earlier in my career, while serving as Desk Officer for Angola, I worked to implement the Department's democracy and human rights priorities in our bilateral engagement. The Department continues to prioritize democracy and human rights, which has supported impressive reforms over the past few years. If confirmed as Ambassador, I look forward to advocating for human rights and democratic principles in Eswatini.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in Eswatini? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Eswatini? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* The most pressing human rights issues in Eswatini are restrictions on the freedom of expression with respect to the monarchy and limitations on political participation. If confirmed, I will use my leadership and voice, both publicly and privately, to underscore that respect for human rights is essential for Eswatini's future growth, prosperity, and security. Additionally, I will engage political organizations, Swati authorities, international partners, civil society organizations, and business leaders to work together toward these goals.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Eswatini in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

*Answer.* Regarding freedom of expression, members of the royal family and Eswatini Government officials continue to insist that Swati culture prohibits public criticism of the monarchy, making it difficult for local press or civil society organizations to hold members of the royal family accountable for practices that hurt the nation, such as exorbitant royal spending.

On political participation, the Government has been unwilling to publish an official record or statement making it clear that the ban on political parties contained in a 1973 royal decree is no longer in effect. Until it does so, doubts will continue among political parties, NGOs, and the people of Eswatini, and will inhibit the further development of political parties and the strengthening of Parliament.

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with the King and his advisors, government officials, political organizations, international partners, civil society, and members of the press.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Eswatini? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

*Answer.* Yes, I am committed to meeting with human rights organizations, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations, regardless of where they are registered or operate. Such organizations can play an important role in advancing democratic governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and assisting Eswatini to continue developing into a stronger partner of the United States. The Leahy Law helps to ensure that we do not furnish U.S. assistance to a security force unit where there is credible information that the unit committed a gross violation of human rights. If confirmed, I will support existing processes at Embassy Mbabane to ensure continued implementation of the Leahy law.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Eswatini to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Eswatini?

*Answer.* There is no question there have been a number of concerns related to good governance and respect for human rights in Eswatini. Our Embassy has engaged with the Government and a multitude of stakeholders to make progress in some of these areas. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing to promote human rights for all individuals in Eswatini, including those who are members of vulnerable populations, journalists, and members of political parties. I am committed to working with the Eswatini Government, like-minded missions, civil society, and international organizations to address these important areas.

*Question.* Will you engage with Eswatini on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

*Answer.* The United States has been a strong advocate in Eswatini for the respect of human rights, including freedoms of expression and of association, and the rule of law. If confirmed, I am committed to speaking both publicly and privately with the Government of Eswatini about our concerns. I will partner with like-minded missions in Eswatini to speak with a united voice on this topic, will work with civil society to ensure our voice is joined by every-day citizens committed to the country's future, and will use my convening power to ensure a continued dialogue on human rights in Eswatini remains front and center of our agenda.

*Question.* Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

*Answer.* I agree with the research that indicates that diverse teams are richer in creativity and perspective, and I believe all leaders should embrace a wide range of inputs, viewpoints, and backgrounds.

If confirmed, I will pursue every opportunity to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. I will ensure the Embassy devotes resources to mentoring and support for all staff, including those from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups.

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Eswatini are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

*Answer.* If confirmed, fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive will be a priority. Proactively, I will make sure supervisors within the Embassy regularly complete diversity training. As the most senior official within the Embassy, it will be my responsibility to set the example for fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive.

*Question.* Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Eswatini?

*Answer.* My investment portfolio includes diversified mutual funds, including a foreign stock index fund and global bond funds, which may hold interests in companies with a presence overseas, but which are exempt from the conflict of interest laws. My investment portfolio also includes security interests, including stocks, in companies, some of which may have a presence in Eswatini. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

*Question.* How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Eswatini specifically?

*Answer.* In many developing countries, corruption inhibits the delivery of public services by siphoning off limited resources and impeding economic growth. Members of the royal family continue to exercise undue influence on large contracts, foreign investments, and business ventures in the country, which creates fertile ground for corruption. While Eswatini offers businesses one of the most politically stable environments in the region, the Government must strengthen efforts toward providing a transparent and predictable economic environment that is attractive to foreign businesses and investors.

*Question.* What is your assessment of corruption trends in Eswatini and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

*Answer.* Within weeks of taking office in 2018, the new Prime Minister announced that his priorities were to turn around the economy and to fight aggressively against corruption. Since then, Eswatini officials have had a mixed response to corruption, with clear progress in some circles counterbalanced by continuing problems in others. The current cabinet has condemned government fraud, waste, and abuse and has instituted accountability measures and reduced opportunities for corruption in several government offices. Earlier this year, authorities arrested a senior government official for alleged corruption and charged him with crimes that could lead to 20 years in prison.

Nevertheless, corruption remains a serious problem, most often involving personal relationships and bribes being used to secure government contracts on large capital projects. The Anticorruption Commission continues to lack the power to effectively investigate, prosecute, and punish corrupt acts.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Eswatini?

Answer. If confirmed, I will underscore the importance of controlling corruption and strengthening good governance. I will support existing and expanded USG-funded training programs and sector-specific engagements to improve transparency, accountability, and oversight. I will emphasize both publicly and privately that control of corruption should be a critical component to Eswatini's efforts to improve its international reputation, attract foreign direct investment, and enhance its security. I will encourage the Government to empower and fund the Anticorruption Commission in a manner that is proportional to its ambitious constitutional mandate.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO MICHAEL A. MCCARTHY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*Question.* President George Weah's 2018 election marked Liberia's first peaceful transfer of power between elected heads of state since 1944. Weah, a former European football star, ran a campaign based on anti-corruption and inclusive economic growth. His efforts to fulfill those promises have come under increasing scrutiny due to high profile scandals, and his refusal to disclose his assets publicly. Dissatisfaction with Weah's performance have prompted large-scale anti-government protests in Monrovia.

- What should we be providing by way of technical assistance, or support for civil society watchdogs to help address corruption in Liberia?

Answer. Corruption is endemic in Liberia and affects nearly every facet of life. In 2019, Liberia ranked 137 of 180 countries and territories on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, falling from 120 in 2018. In 2012, Liberia ranked 75. To protect U.S. taxpayer assets, USAID maintains a robust monitoring and evaluation program. If confirmed, I will continue to reinforce U.S. values including the application of good governance, fiscal transparency, improved public financial management, and inclusive economic growth in my interactions with President Weah and other Liberian officials. These values are ingrained in U.S. programming and are the foundational elements of the assistance portfolio to Liberia. As we do in other countries, the United States will consider application of visa sanctions for corrupt officials—including those who use corrupt practices or ill-gotten influence to subvert Liberia's recently established democratic gains.

In January of this year, thousands of protesters joined demonstrations in Liberia's capital, Monrovia. Police reportedly dispersed the protesters with tear gas. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported that since March "Liberian security forces have attacked or intimidated at least four journalists covering the COVID-19 pandemic." The Liberian solicitor general was quoted as saying publicly that, "Any media institution that decides to spread fake news, we'll just move in and seize your equipment, we'll keep it and we'll ask for the revocation of your license until after the coronavirus. And even after that, there will be a contest in court and it would be difficult for you to get your license."

*Question.* How would you characterize the state of political and media freedoms in Liberia? Has the Government taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to restrict freedom of expression and assembly?

Answer. Recent editions of the Department of State's annual Human Rights Report note that restrictions on freedom of expression for members of the press are among the most significant human rights issues in Liberia. The Liberian Government has taken some steps to address these concerns, including passage in 2019 of the Press Freedom Act, which was an important step forward in decriminalizing defamation and promoting a freer press. Nevertheless, journalists sometimes perceive the Government's approach to them as antagonistic.

In high-profile cases of anti-government demonstrations in 2019 and 2020, the Ministry of Justice requested that organizers apply for permits before assembling, though the laws and regulations regarding permits remain unclear. Civil society and the international community have worked to encourage dialogue between all actors and to establish a transparent system that would respect the right to peaceful assembly while also providing for public safety.

If confirmed, my Embassy team and I will look into any allegations of use of the COVID-19 pandemic to restrict the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and advocate for transparent laws and regulations around the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, including for members of the press.

*Question.* If confirmed, what will you do to advocate for respect for political and civil rights in Liberia?

*Answer.* Effective, accountable, transparent, responsive, and inclusive governance is fundamental to citizen-focused democracy and a free market economy. U.S. support for these objectives should focus on improving the ability of Liberian ministries' to use public resources in transparent and accountable ways, decentralizing service delivery to local authorities so that citizens can better access and monitor those services, strengthening Liberia's capacity to hold free and fair elections, fostering accountable political leadership, as well as strengthening capacity of civil society and media organizations as effective advocates for reform.

In terms of potential impediments, both the armed forces and civilian security agencies suffer from a perennial lack of funding, which leads to late payments of salaries and low levels of operational readiness. Good governance is also challenged by corruption and a political system that places disproportionate influence in individual actors rather than institutions or organizations. U.S. assistance to Liberia seeks to build democratic institutions, and shore up checks and balances, efforts I pledge to support, if confirmed.

#### *Oversight*

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

*Answer.* Yes, I agree that the federal government should not employ prohibited personnel practices. As a career Foreign Service Officer, I have treated and will continue to treat all employees with respect and professionalism. If confirmed, I will maintain a policy of prohibiting these personnel practices. I agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be subject to accountability and discipline in accordance with U.S. federal labor law and regulation.

*Question.* What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will foster an environment that is open, diverse, and inclusive. Proactively, I will make sure supervisors within the Embassy complete diversity training on a regular basis. As the most senior official within the Embassy, it will be my responsibility to set the example for fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive.

*Question.* Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

*Answer.* Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

*Answer.* Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

*Answer.* I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

#### *Democracy/Human Rights*

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* In 2015, while serving as Charge d'Affaires in South Sudan, we publicly raised concerns about South Sudanese Government officials' human rights violations and abuses following the country's descent into crisis in December 2013. This effort put the Government on notice that the United States was monitoring the actions of government troops and their associated militias and that we were tracking events throughout the country. I believe our actions in this capacity inhibited further human rights abuses and violations. If confirmed as Ambassador, I intend to advocate for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Liberians.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Liberia? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* Recent editions of the Department of State's annual Human Rights Report note that the most significant human rights issues in Liberia include violence against women, including widespread female genital mutilation and other harmful practices against women and girls; restrictions on freedom of expression for members of the press; harsh prison conditions and lengthy pretrial detention; and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. If confirmed, I will use my unique platform and voice as the U.S. Ambassador, both publicly in my interactions with the Liberian people and privately with Liberian officials, on the importance of human rights and the rule of law in Liberia. I will engage like-minded missions, civil society, government and business leaders, and other relevant stakeholders to end these abusive practices.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Liberia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* The U.S. Embassy in Monrovia has served as a powerful and consistent advocate for human rights, civil rights, good governance, and democracy in Liberia. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will speak with an authoritative voice—both publicly to the Liberian people and privately with Liberian officials—on the importance of making further progress on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance to Liberia's democracy and future prosperity. I will partner with like-minded missions, civil society, and other key stakeholders to ensure that the dialogue with the Government of Liberia on these critical issues remains at the top of our bilateral agenda.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* Supporting democracy and good governance are key priorities of our assistance programming in Liberia. U.S. support for these objectives focuses on improving the ability of Liberian ministries' to use public resources in transparent and accountable ways; decentralizing service delivery to local authorities so that citizens can better access and monitor those services; strengthening Liberia's capacity to hold free and fair elections, which are transparent; fostering accountable political

leadership; as well as strengthening capacity of civil society and media organizations as effective advocates for reform.

U.S. public diplomacy and outreach in Liberia supports Mission and Department goals through press outreach, small grants, American Center-based programs, digital video conferences, visiting speakers, exchange programs, and social media engagement. USAID provides support to promote free and fair elections, cultivate more representative political leadership, and enhance the ability of Liberians to hold their government accountable. USAID also supports transparent and responsible management of public resources, civil service reform, domestic resource mobilization, and decentralization. To mitigate conflict, USAID supports improved land tenure for traditionally marginalized groups and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. If confirmed, these are key efforts I will prioritize as Ambassador.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Liberia? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* Organizations promoting human rights, civil society, and good governance are critical to any functioning democracy. If confirmed as Ambassador, I intend to meet with these and any other non-governmental entities in the United States and Liberia that promote and reinforce human rights and the rule of law. U.S. assistance was critical to rebuilding the Liberian security sector following the country's two civil wars, and we share a robust security relationship with Liberia today. The Leahy Law helps ensure that U.S. security assistance is not provided to a security force unit where there is credible information that the unit committed a gross violation of human rights. If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Monrovia's efforts to implement Leahy vetting and will ensure that our security assistance and cooperation activities reinforce human rights.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* Our top priority in Liberia is a secure and stable country with effective rule of law, good governance, and strengthened human rights protections for all. If confirmed, my Embassy team and I will actively engage with Liberian officials to address cases of political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted for harassment or unjust detention by Liberia, specifically vulnerable populations such as women and girls, LGBTI persons, opposition politicians, and members of the press. As appropriate, I will partner with like-minded missions, civil society, and other key stakeholders to address our concerns with a unified voice.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Liberia on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Liberia?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will actively engage with Liberia on freedom of expression and advocate against any government efforts to control or undermine press freedom. I commit to meeting with the independent local press in Liberia.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Liberia?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, the Embassy team and I will engage with civil society and government to counter disinformation and malign propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Liberia on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will advocate for the right of workers to organize, including to form independent trade unions.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Liberia, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Liberia? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Liberia?

Answer. Discrimination against LGBTI persons remains a significant challenge in Liberia. The topic remains taboo, and the community has few safe spaces. The law prohibits consensual same-sex sexual activity; “voluntary sodomy” is a misdemeanor with a penalty of up to one year’s imprisonment. LGBTI persons report instances of assault, harassment, and hate speech by individuals in communities where they live. If confirmed, I will call on the Government of Liberia to investigate allegations of violence and discrimination targeting LGBTI persons. I will partner with civil society and other human rights organizations and LGBTI stakeholders to work to improve the conditions for LGBTI persons in Liberia.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO MICHAEL A. MCCARTHY BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Human Rights*

*Question.* What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. In 2015, while serving as Charge d’Affaires in South Sudan, we publicly raised concerns about South Sudanese Government officials’ human rights violations and abuses following the country’s descent into crisis in December 2013. This effort put the Government on notice that the United States was monitoring the actions of government troops and their associated militias and that we were tracking events throughout the country. I believe our actions in this capacity inhibited further human rights abuses and violations. If confirmed as Ambassador, I intend to advocate for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Liberians.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in Liberia? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Liberia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. Recent editions of the Department of State’s annual Human Rights Report note that the most significant human rights issues in Liberia include violence against women, including widespread female genital mutilation and other harmful practices against women and girls; restrictions on freedom of expression for members of the press; harsh prison conditions and lengthy pretrial detention; and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. If confirmed, I will use my unique platform and voice as the U.S. Ambassador, both publicly in my interactions with the Liberian people and privately with Liberian officials, on the importance of human rights and the rule of law in Liberia. I will engage like-minded missions, civil society, government and business leaders, and other relevant stakeholders to end these abusive practices.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Liberia in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

Answer. Sexual and gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, and forced child labor remain widespread in Liberia, with high rates of violence committed against minors. These practices and the lack of accountability for those responsible are of serious concern. The Government of Liberia has undertaken a number of efforts to combat what it rightly perceives as major problems, including efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence and forced labor, but there remains much to be done. Law enforcement and other civilian security agencies suffer from a perennial lack of funding, which leads to late payments of salaries and low levels of operational readiness. Good governance is also challenged by corruption and a political system that places disproportionate influence in individual actors rather than institutions or organizations.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Liberia? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. Organizations promoting human rights, civil society, and good governance are critical to any functioning democracy. If confirmed as Ambassador, I intend to meet with these and any other non-governmental entities in the United States and Liberia that promote and reinforce human rights and the rule of law. U.S. as-

sistance was critical to rebuilding the Liberian security sector following the country's two civil wars, and we share a robust security relationship with Liberia today. The Leahy Law helps ensure that U.S. security assistance is not provided to a security force unit where there is credible information that the unit committed a gross violation of human rights. If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Monrovia's efforts to implement Leahy vetting and will ensure that our security assistance and cooperation activities reinforce human rights.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Liberia to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Liberia?

Answer. Our top priority in Liberia is a secure and stable country with effective rule of law, good governance, and strengthened human rights protections for all. If confirmed, my Embassy team and I will actively engage with Liberian officials to address cases of political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted for harassment or unjust detention by Liberia, specifically vulnerable populations such as women and girls, LGBTI persons, opposition politicians, and members of the press. As appropriate, I will partner with like-minded missions, civil society, and other key stakeholders to address our concerns with a unified voice.

*Question.* Will you engage with Liberia on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. The U.S. Embassy in Monrovia has served as a powerful and consistent advocate for human rights, civil rights, good governance, and democracy in Liberia. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will speak with an authoritative voice—both publicly to the Liberian people and privately with Liberian officials—on the importance of making further progress on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance to Liberia's democracy and future prosperity. I will partner with like-minded missions, civil society, and other key stakeholders to ensure that the dialogue with the Government of Liberia on these critical issues remains at the top of our bilateral agenda.

#### *Diversity*

*Question.* Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

Answer. If confirmed, I will embrace every opportunity to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and encourage new perspectives whenever possible. I would ensure the Embassy devotes resources to mentoring and support for all staff, including those from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups. I agree with the research that indicates that diverse teams are richer in creativity and perspective, and I believe all leaders should embrace a wide range of inputs, viewpoints, and backgrounds because it is the right thing to do and the smartest management approach. As Director General Perez said in testimony recently, this is not just a moral imperative, it is a strategic imperative as well.

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Liberia are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

Answer. If confirmed, fostering an environment that is open, diverse, and inclusive will be a priority. Proactively, I will make sure supervisors within the Embassy complete diversity training on a regular basis. As the most senior official within the Embassy, it will be my responsibility to set the example for fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive.

#### *Conflicts of Interest*

*Question.* Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply fully with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply fully with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Liberia?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes diversified mutual funds, which may hold interests in companies with a presence overseas, but which are exempt from the conflict of interest laws. My investment portfolio also includes security interests, including stocks, in companies, some of which may have a presence in Liberia. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

#### *Corruption*

*Question.* How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Liberia specifically?

Answer. Effective, accountable, transparent, responsive, and inclusive governance is fundamental to citizen-focused democracy and a free market economy, including in Liberia. U.S. support for these objectives focuses on improving the ability of Liberian ministries' to use public resources in transparent and accountable ways, decentralizing service delivery to local authorities so that citizens can better access and monitor those services, strengthening Liberia's capacity to hold free and fair elections, fostering accountable political leadership, as well as strengthening capacity of civil society and media organizations as effective advocates for reform.

*Question.* What is your assessment of corruption trends in Liberia and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

Answer. Corruption is endemic in Liberia and affects nearly every facet of life. In 2019, Liberia ranked 137 of 180 countries and territories on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, falling from 120 in 2018. In 2012, Liberia ranked 75. Liberia has several integrity institutions tasked to monitor and address corruption, but these entities lack resources and the political will necessary to carry out their mandates. If confirmed, I will press the Government of Liberia to reverse these trends and underscore that endemic corruption is a key impediment to attracting foreign investment and enhancing private sector-led growth.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Liberia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to reinforce U.S. values including the application of good governance, fiscal transparency, improved public financial management, and inclusive economic growth in my interactions with President Weah and Government of Liberia officials. These values are ingrained in U.S. programming and are the foundational elements of the assistance portfolio to Liberia. To protect U.S. taxpayer assets, USAID maintains a robust monitoring and evaluation program. USAID's direct financing agreement with the Ministry of Health is structured as a reimbursement agreement. Under this arrangement, USAID only reimburses the Ministry after verification, minimizing the risk of the diversion of U.S. Government assistance.

As we do in other countries, the United States will consider application of visa sanctions for corrupt officials—including those who use corrupt practices or ill-gotten influence to subvert Liberia's recently established democratic gains.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. MANISHA SINGH BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Mission will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I commit to making clear that prohibited personnel practices has no place in the federal government and will not be tolerated. I agree that those found to have engaged in retaliation should be subject to accountability and discipline in accordance with U.S. federal labor law and regulation.

**Question.** What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I am committed to fostering a culture of inclusion and accountability and ensuring that all members of my team feel empowered to contribute to our mission. I will ensure that we learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for retaining diverse talent. I will promote best practices for inclusive hiring practices including standardized interview guidance. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and how they can be bolstered. I will encourage greater connectivity for members of my team to share their experiences and their expertise.

**Question.** Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

**Answer.** Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

**Question.** Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

**Answer.** Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

**Question.** Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

**Question.** Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

**Question.** If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

**Question.** What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

**Answer.** As Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, I have ensured the implementation of Global Magnitsky and other financial sanctions and visa restrictions to promote human rights and democracy are at the center of our sanctions policy. Under my leadership, the United States used sanctions authorities to protect democratic processes, disrupt and deter corrupt acts, and promote accountability for those who commit human rights abuses. For example, in July 2020 the United States designated Chinese Communist Party officials and entities under Global Magnitsky for their role in serious human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The United States also designated Chinese and Hong Kong officials in July 2020 for their involvement in undermining freedom and democratic processes in Hong Kong. In Venezuela, the United States has used E.O. 13884 to directly target the former Maduro regime and those who support its corruption and repression of democracy and human rights. In May 2020, the Department designated Iran's Interior Minister, Abdolreza Rahmandi Fazli and former head of its intelligence service (MOIS), Ali Fallahian, under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2020, for involvement in gross violations of human rights. As a result of these actions, my bureau has ensured that the

United States continues to be a global leader in protecting citizens from malign regimes and governments that violate the rule of law.

My prior State Department service includes serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs overseeing the IO human rights portfolio. In this position, I attended meetings of U.N. human rights bodies as the U.S. representative. I worked on matters such as USG supported resolutions that condemned rape as a weapon of war and demanded the release of political prisoners. My contribution was one of maintaining and amplifying the United States as a country that promotes and values human rights.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development at the OECD? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights, and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. The OECD is a group of like-minded countries committed to a market economy and a pluralistic democracy. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the integrity of the OECD's peer review process to ensure that members live up to their obligations as OECD members. I also commit to working to ensure that potential new members demonstrate political commitment to core OECD values, including democratic principles, respect for rule of law, transparency, and human rights. Finally, I commit to encouraging the review of OECD engagement with non-members to ensure democratic principles remain key and that engagement is not merely done for the sake of engagement.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy at the OECD? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. OECD instruments, if implemented in a meaningful way, can open markets, develop economies, and help level the playing field for U.S. businesses. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with policymakers, experts, and stakeholders from like-minded, market-based democracies to disseminate our best practices and policy approaches to members and non-members. These efforts counter competing authoritarian models and bring value to the American taxpayer by helping create and expand legitimate investment and financing opportunities for U.S. businesses and promoting U.S. job creation.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support the work of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The DAC is an international forum of 30 of the largest foreign assistance donors. It develops international principles and standards for development cooperation and monitors how donors deliver on their commitments. Through our participation in the DAC, the United States helps sets the standards for effective and transparent assistance, which in turn supports democracy and good governance.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with the OECD on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. The U.S. Mission to the OECD actively engages with the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC), which serves as the interface for global trade unions with the OECD. It is important that the voice of organized labor be heard in the wide range of economic policy discussions at the OECD where evidence-based analysis serves as the basis for informing policy makers in each of the member states. If confirmed, my team and I will continue to actively engage TUAC and support its consultative status with the OECD and its various committees.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people at the OECD, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in the OECD? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in the OECD?

Answer. I come from an immigrant family, and therefore understand first-hand how much diversity contributes to our society. I am the first woman and first person of color to be confirmed for my current position, and it has been a priority for me to ensure opportunities for people from all backgrounds, including LGBTQ people. I am committed to listening and learning from others and understanding their chal-

lenges. In the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, I have established a Diversity and Inclusion Council composed of diverse senior leadership. We are working together to ensure advancement and support of underrepresented groups. I have held town hall meetings to solicit input on how the bureau can improve opportunities and actively recruit diverse candidates. If confirmed, I will continue these practices, specifically establishing a council with a focused mission of diversity and inclusion and holding regular meetings to hear views of the entire staff.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. MANISHA SINGH BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* As Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, I have ensured the implementation of Global Magnitsky and other financial sanctions and visa restrictions to promote human rights and democracy are at the center of our sanctions policy. Under my leadership, the United States used sanctions authorities to protect democratic processes, disrupt and deter corrupt acts, and promote accountability for those who commit human rights abuses. For example, in July 2020 the United States designated Chinese Communist Party officials and entities under Global Magnitsky for their role in serious human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The United States also designated Chinese and Hong Kong officials in July 2020 for their involvement in undermining freedom and democratic processes in Hong Kong. In Venezuela, the United States has used E.O. 13884 to directly target the former Maduro regime and those who support its corruption and repression of democracy and human rights. In May 2020, the Department designated Iran's Interior Minister, Abdolreza Rahmandi Fazli and former head of its intelligence service (MOIS), Ali Fallahian, under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2020, for involvement in gross violations of human rights. As a result of these actions, my bureau has ensured the United States continues to be a global leader in protecting citizens from malign regimes and governments that violate the rule of law.

My prior State Department service includes serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs overseeing the IO human rights portfolio. In this position, I attended meetings of U.N. human rights bodies as the U.S. representative. I worked on matters such as USG supported resolutions that condemned rape as a weapon of war and demanded the release of political prisoners. My contribution was one of maintaining and amplifying the United States as a country that promotes and values human rights.

*Question.* Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

*Answer.* I come from an immigrant family and understand first-hand how much diversity contributes to our society. I am the first woman and first person of color to be confirmed for my current position at the Department of State, and it has been a priority for me to ensure opportunities for people from all backgrounds. In the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, I established a Diversity and Inclusion Council composed of diverse senior leadership. We are working together to ensure advancement and support of underrepresented groups. I have held town hall meetings with the bureau to solicit views on how the bureau can improve opportunities and actively recruit and retain diverse candidates. If confirmed to be the Permanent Representative to the OECD, I will continue these practices, including establishing a council within the mission and promoting diversity and inclusion.

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors under your direction at the OECD are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will establish a council on diversity and inclusion and make sure every supervisor understands this is a priority issue for the mission. I will also stay personally involved and ensure that everyone is actively creating a positive work environment for people from all backgrounds. I will hold my staff accountable to the highest standards of diversity and inclusion.

*Question.* Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect

may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in any foreign country?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes diversified mutual funds, which may hold interests in companies with a presence overseas, but which are exempt from the conflict of interest laws. My investment portfolio also includes stock in one company with a presence overseas. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JAMES BROWARD STORY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* What is your assessment of specific states and/or territory in Venezuela that are not under the complete control of the Interim Government or the Maduro regime—i.e. ungoverned territory in Venezuela?

Answer. Venezuela's ungoverned territory is growing and disputed among armed actors. The illegitimate Maduro regime and local criminal organizations, and infrequently dissident forces, share control in many parts of the country. Regime control is probably weakest in Amazonas, Apure, Bolivar, Tachira, and Zulia because of their distance from the capital, the prevalence of illegally armed groups such as the ELN and FARC, the impact of illegal mining, and security force manpower shortages. In some instances, we've seen how the Maduro regime has actively empowered illegally armed groups, gifting them mines, weapons, or items such as medications to enforce their control over territory in exchange for political support. This landscape is constantly changing, in part depending on the regime's ability to fund and shield the groups and sporadic operations to bring them back under regime influence. Armed colectivos—armed groups that are largely regime sponsored—operate in 15 of Venezuela's 23 states, according to a 2019 InSight Crime report. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the interagency and Congress on transition scenarios, focusing on the challenges presented by these ungoverned territories.

*Question.* What is your estimate of the number of members of Colombia's ELN that operate in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. According to local and international media, ELN was present in 12 of Venezuela's 24 states (with particular strength in Anzotegui, Amazonas, Apure, Bolivar, Zulia, and Tchira states). The ELN's presence has expanded beyond its historic base in the border zone with Colombia. Colombian authorities estimate there are around 3,000 active members of the ELN in total, 1,400 of whom the Government assesses are camped across the border in Venezuela. Colombian authorities have also assessed there are 36 ELN camps strategically located on the Venezuela side of the Colombia-Venezuela border.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the operations conducted by Colombia's ELN operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. The ELN engages in narcotrafficking, illegal mining, money laundering, extortion, and kidnapping in Venezuela. Media reports indicate an increasing role for the ELN in regime-subsidized food distribution, contraband (gas, basic goods, meat), extortion, illegal mining, and recruitment propaganda, at times via control of radio stations. The ELN is increasingly recruiting vulnerable Venezuelans, including children and those seeking to migrate, to join its ranks. There were also reports noting sporadic activity by ELN in the areas of road/border checkpoints. The unwillingness or inability to counter the ELN's illegal activities, and the effect this has on regional stability, speak to the need for a democratic transition in Venezuela.

*Question.* What is your estimate of the number of members of former members of Colombia's FARC that operate in Venezuelan territory?

*Answer.* Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia dissidents (FARC-D) are present in Venezuela, but we do not have reliable estimates of their numbers at this time, in part because Venezuela permits criminal groups to transit easily and to operate in the border regions. Maduro stated publicly in July 2019 that former FARC commanders Ivan Marquez and Jesus Santrich are "leaders of peace" and "welcome in Venezuela," shortly before the two announced a return to armed conflict as FARC dissidents. In 2019 in Colombia, an estimated 2,600 FARC dissidents who never demobilized, left the peace process, or are new recruits, continued violent attacks, primarily to enable narcotics trafficking and other criminal activities, particularly in border regions and areas previously controlled by the former FARC.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the operations conducted by former members of Colombia's FARC operating in Venezuelan territory?

*Answer.* The dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-D) engage in narcotrafficking, illegal mining, money laundering, extortion, and kidnapping in Venezuela. Financial ties with FARC-D and Venezuelan paramilitary groups facilitate the public corruption and graft schemes of the regime to include members of the armed forces acting at the behest of Maduro and his inner circle or in their own personal interest. Of concern, there were reports noting sporadic cooperation with FARC-D in the areas of road/border checkpoints, subsidized food distribution, recruitment and forced displacement of vulnerable indigenous communities, and trafficking of illegal narcotics and gold. These activities contribute to instability in the region—one of many reasons why a democratic transition is necessary.

*Question.* Is it your assessment that there are paramilitary groups operating in Venezuelan territory? If yes, please provide a description of their numbers, organization, and operations.

*Answer.* Yes, I assess there are paramilitary groups operating in Venezuela. The groups probably range in size from a few dozen to several thousand members, are typically hierarchical in structure, and often have some linkage to the Maduro regime or other armed groups through alliances or non-aggression pacts. A few of the larger groups are likely to oppose a transition from the Maduro regime because of their mutually beneficial relationship for maintaining power and money, even if there are no ideological ties. They most commonly fund themselves with extortion, drug trafficking, and illicit mining.

*Question.* What is your estimate of the number of members of colectivos operating in Venezuelan territory?

*Answer.* I understand there are roughly a dozen armed colectivos operating in the country with smaller groups operating within them. It is impossible to provide an estimate because the groups evolve and combine or divide frequently, depending on their loyalty or resistance to the Maduro regime and their ability to control territories.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the operations of colectivos operating in Venezuelan territory?

*Answer.* Armed colectivos are more likely to be legitimized and funded by the regime and be more ideologically consistent with it than other non-state armed groups. Some colectivo members have overlapping membership in a Venezuelan security service. Many are provided with identification cards by the Maduro regime and allowed to possess and carry firearms. They have been used to quell dissent and conduct operations that are too politically sensitive for the regular armed forces. The groups are the most powerful in Caracas and the greater capital district and near the border. While most armed colectivos operate in cahoots with regime authority, some are an expression of their community and may accept a transitional government if they are allowed full political participation.

*Question.* What is your estimate of the number of Cuban intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

*Answer.* The exact number of Cuban intelligence personnel is difficult to assess. Actual members of the military may reach several thousand and they provide key functions in protecting Maduro and in providing surveillance of the armed forces and security apparatus. Others may also be involved in providing intelligence inside of Venezuela. For example, media reports that the total Cuban presence, including medical doctors, may reach between 20,000 and 25,000. It is not just the number that is significant, however, but also their role. The Department assess Cuban ele-

ments are pervasive in Maduro's security and intelligence forces, and conduct training exercises and loyalty checks to root out anyone who is seen to be sympathetic to the opposition.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the operations of Cuban intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. Cuban military and intelligence advisors actively support Maduro through the provision of security forces, intelligence officers, and providing direction to Venezuelan authorities. They equip the regime with the tools they need to repress any domestic or internal dissent, including in the military. In its 2019 annual report, the Casla Institute, a Czech human rights body, revealed the "systematic repression and torture, Cuban influence, and significant changes in the methods of torture in Venezuela."

*Question.* What is your estimate of the number of Russian intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. According to media reports, as many as 100 Russian troops are present in Venezuela, without the constitutionally required consent of the legitimate National Assembly.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the operations of Russian intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. According to publically available sources, current Russian support for the Maduro regime includes military advisors and proxies, disinformation mechanisms, political influence on the world stage, and some financial backing. In return, Russia receives access to Venezuela as a potential military power projection platform in the Western Hemisphere, a foothold for disinformation and influence campaigns against the United States and our allies, and investment payoffs from foreign military sales and the exploitation of Venezuela's oil and other natural resources.

*Question.* What is your estimate of the number of Chinese intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. I do not have unclassified information on the number of People's Republic of China (PRC) intelligence personnel operating in Venezuela.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the operations of Chinese intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. We do not have unclassified information to suggest People's Republic of China (PRC) intelligence personnel operate in the country. However, of note, Chinese telecommunications firm ZTE has played a critical role in the illegitimate Maduro regime's "fatherland card," a national identification card program that enables the regime to control the population through the delivery of social services, purchases of gasoline, and voting. This social control of the Venezuelan people is most evident in its use to channel a subsidized food program to political supporters. More broadly, I assess that the PRC's support for the regime is grounded in protecting its economic interests.

*Question.* What is your estimate of the number of Iranian intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. I do not have unclassified information on the number of Iranian intelligence personnel operating in Venezuela.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the operations of Iranian intelligence personnel (military and/or civilian) operating in Venezuelan territory?

Answer. I do not have unclassified information on the operations of Iranian intelligence personnel operating in Venezuela.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the value of assets stolen from the Venezuelan people by the Maduro regime and the Chávez government?

Answer. Though it is impossible to precisely quantify how much public money has been stolen by these regimes, we currently estimate the total value of stolen and misspent assets is hundreds of billions of dollars.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the total value of blocked assets in the United States as a result of U.S. sanctions and/or legal cases against the Maduro regime, members of the regime, regime intermediaries, and/or legal entities related to the regime?

Answer. I refer you to the Department of the Treasury for details on U.S.-based assets blocked under our sanctions. I refer you to the Department of Justice for de-

tails on the disposition of any assets associated with legal cases involving members of the Maduro regime or its associated entities.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the total value of forfeited assets in the United States as a result of U.S. sanctions and/or legal cases against the Maduro regime, members of the regime, regime intermediaries, and/or legal entities related to the regime?

*Answer.* Assets are not forfeited as a result of our Venezuela sanctions program. I understand that the Fraud Section of the Department of Justice (DOJ) investigates and prosecutes foreign corruption through the enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and other corruption related statutes. Additionally, I understand DOJ's Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative investigates and prosecutes cases to seize and forfeit assets linked to foreign corruption which affects the U.S. financial system, and to prosecute individuals and entities involved where appropriate. I respectfully refer the committee to the Department of Justice for additional information on forfeited assets and legal cases.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the location of these forfeited funds and whether they are being held in Department of Justice accounts, Department of Treasury accounts, or any other location?

*Answer.* Under U.S. law, forfeiture orders may be sought in certain criminal cases subject to a number of procedural and practical limitations. If a case does result in forfeiture of and recovery of assets, those funds go into one of two forfeiture funds, one administered by DOJ and one by Treasury. I respectfully refer you to the Departments of Justice and Treasury for additional information on where forfeited funds may be held.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the intended use of these forfeited funds?

*Answer.* The Department of State understands that any funds forfeited as a result of the cases described above are and will be used in accordance with the rules governing the funds where the assets are maintained. The Treasury Forfeiture Fund (TFF) was established in 1992 for the purpose of managing cash and other resources seized as the result of civil or criminal asset forfeiture cases. The TFF is managed by the Treasury Executive Office of Asset Forfeiture (TEOAF) for the purpose of influencing the consistent and strategic use of the funds by law enforcement bureaus to disrupt and dismantle criminal enterprises. The Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 established the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund to receive the proceeds of forfeiture and to pay the costs associated with such forfeitures. The Fund may also be used to finance certain general investigative expenses. These authorized uses are enumerated in 28 U.S.C. § 524(c). I respectfully refer you to the Departments of Justice and Treasury for additional information.

*Question.* Do you believe that, to the greatest degree possible, these funds should be returned to the Interim Government of Venezuela and/or the people of Venezuela for uses related the future reconstruction of their country and support for the Venezuelan people?

*Answer.* The Department of State believes to the greatest degree possible any funds subject to forfeiture, should be returned to the people of Venezuela for uses related to the future reconstruction of their country, provided doing so can be done in accordance with the operative U.S. laws, regulations and processes. I respectfully refer you to the Departments of Justice and Treasury for additional information concerning the processes for returning such funds.

*Question.* Are you aware of press reports suggesting that these forfeited assets may have been utilized for expenditures or obligations related to the construction of a border wall on the southwestern border of the United States?

*Answer.* I am aware of press reports suggesting that funds recovered in kleptocracy cases involving PDVSA, as well as current and former regime officials, have been used to fund the southern border wall.

*Question.* What is your understanding or whether any of these forfeited funds have been utilized for any expenditures or obligations related to the construction of a border wall on the southwestern border of the United States?

*Answer.* Any funds that were subject to forfeiture are held with other funds recovered in all other asset forfeiture cases and the funds are utilized according to the mandates for managing the funds established by Treasury and DOJ. I respectfully refer you to the Departments of Justice and Treasury for additional information.

*Question.* What steps are you taking to help the World Food Program negotiate access to deliver humanitarian assistance in Venezuela?

*Answer.* Along with my USAID and IO colleagues working the WFP relationship directly, I have actively supported WFP's negotiations for access to Venezuela for over a year. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for the Maduro regime to provide unrestricted and safe access to the global humanitarian community to deliver aid directly to those who need it, to assess humanitarian situations in real time, and to be able to monitor the results of aid delivery.

*Question.* Please describe the factors preventing NGOs from registering and/or expanding assistance in Venezuela and what specific steps the State Department and USAID are taking to address these challenges.

*Answer.* The illegitimate Maduro regime has made it extremely difficult for international NGOs to legally register and for humanitarian workers to obtain visas. This, coupled with ongoing logistical impediments and security concerns for our partners, prevents humanitarian organizations from responding at a scale commensurate with the needs created by this economic and political crisis. Notwithstanding, partners continue to provide life-saving assistance where possible, and we commend them for these efforts in such difficult circumstances. As long as it is possible for USG partners to operate on the ground inside Venezuela, we will continue to work to provide them with support to help save lives.

*Question.* The loss of livelihoods and evictions resulting from the COVID-19 crisis have prompted tens of thousands of Venezuelans to return from neighboring countries. Knowing the generalized conditions of deprivation and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Maduro regime and armed groups, what specific threats or challenges do returnees face in Venezuela? Please describe any humanitarian assistance the United States has provided to meet the needs of returnees in Venezuela.

*Answer.* COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures in countries hosting Venezuelan refugees have contributed to an influx of returns to Venezuela, primarily from Colombia, as well as from Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru. As of late June, IOM reports that approximately 96,000 people have returned to Venezuela through formal crossings since mid-March. We are deeply concerned about the returnees making the voyage across the border region. Venezuelan returns should take place in conditions of safety and dignity. Conditions in Venezuela are not safe or conducive to large-scale assisted returns. On the Venezuela side of the border, returnees face a 14-day quarantine upon entry, and relief actors report that quarantined returnees require food, water, and shelter assistance. Due to limited access in border states and at the overcrowded and inadequate quarantine shelters managed by Maduro-aligned officials, humanitarian organizations that we support are already struggling to reach all individuals in need.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the estimated value and/or volume of illegally mined gold exported from Venezuela? What are the major countries of export?

*Answer.* By its nature, it is extremely difficult to estimate with any certainty the value, volume, or destination of illegally mined gold. Various sources estimate that 70% to 90% of the mined gold is smuggled out of the country illegally in operations often conducted in active cooperation with Maduro regime officials. Also, increased numbers of Venezuelans have turned to artisanal gold mining because of a lack of alternative economic opportunity. The private consulting firm Ecoanalítica, estimated the value of illegally mined gold smuggled from Venezuela in 2018 at \$2.71 billion. The amounts have almost certainly gone up since that time. Gold is smuggled out both by land and by air to a wide range of countries. We believe that the countries that are the largest destinations for Venezuelan gold include Colombia, Brazil, Guyana, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

*Question.* Please provide a list of companies and/or officials the United States has sanctioned to date for involvement in the trade of illegally mined gold and minerals from Venezuela.

*Answer.* I understand the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has designated multiple persons pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13850, as amended, for operating in the gold sector of the Venezuelan economy, and has also designated, under other authorities, persons involved in the Venezuelan gold industry. Most notably, on March 19, 2019, OFAC designated CVG Compania General de Minería de Venezuela CA, or Minerven, the Venezuelan state-run ferrous metals mining company, and its President, Adrian Antonio Perdomo Mata.

*Question.* What additional specific steps can the United States take, along with other international actors, to ensure that companies that purchase, sell, and trade

gold are following regulations and not unwittingly supporting illegally gold mining operations in Venezuela (Note: this question is not asking for a list of steps taken thus far by the U.S. Government)?

*Answer.* The United States could take additional steps to try and increase transparency in the global gold supply chain by promoting effective due diligence procedures and management standards to encourage the traceability and sourcing of gold and mercury (used to extract gold from ore), and discourage the use/sale/importing of gold that cannot be sourced transparently and responsibly to non-sanctioned, source countries. The United States could encourage, support and coordinate with NGOs and other civil society entities in efforts to expand ongoing work on gold in Latin America, and to promote best practices of Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM). The United States could increase work with and support OECD processes focused on promotion of supply chain due diligence for gold from Latin America. The United States could initiate an outreach campaign focused on all relevant industries/commercial sectors involved in gold supply chain, domestically and internationally, to urge increased supply chain management and uses of due diligence standards. The United States could also seek to make gold supply chain issues a larger part of the agenda in bilateral outreach with: countries suspected of or known to provide markets for Venezuelan gold, e.g. Turkey, UAE, Uganda, Switzerland; countries suspected of or known to provide transit and smuggling routes for Venezuelan gold, e.g., Colombia, Guyana, Brazil and Panama; and countries known to be a source of mercury used in illegal gold mining or in the mercury supply chain, e.g. Mexico, Indonesia and Bolivia.

*Question.* Does the U.S. need additional regulations to ensure that companies that purchase, sell, and trade gold are not unwittingly supporting illegally gold mining operations in Venezuela?

*Answer.* I do not believe that new regulations, if deployed, would be able to ensure that companies that purchase, sell, and trade gold are not unwittingly supporting illegal gold mining operations in Venezuela. However, new tools could assist in confronting the significant challenge presented by the gold supply chain. The Department of State has had discussions with interagency partners which suggest that new legislation, and possibly new regulatory authorities, could potentially help in the fight against illegal mining, smuggling and sales of Venezuelan gold.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the environmental impact of illegal mining in Venezuela? Please describe any U.S. diplomatic efforts and foreign assistance to mitigate or remediate this impact?

*Answer.* The illegitimate Maduro regime has allowed practices in Venezuela's Arco Minero that have wrought vast ecological damage to the vital Amazonian landscape, including the use of harmful toxins such as mercury. Mercury released to the environment harms human health primarily through eating fish with high mercury levels, and is also transported thousands of miles in the atmosphere to be deposited in other countries. Artisanal and small-scale mining without proper regulatory controls also leads to widespread deforestation, biodiversity loss, and contaminated waterways. In 2019, the Treasury Department announced sanctions against the Venezuelan state-owned gold sector company, MINERVEN and its president. We have also engaged our international partners to take a firm stance against illicit gold mining. We believe a swift political transition is the single best and most effective way to reduce these and other abuses and remain focused on uprooting the cause: the Maduro regime.

*Question.* What specific steps is the United States undertaking to combat human trafficking related to illegal mining in Venezuela, particularly among indigenous communities?

*Answer.* The State Department's Trafficking in Persons report notes the illegitimate Maduro regime does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making any efforts to do so; therefore Venezuela remains on Tier 3. Illegal mining operations exist in Venezuela's remote regions, including Bolivar state, where an estimated 45 percent of miners are underage and vulnerable to trafficking. In mining communities, traffickers exploit women and girls, including indigenous women and girls, in sex trafficking; traffickers force children to work in mines under dangerous conditions. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the international community and Venezuela's brave human rights advocates to promote the protection of those whose lives are affected by the illicit mining industry, including Venezuela's indigenous communities.

*Question.* In the absence of a political transition, what steps do we need to take to address the security threats—both to the United States and to regional partners,

including Colombia—posed by the armed actors operating in Venezuela’s ungoverned territories?

Answer. The non-state armed groups operating with impunity within Venezuela’s ungoverned territories present a significant security threat to the Venezuelan people, the region, and the United States. The Department is collaborating with our interagency partners to better understand the nature of the threat and identify strategies to mitigate these threats. If confirmed, I will work closely with Venezuela’s democratic actors and our international partners to address the threat these groups pose to our country and region.

*Question.* What is your understanding of current U.S. policy on the deportation of Venezuelan nationals? We understand there are no direct flights to Venezuela from the United States, and we recently heard testimony from administration witnesses that the United States is no longer deporting Venezuelans.

Answer. As U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela Abrams stated, we understand that Venezuelans who have not committed crimes are not currently being deported. However, I would have to refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for more information as they manage the removal program.

*Question.* During your tenure as Chargé d’Affaires, are/were you aware of any incidents of the United States deporting, removing, or transferring any Venezuelan nationals on indirect flights through third countries (if yes, please provide details about the country and/or countries, and an estimate of the number of Venezuelan nationals)?

Answer. I was made aware of removals of some Venezuelan nationals through Trinidad and Tobago between January and March 2020. I refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for additional details.

*Question.* During your tenure as Chargé d’Affaires, are/were you aware of any incidents of the United States deporting, removing, or transferring any Venezuelan nationals on indirect flights to third countries (if yes, please provide details about the country and/or countries and an estimate of the number of Venezuelan nationals)?

Answer. I am not aware of any removals of Venezuelan nationals to third countries. I refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for additional details.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the number of Venezuelans that have been deported, removed, or transferred from the United States to date in FY 2020?

Answer. I refer your question to the Department of Homeland Security for any information held on these figures.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the last date when a Venezuelan national was deported, removed, or transferred from the United States to another country?

Answer. I refer your question to the Department of Homeland Security for any information held on these figures.

*Question.* What additional steps do we need to take to counter the Cuban regime’s continued activities inside Venezuela?

Answer. The Department and White House have condemned Cuban interference in Venezuela, and if confirmed, I would encourage our partners to do the same. Among financial and visa restrictions on Cuban individuals and/or entities supporting the illegitimate Maduro regime, the U.S. Government has targeted firms, vessels, and Cuban state-owned enterprises engaging in transactions related to the provision of Venezuelan oil to Cuba, squandering a Venezuelan natural resource to the detriment of the Venezuelan people. If confirmed, I would also seek additional opportunities to implement appropriate measures in connection with Cuban individuals and/or entities responsible for funding or otherwise enabling the Maduro regime.

*Question.* What changes do we need to make to address Putin’s continued maneuvering in Venezuela?

Answer. The Department and White House have condemned Russian interference in Venezuela and, if confirmed, I would encourage our partners to do the same. Moreover, the U.S. Government has targeted Russian firms, vessels, and state-owned enterprises engaging in transactions involving Venezuelan oil, including Rosneft Trading S.A. and TNK Trading International, to indicate that we no longer are merely messaging on Russia’s interference, we are taking action. If confirmed, I would seek additional opportunities to implement appropriate measures in connec-

tion with Russian individuals and/or entities responsible for funding or otherwise enabling the illegitimate Maduro regime.

*Question.* What additional steps do we need to take to put a stop to Turkey's transactions in Venezuelan gold and oil?

*Answer.* The State Department, working with our interagency partners, has taken strong steps against the illegitimate Maduro regime, including on its ability to trade gold and oil. The Department of the Treasury last year designated a Turkish company that was used to facilitate payments made as a part of Alex Saab's corruption network for the sale of gold in Turkey. We are working to uncover other networks for disruption through sanctions and other actions. As we see evidence of inappropriate links between Turkey and the Maduro regime continuing, if confirmed, I will continue to work with our interagency partners to develop responses to break these links and coordinate with Department colleagues to engage diplomatically with Turkey on halting its inappropriate activities with Venezuela.

*Question.* What additional steps do we need to take to better counter Iran's support for Maduro?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would continue the Department of State's work with our partners to condemn, limit, and counter Iran's ability to support the illegitimate Maduro regime. The international business community should already be aware of the sanctions risk of transacting with the illegitimate regime. If confirmed, I would seek additional opportunities to implement appropriate measures in connection with Iran's ties to Maduro.

*Question.* How can we make it clear to Beijing that continued support for Maduro will not be overlooked and will come with a cost?

*Answer.* China's support for the regime is grounded in protecting its own economic interests. China could play a constructive role in helping end the humanitarian suffering in Venezuela, but declines to do so. Instead its actions are taking hundreds of millions of dollars from the Venezuelan people and providing the regime diplomatic support. If confirmed, I will continue to work with our regional allies to demonstrate China's support for Maduro comes at the cost of its long-term interests in the region, and will seek additional opportunities to implement appropriate measures to prevent China from further enabling the illegitimate Maduro regime.

*Question.* Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

*Answer.* I support fully the Department's policy to vigorously protect employees' rights to engage in protected activities. If confirmed, I will make clear to my team that retaliating against employees who engage in protected activities is prohibited and that those who retaliate will be held accountable. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that any employee found to have engaged in unlawful retaliation will be held accountable for their actions.

*Question.* What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

*Answer.* Throughout my career at the State Department, I have greatly benefited from the support and guidance of supervisors and colleagues who are committed to fostering a strong, diverse, and inclusive workforce at the Department. Having twice served as an Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor at posts abroad, I am committed to supporting a diverse workforce. If confirmed, I am committed to fostering a culture of inclusion and accountability at the Venezuela Affairs Unit and ensuring that all members of my team feel empowered to contribute to our mission. I will ensure that we learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for retaining diverse talent. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and how they can be bolstered. I will encourage greater connectivity for members of my team to share their experiences and their expertise with our Mission.

*Question.* Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Respect for human rights and democracy produces peace, stability, and prosperity—making it an integral component of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. national security. As a career diplomat, promoting human rights and democracy has been a central focus of my work throughout my career. As the INL Director in Colombia, we emphasized human rights training in our support of the Colombian National Police, as well as created scholarship programs for Afro-Colombians and Indigenous people to join the police in order to create a more representative police force. While the Director of INL for the Western Hemisphere, we created a series of programs with human rights and democracy as its focus, including from police vetting programs and citizenship kiosks in Mexico, to conducting placed-based initiatives in Central America to connect police to the community in a positive way. I personally met with numerous human rights and democracy NGOs throughout Central America to understand their concerns and participated in bilateral meetings focused on human rights. Support for human rights and democracy is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing my current work to secure a peaceful transition to democracy in Venezuela, alongside the interagency and Congress.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Venezuela on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. I support working with labor groups to promote worker rights in Venezuela, including freedom of association to form and join trade unions, including independent trade unions. If confirmed, I will work with my Embassy, State, and interagency colleagues to advocate for protecting workers' rights.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Venezuela, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Venezuela? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Venezuela?

Answer. I am proud of my work defending the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people in Venezuela, including LGBTI persons. LGBTI persons in Venezuela often face violence, abuse, and discrimination in access to healthcare, employment, education, and the judicial system. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's efforts to protect LGBTI persons from these types of human rights abuses.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO JAMES BROWARD STORY BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* Respect for human rights and democracy produces peace, stability, and prosperity—making it an integral component of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. national security. As a career diplomat, promoting human rights and democracy has been a central focus of my work throughout my career. As the INL Director in Colombia, we emphasized human rights training in our support of the Colombian National Police, as well as created scholarship programs for Afro-Colombians and Indigenous people to join the police in order to create a more representative police force. While serving as Director of INL for the Western Hemisphere, I and my team created a series of programs with human rights and democracy as its focus, from police vetting programs and citizenship kiosks in Mexico, to conducting placed-based initiatives in Central America to connect police to the community in a positive way. I personally met with numerous Human Rights and Democracy NGOs throughout Central America to understand their concerns and participated in bilateral meetings focused on Human Rights. Support to Human Rights and Democracy is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing my current work to secure a peaceful transition to democracy in Venezuela, alongside the inter-agency and Congress.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in Venezuela? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Venezuela? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* The existence of the illegitimate and authoritarian Maduro regime in Venezuela is the single source of the most pressing human rights issues in Venezuela. In 2019 and 2020, the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued reports on several grave human rights violations and abuses in Venezuela. The accounts include reports of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, political prisoners, impunity for human rights violations, the absence of free and fair elections, and the failure to respect basic rights, including the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and freedom of expression, including for the press. Human rights violations associated with illegal mining are pervasive across southern Venezuela, and frequently have a disproportional impact on women and children. If confirmed, I will work to ensure our Department bureaus and embassies remain engaged bilaterally and multilaterally on the importance of protecting human rights and defending democracy in Venezuela. I will continue to partner with Venezuelan collaborators and civil society interlocutors on pressing human rights issues, and to publicly express the need to strengthen an impartial justice system to prosecute those responsible for human rights violations and abuses and anti-democratic abuses in Venezuela. I will also engage through U.S. interagency programs to help build the capacity of Venezuela's human rights, civil society, and democracy advocates.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Venezuela in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

*Answer.* The current illegitimate Maduro regime is the most significant obstacle to addressing key human rights issues in Venezuela. Challenges include a relatively underdeveloped civil society in Venezuela that is actively threatened by a brutal regime and its allied criminal groups. I remain concerned with the ongoing manipulation of the judiciary system by the regime, which has stopped functioning as an independent branch of government. There are also no guarantees scheduled elections will adequately ensure electoral integrity or reflect the free will of the Venezuelan people. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. Department of State's advocacy to establish a transitional government to oversee free and fair presidential elections that will promote and demonstrate respect for human rights, civil society, and the strengthening of democratic institutions in Venezuela.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Venezuela? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

*Answer.* I will continue to build on the vigorous momentum gained from our diplomatic efforts engaging NGOs in the United States and Venezuela to uphold democracy and respect for human rights in Venezuela. At this time, the United States does not provide security assistance for Venezuelan security forces. If confirmed, I wholeheartedly commit to prohibit providing U.S. assistance to units of foreign security forces where there is credible information that such unit committed a gross violation of human rights. I will pro-actively work to ensure Leahy vetting compliance working with staff at the U.S. Embassy; the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in Washington, DC, the lead State Department bureau for vetting; the Department's Western Hemisphere Affairs regional bureau; and other government agencies as required.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Venezuela to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Venezuela?

*Answer.* Respect for and defense of human rights are a cornerstone of democracy. If confirmed, I will tirelessly seek the immediate release of all political prisoners and persons unjustly targeted for detention by the regime. Along with my embassy team, we will continue to work with our Venezuelan partners in the vital work of promoting the protection of human rights for all in Venezuela.

*Question.* Will you engage with Venezuela on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

*Answer.* A vibrant and thriving democracy requires respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including protection of civil and political rights, and transparent and accountable governance, all of which the illegitimate Maduro regime has brutally sought to repress. If confirmed, I will engage to help strengthen these key pillars of democracy and help the Venezuelan people restore respect for their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

*Question.* Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work diligently to foster a culture of inclusion and representative workforce. I will also work to encourage and promote Diversity and Inclusion in the hiring process through standardized interview procedures and recruiting from the broadest possible base of candidates. I will promote the expansion of workplace flexibilities, including telework and alternative work schedules, and Leave Without Pay (LWOP) options. I will learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms such as the Open Conversations platform and the Department's new Centralized exit survey.

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Venezuela are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

*Answer.* I have twice been an Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor and take issues of diversity and inclusion seriously. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering a culture and environment of inclusion. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for retaining diverse talent. I will promote Diversity and Inclusion Best Practices and tips for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance. If confirmed, I will also support the review of existing mentoring programs and identify opportunities for improvements.

*Question.* Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Venezuela?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes sector and diversified mutual funds, which may hold interests in companies with a presence in Venezuela, but which qualify for exemptions from the conflict of interest laws. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

*Question.* How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Venezuela specifically?

Answer. Political corruption is caustic to democratic governance and the rule of law. Corrupt politicians and government officials become consumed with preserving power and amassing personal wealth rather than prioritizing the responsible stewardship of government institutions for the benefit of the people. This is definitely true in Venezuela, where Nicolas Maduro and his regime have damaged Venezuela's institutions, economy, and infrastructure through misappropriation of state funds and the abuse of state power. The resulting deterioration of economic and social conditions within Venezuela make Maduro increasingly unpopular with the Venezuelan people, prompting the regime to employ heavy-handed tactics to neutralize opposition and subdue the population. This behavior is the antithesis of democratic governance and rule of law. If confirmed, I will continue to use all available tools to promote democratic governance and rule of law in Venezuela.

*Question.* What is your assessment of corruption trends in Venezuela and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

Answer. Since he came to power in 2013, Maduro has plundered the country's natural resources and driven a once prosperous nation into economic ruin with an authoritarian rule and socialist economic policies, all while enriching himself, his family, and his closest supporters. Venezuela has cash accounts existing outside of its national territory valued at several billions of dollars, and the illegitimate Maduro regime has sought to steal from them. Sanctions, diplomatic efforts, and internationally recognized best practices for foreign accounts have thus far prevented the Maduro regime from seizing these assets. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for tracking and preserving Venezuelan held assets in foreign countries. These funds belong to the Venezuelan people.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Venezuela?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue our robust support of Venezuela's democratic actors as they seek to restore democracy to Venezuela. We will continue to lead international efforts to seek to compel Maduro and members of his regime to accept free and fair elections in Venezuela, organized by a broadly acceptable transitional government as proposed in the Democratic Transition Framework. I also will ensure that we support those investigating the regime's vast corruption and engaging with law enforcement entities to bring the kleptocratic members of the Maduro regime to justice. Activities such as these are essential in ensuring a stable, peaceful transition.

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