

Statement of Larry Edward André, Jr.
Nominee to be Ambassador of the United States of America to the Federal
Republic of Somalia
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 9, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Greetings from Juba, South Sudan. I am honored to come before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

My wife, Ouroukou André, and my children, Ruhiyyih André and Isidore André, are watching online. I thank all my family, friends, and colleagues for their support.

Mr. Chairman, I first came to Africa in 1983 as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Senegal, and then in Chad working on post-war reconstruction. I joined the State Department in 1990. I am now serving my tenth tour in Africa. With an additional three domestic Africa-related assignments, my over 31-year diplomatic career has focused almost exclusively on the continent. I have served at our embassies in each of the countries that border Somalia. If confirmed, I will draw on these experiences to advance our partnership with Somalia's people and their federal and state-level governments toward greater peace and prosperity.

The United States needs a stable Somalia, as do the Somali people, East Africa and the international community. If confirmed, I will work with the Somali federal government, Somalia's state governments, regional organizations, and like-minded international partners to promote stability through credible elections that advance peace and prosperity. Mr. Chairman, Somalia's political stability also requires compromise leading to national consensus on the

relationship between the federal government and state governments. The nature of Somali federalism has remained an open question for too long.

Mr. Chairman, the people of Somalia and their neighbors are attacked regularly by al-Qaeda's East Africa branch, al-Shabaab. There is a smaller ISIS-Somalia presence in the north. Both international terrorist networks threaten our interests in the region and aspire to attack our country. If confirmed, I will continue the work of Ambassador Yamamoto to bring to bear the full range of tools to help Somalis defend themselves and rid their country of terrorism. I will also coordinate with AMISOM, the African Union's peacekeeping operation. I will be guided by our shared goal of more operationally capable and professional Somali security forces that respect human rights, protect civilians, and hold accountable those responsible for abuses. In recent years, the Somali National Army has made progress in this direction. The U.S. military, the European Union, and the United Nations have contributed to that progress.

Mr. Chairman, having spent much of my career serving at U.S. embassies in dangerous places, I feel deeply the responsibility of an Ambassador toward all resident Americans and to all U.S. government employees and contractors. If confirmed, I will lead our team in Somalia to take all necessary measures to promote the security of American citizens and of U.S. government colleagues while we work with the Somali people, their government, and our international partners to advance shared objectives.

Aside from political and security challenges, Somalis also confront a variety of natural calamities, economic dysfunction, and deficient educational and other public services that contribute to poverty, hunger, and displacement. If confirmed, I would support the work of our development, humanitarian, and economic professionals, in coordination with Somali authorities

and international organizations, to provide aid from the American people to Somalis in need and to promote inclusive economic growth.

If confirmed, I will lead our U.S. Embassy Mogadishu team to advance peace and prosperity through diplomacy, defense, and development efforts in partnership with the Somali people and their federal and state governments. I commit to keep you and your staff informed.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I am eager to respond to your questions.