

**Statement of Ambassador Michele J. Sison
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for
International Organization Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 19, 2021**

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members of the Committee.

I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, IO. I am grateful to President Biden and to Secretary Blinken for this opportunity.

I want to recognize my daughters, Alexandra and Jessica, who are watching virtually today. Their love has supported me as I represented our country around the world and at the United Nations.

Over the past 39 years, I've been privileged to serve under six U.S. administrations and as U.S. Ambassador four times overseas: to the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Maldives, and Haiti.

Given this experience – as well as service in Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, India, Pakistan, Iraq and at the U.S. Mission to the UN -- I know that the United States cannot address today's global challenges alone.

From climate change to the COVID 19 pandemic, we must work in partnership with other nations. President Biden has made clear that we will put our core U.S. values at the center of our foreign policy.

As U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN in New York, I saw that our nation is stronger when we lead the way in crafting strategic, cross-regional partnerships. These alliances are key in safeguarding multilateral institutions from those, such as the People's Republic of China, that seek to bend the UN system to their authoritarian agendas.

We must actively out-compete efforts by nations that stand in opposition to U.S. values on human rights, democracy, labor rights, and transparent economic practices. If confirmed, this will be at the top of my agenda. It's important that we uphold the rules-based order that upholds and promotes our values, advances

sustainable development, and protects human rights.

The United States has a strong stake in leading efforts to preserve a free and open internet, and in advancing global governance in areas such as technology, trade, and climate change.

These rules and values benefit American interests and the American people. From the World Food Program, to UNICEF, to the International Telecommunication Union, we have a deep stake in leading the international system -- driving forward reforms with our partners.

We must also ensure that the voices of civil society, women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other marginalized communities are heard. I've seen firsthand how UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers protect civilians and save lives in places critical to U.S. national interests.

I've witnessed the positive impact of U.S. leadership when we insist on results, and when we press for accountability -- including accountability related to sexual exploitation and abuse. We are the largest contributor to the UN system; it is in our interest to lead in promoting genuine reform.

Thus, ensuring the transparency and integrity of multilateral bodies is a key priority. We must promote qualified, independent candidates to lead multilateral institutions, and we must leverage the commitments of other countries to ensure that financial burdens are shared.

We must also fight bias against Israel across the UN system.

The IO Bureau supports strong U.S. leadership at the UN and multilateral venues to advance our U.S. national interests, protect the American people, promote U.S. prosperity, and drive the reforms needed to ensure the effectiveness of international organizations.

As a Foreign Service practitioner, I know that our skilled diplomats at our missions abroad, our talented negotiators, and our amazing Civil Service subject matter experts are our force multipliers in the multilateral arena and in mobilizing global action.

If confirmed, prioritizing diversity and inclusion and building strong morale within the IO Bureau, will be at the top of my list. And, if confirmed, I also pledge:

1) to look hard at UN and international organization management and budgeting practices, and at how agencies implement their ethics rules, including whistleblower protections;

2) to insist on effective peacekeeping operations that advance political solutions, have realistic and achievable mandates, and include women's participation; and,

3) to consult with you as we work to meet the challenges of today's strategic competition -- and as we prove that respect for human rights, transparency, and democratic norms can and will prevail.

If confirmed, I know you will be counting on me to make sure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are well-spent, and that our multilateral policies and programs improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable citizens, contribute to international peace and security, and serve the American people.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you, and I welcome your questions.