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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 18, 2022

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

Assistant Secretary Phee:

In advance of your trip to Chad, I write to encourage you to lead Administration efforts to develop a holistic policy approach to Chad that appropriately balances defense, diplomacy and development, including a greater role in supporting Chad's transitional process. The Administration's failure to call Chad's 2021 unconstitutional change of power a coup significantly undermined our credibility as a voice for democracy and respect for the rule of law in the Sahel, and set a very worrisome precedent for the continent. The United States, however, can and should play a lead role in encouraging Chadians to adhere to the transitional roadmap to civilian rule through elections as outlined by the African Union's Peace and Security Council in May 2021.

After decades of the authoritarian rule of Idriss Deby and Hissene Habre, Chad has a chance to chart a path toward democracy. I am greatly concerned, however, that Idriss Deby's son, General Mahamat Deby, who took power by unconstitutional means and installed himself as the leader of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) in contravention of the Chadian constitution, is trying to extend the transitional period and has yet to acknowledge that he and other members of the TMC cannot compete in the elections they are responsible for organizing. Deby's failure to adhere to this principle, which has guided previous transitions elsewhere in Africa, would severely damage efforts to transition to democracy and civilian rule not only in Chad but also in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Sudan. We must continue to insist that he do so, and marshal the support of other likeminded partners to join us in this effort.

Our security assistance to Chad over the years has far outpaced the development assistance we have provided to the Chadian people, including in the area of democracy and governance. This imbalance is deeply problematic and has contributed to the militarization of the previous Chadian regime. Yet despite this historic imbalance as well as last year's coup, the Administration has continued to pursue a security assistance relationship. This approach fails to consider the shortcomings of the past, and does not position us to take advantage of the window of opportunity to change Chad's trajectory moving forward. In the absence of a comprehensive plan for Chad that includes robust support for good governance and institution strengthening, I will continue to object if notified of the intent to provide further security assistance. With this in mind, I urge you to ensure that the Administration develops a strategy that prioritizes democracy

and governance, including support for meaningful civil society engagement in a legitimate, inclusive National Dialogue process. It is also critical for the Administration to publicly state its expectation that General Deby and others in the junta respect the principle that bars transitional leaders from running for office, and that it fully support the African Union roadmap and the core principles it outlined, to include deadlines for an end to the transitional period.

A stable, democratic, and peaceful Chad is essential for the future development of both the Sahel and Central Africa. Now is the time for the U.S. to assert its leadership and influence in support of civil society voices in Chad advocating for credible elections and a transition to civilian governance in 2022. We must be unwavering in standing with the people in Chad in their aspiration for a civilian-led democratic government that respects civil liberties and human rights.

Sincerely,

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

Robert Menendez
Chairman