

Opening Statement of Heide B. Fulton
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 28, 2022

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador of the United States to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

I'm humbled by the trust and confidence President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by sending my name to the Senate for consideration at this pivotal moment in the bilateral relationship. I'm also grateful for the support of my family, including my husband James Fulton, a Foreign Service Specialist and retired Army Special Forces officer, and two children, Anam-Cara and Cormac Fulton. I also want to thank my parents, Bob and Gretchen Bronke, who instilled in me the values of hard work, dedication, and integrity, which they have modeled in all aspects of their lives.

Throughout my career at the State Department, I have led complex organizations and negotiated large-scale initiatives. This includes my present position serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement's Offices of Western Hemisphere Programs and Aviation. In this capacity, I oversee more than \$2 billion in programs in 28 countries in the Western Hemisphere. I have hands-on experience combatting corruption, strengthening the civilian law enforcement capacity of our partners, shaping our rule of law programs throughout the hemisphere, and fighting to stem the flow of synthetic drugs and other narcotics that killed over 100,000 Americans last year. I shaped the Bicentennial Framework with Mexico, which has reset and rejuvenated our security cooperation with this key partner. I led the U.S. Mission in Honduras during the tumultuous period of the contested 2017 elections, where I protected U.S. interests and preserved our strategic objectives. I have drawn on my formation as an Army officer and public diplomacy practitioner to forge strong partnerships based on open communication and mutual understanding. These have been hallmarks of my career.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and others in Congress as I use these skills to continue to enhance our robust bilateral relationship with Uruguay and advance the interests and security of the American people. This will include significant focus on three areas: expanding economic ties between our two nations, working with Uruguay as a democratic leader in the

hemisphere, and strengthening the position of the United States as one of Uruguay's key diplomatic partners.

Uruguay is a valued partner in the Western Hemisphere. With its large middle class, strong history of democratic values, and dedicated engagement in multilateral organizations, Uruguay is one of the most economically and politically stable countries in Latin America. Uruguay has spoken out strongly against Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and democratic backsliding in the region and welcomed more than 20,000 refugees fleeing the dictatorship in Venezuela. Uruguay has historically played a key role in global peacekeeping efforts, as one of the world's top troop-contributing countries per capita. With U.S. support, Uruguay's peacekeepers help protect civilians, support political processes, and achieve lasting peace. Uruguay is also recognized as a global leader in its use of renewable energy sources, and we are expanding our joint efforts toward more sustainable agriculture. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work diligently to strengthen cooperation with the government of Uruguay and international organizations to combat transnational criminal organizations and all forms of trafficking.

The United States is one of Uruguay's largest trading partners and an important investor. The United States buys over 70 percent of Uruguay's services exports, estimated at a value of \$1 billion. The IT and software sector is booming, creating increased opportunity for U.S. investment, which is mutually beneficial. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen economic ties and develop new business opportunities in Uruguay on behalf of U.S. companies. As Uruguay prepares to implement its 5G networks, I will also, if confirmed, encourage Uruguay to embrace the principles of competition and technology neutrality, while prioritizing security, resilience, and innovation.

In closing, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and other relevant stakeholders to advance our national interests, maintain a strong relationship with Uruguay, and support continued cooperation on defending democratic institutions in the region with the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, a country with an outsized influence in the region.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is an honor to be here, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.