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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 8, 2022

The Honorable Molly Phee
Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Phee,

I appreciate the Department's intense focus put into ensuring a robust diplomatic response to the crisis in Ukraine. The multilateral, coordinated response in terms of sanctions and security assistance, particularly in Europe, is unprecedented and a testament to the Department's tireless efforts.

However, a truly comprehensive and ultimately effective effort to counter the Kremlin cannot be limited to Europe. The world needs to be united against an emboldened Kremlin, not only with rhetoric, but action. If the world does not counter this rising threat, Russian aggression will be the scourge of future generations to come in every region. We must act now.

To that end, I urge the United States to reorient its diplomatic approach and redouble its efforts throughout the world to counter Kremlin aggression, including in Sub-Saharan Africa. I was inspired by the words of Kenya's UN Ambassador Martin Kimani to the UN Security Council at the start of the conflict, and by the 25 African nations that were among the 141 countries around the world voting to condemn Russian aggression.

Unfortunately, 24 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa failed to support the UN Resolution. Not surprisingly, Africa's most undemocratic and repressive governments were among those who chose not to condemn Russian aggression. This includes Eritrea, which has never held an election and is responsible for gross violations of human rights. It also includes the Sudanese military junta, whose leadership was in Moscow when Russian troops rolled into Ukraine and is, according to media reports, funneling Sudanese gold to Russia while promising the Russian military access to the Red Sea; the military junta in Mali and the government of the Central African Republic, both of which have hired Russian mercenaries; Uganda, where President Museveni continues to use torture and violence against civil society and political opponents; Equatorial Guinea where you visited recently; Zimbabwe; South Sudan; Cameroon, and others.

I was most disappointed, however, to see several close partners known for their longstanding respect for democratic and international norms among those who abstained. This includes Senegal, South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and others.

In recent years, Russia has sought to expand its influence in the world by cultivating relationships with African countries, often through covert and destabilizing methods. These

include deploying Wagner Group mercenaries to conflict zones in Mali, the Central African Republic, Mozambique, and elsewhere; creating disinformation campaigns to benefit Russia's supporters; signing corrupt and non-transparent business agreements for African resources; and selling weapons across the continent with no regard for transparency or human rights. Russia also takes advantage of some countries' nostalgia for the Soviet Union and its historical support for Africa. Yet the Russian Federation has failed to provide any tangible economic support, development assistance, or humanitarian aid to Africa and its people.

With this in mind, I respectfully request that you provide me details to the questions below in writing.

First, how are you personally working to ensure that countries in Africa are imposing and enforcing sanctions on the Putin regime and the Russian economy? Please specifically describe your efforts to encourage the governments of South Africa and Senegal, Russia's two largest trading partners in Sub-Saharan Africa, to impose and enforce sanctions, including sanctions similar or equal to those imposed by the United States.

Second, how are you personally encouraging countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to cut ties with sanctioned Russian companies and oligarchs active in Africa? Please provide specific details on these efforts and quantify these efforts by country in the region.

Third, what specific efforts are you making to encourage African governments to end purchases of Russian military equipment?

Fourth, what are you doing to counter the Kremlin's persistent disinformation in the region and to ensure that the public has access to unbiased information about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and human rights abuses committed by the Wagner Group in Africa?

The United States needs a comprehensive, global and durable diplomatic approach to counter rapidly increasing Kremlin aggression. Thank you for your attention to these issues. I expect your prompt reply in open or classified form as appropriate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "R" and "M".

Robert Menendez
Chairman