

Statement of Kelley Currie
Nominee For Representative of the United States of America
On the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 11, 2017

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. I am honored have this opportunity to serve my country, and appreciate the confidence President Trump, Secretary Tillerson, and Ambassador Haley have shown in me. I also want to thank my family, particularly my husband Peter and my children Mack and Sarah, for their support and encouragement; my mother Beth and my step-father Gene Price who have come today from Georgia; and my mother-in-law Dottie Currie who is looking forward to seeing more of her grandchildren in New York. I also have to express my appreciation to everyone at USUN and the other offices at the State Department and the White House who helped guide me through the process.

When I was growing up in small-town South Georgia, enthusiastically participating in model United Nations programs in high school, I never dreamed I would be asked to represent our great nation at the United Nations. Whether serving as the majority staff director of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus or supporting democratic activists in closed societies during my time with the International Republican Institute, I have spent my career working to promote international human rights, human freedom and human dignity.. Today, the universality of human rights is under attack from resurgent authoritarian regimes that are threatened by the ideas of freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religion. Regimes that rule through fear, coercion and cooptation rather than the consent of the governed will always seek to limit basic freedoms – both of their own citizens and of others, when possible. Unfortunately, repressive regimes have too often found a safe harbor in the very international bodies that are meant to protect the most vulnerable. This must change if these bodies are to continue to enjoy the support of the American people. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Ambassador Haley and our colleagues at the Department of State to advance the protection of human rights worldwide by refocusing the UN on its core mission of promoting genuine international peace and security.

Among the most critical aspects of America's efforts to elevate and defend human rights and human freedom is our long-standing focus on international efforts to empower women and girls. It is vital that girls have equal access to education, women are given equal opportunity in the workforce, and women and girls are protected from sexual violence and exploitation. If these efforts are to succeed, men must be partners in these initiatives. Many of the lead UN agencies that address these challenges fall under the ECOSOC umbrella. Unfortunately, overlapping mandates, bureaucratic competition and other factors have made these UN mechanisms less effective than they could and should be. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our global partners and the UN management to improve the functioning of those agencies that are intended to support the full economic and political participation of women and girls.

Another major focus of ECOSOC's work is the global effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Providing improved access to food, water, and health care are laudable and important goals, but without broad-based domestically-driven economic growth – not to mention peace, security and responsive, accountable governance -- any short-term gains in these areas are likely to be illusory. While recognizing the value of the framework established by the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to realize that achieving a more stable, prosperous and secure global community also requires tackling political issues implicated in systemic human rights abuses and conflict-related crises. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our partners to see how we can work within this framework while also addressing some of the gaps on political reform.

While there are certainly areas for improvement, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations is a critical forum for the United States to advocate America's human rights, development, and humanitarian values and interests. If confirmed, I will be honored to represent the U.S. at this important body, and work closely with our partners, as well as with Congress, to demonstrate American leadership and to further American values and interests.

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