

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:07 p.m. by video-conference, Hon. Chris Van Hollen, presiding.

Present: Senators Van Hollen [presiding], Menendez, Cardin, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Merkley, Booker, Schatz, Risch, Rubio, Johnson, Romney, Portman, Paul, Young, Barrasso, Cruz, Rounds, and Hagerty.

Also Present: Senators Duckworth, Udall, and Graham.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Good afternoon, everybody, officially. Welcome to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing.

We have some terrific nominees we are going to hear from this afternoon. Before I give some brief opening remarks, though, in deference to our colleagues who are here to introduce some of our nominees, I am going to turn it over to them.

I understand we have Senator Markey here to introduce Leader Cronin. We have Senator Barrasso here to introduce Dr. Gawande, and we, I think, are expecting Senator Duckworth to introduce Captain Sullenberger.

Why don't we kick this off? I see Senator Barrasso.

Senator Barrasso, why do not you kick us off and please introduce Dr. Gawande?

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BARRASSO, U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING

Senator BARRASSO. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman, and I am pleased to welcome to the committee and to the Senate Dr. Atul Gawande, who is a fellow physician, and President Biden has nominated him to be Assistant Administrator for Global Health at USAID.

Dr. Atul Gawande is truly a highly respected and well known voice in American medicine. He is a surgeon. He is a writer. He is a researcher. In domestic health care discussions, he normally needs no introduction.

Dr. Gawande has devoted his life to public health as well as to medicine. His appreciation for the field started with his parents. They were both physicians, doctors, who emigrated from India to the United States.

He earned a Bachelor's degree in biology and political science from Stanford University. He is a Rhodes Scholar, earned a Master's degree in philosophy, politics, and economics at Oxford. Graduated from Harvard Medical School. Also earned a Master's of public health.

Dr. Gawande completed his general surgical residency training at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and in 2006, he was named a MacArthur Fellow for his work researching and explaining problems faced by surgeons in training.

Dr. Gawande continues caring for patients as a general and endocrine surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He is a professor at Harvard Medical School.

He is training the next generation of doctors and, as a professor, he is focused on surgical safety, avoiding errors, and health system innovation.

Mr. Chairman, over the years, Dr. Gawande has come to this very office in this room where I am sitting today doing this introduction to meet in a bipartisan way with groups of senators to discuss issues of health care, and he and I know that there are a number of political issues on which he and I do not agree.

But let me just tell you why I am here in front of the committee today. For nearly 20 years, I have been pointing to his remarkable books, and when I talk with medical students I bring the books.

When I talk to sometimes lay organizations and groups, I talk to the books. When I talk about health care and health care providers, I talk to the books. I have all four of them here.

The first one I read was called "Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science." Knowing how realistic he is and understanding even though you do your very best and put forth your best efforts, it does not always work out the way you would like as a surgeon.

The next book I read was one called "Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance," all aimed at improving performance, in getting better. Even though we live in a world that is complicated, we can always try to do better.

And then we have Sully up here going to be nominated. "The Checklist Manifesto," taken from pilots, what pilots have learned and how we can apply those in the operating room and we have, certainly, done that at the Wyoming Medical Center and at hospitals all across the country, and I believe thousands of lives have been saved by avoiding medical errors as a result of the work that he has done.

And then the book that Senator Booker made reference to, Atul Gawande "Being Mortal," what happens as we age in life and how we care for our parents, and then how our children end up caring for us.

Dr. Gawande has a commitment to excellence, and you read through his books and you come up with the words of diligence, overcoming obstacles, avoiding errors, which is why I believe he would be a very valuable asset and why I am happy to introduce him today.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator Barrasso, and thank you for being here to introduce Dr. Gawande.

And now I am going to turn it over to our colleague, Senator Markey, who is going to be introducing Leader Cronin, who has been nominated to be our Ambassador to Ireland.

Senator Markey?

**STATEMENT OF HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

It is my pleasure today to introduce my friend, Claire Cronin, as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, and I would also like to take this time to send my warmest regards to her husband, Ray, and two daughters, Kara and Kerry, who I am sure are watching right now.

Claire, fittingly, comes before us today as a proud public servant from eastern Massachusetts. In her hometown of Brockton, Massachusetts, the city of champions, the undefeated Rocky Marciano shattered boxing records to earn Brockton that title.

The Marvelous Marvin Hagler amplified the legend, and Claire Cronin continued in that tradition by shattering glass ceilings and being a champion in her own right.

The Massachusetts State Legislature, also known as the General Court, traces its earliest origins back to 1629 and the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Claire wrote one of its latest chapters by becoming the first female chair of the Judiciary Committee, and more recently, the first female majority leader of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

And while Claire will not be the first female U.S. Ambassador to Ireland, I will note that the only two others to hold that honorable posting also hail from Massachusetts.

As a legislator, former litigator, professional mediator, Claire has always taken the time to listen and respond to the needs and concerns of a diverse set of constituents and stakeholders.

I have seen the way she builds genuine deep bonds within her community by fighting to improve the lives of those she represents. Her commitment to public service, diplomatic acumen, and work ethic are supreme and all critical skills that will serve her well in Dublin.

Claire's leadership has also earned her multiple honors. Most recently, she was awarded the Jewish Community Relations Council Legislative Leadership Award, and was also named the Emerge Massachusetts 2020 Woman of the Year.

The U.S.-Ireland relationship is one of the warmest and closest we have. Our shared values and ancestral ties serve as a bedrock of our modern dynamic relations in the area of commerce, education, culture, and research.

As a proud Irish American, Claire understands that foundation well, and as a maverick public servant she is the ideal candidate to deepen and expand the cross community engagement and ties between our two nations.

There is an old Irish proverb that says, may the hinges of our friendship never grow rusty. I have the utmost confidence that

with Claire at the helm, our relation with Ireland will flourish very, very greatly for the 21st century.

Congratulations on your nomination, Claire. I look forward to seeing the history you write in the next chapter.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Markey, for being here with those good words.

And I see my colleague and friend and ranking member of the Africa Subcommittee, Mike Rounds, is here now and we are both honored to be chairing this full committee hearing for these great witnesses.

Now let me turn it over to Senator Duckworth who is going to be introducing Captain C. B. “Sully” Sullenberger III to be the representative to the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Senator Duckworth, take it away.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS**

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. It is so hard to follow Senator Markey. I am not as poetic as he is, but I will do my best.

[Laughter.]

Senator DUCKWORTH. It is a real privilege to join the committee today to introduce my good friend, fellow pilot and President Biden’s nominee for the distinguished rank of ambassador and U.S. Representative to the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization, Captain Chesley Burnett “Sully” Sullenberger III.

Mr. Chairman, Captain Sullenberger has dedicated his entire professional life to the pursuit of aviation safety. I commend President Biden for nominating him to represent our nation before ICAO and I am confident that his expertise, experience, and dedication to public service will strengthen our efforts to achieve greater cooperation in international air transportation.

He will restore America’s leadership in international institutions at a time when our adversaries are openly questioning our capabilities. The United States’ FAA and our aviation regulations are the gold standard for the world.

This gold standard has been tarnished by the failures in oversight of the Boeing MAX-8’s development and deployment. We are fixing these failures here at home, but our adversaries seek to undermine America’s leadership by exploiting tragedy for their geopolitical gain.

Captain Sullenberger’s confirmation as Ambassador to the ICAO will immediately send a signal to the world that United States excellence in aviation and aviation safety is here to stay.

While he is best known for piloting the Miracle on the Hudson, Captain Sullenberger is a longtime aviation safety expert, a renowned public speaker, and a successful author.

Born and raised in Denison, Texas, Captain Sullenberger pursued his childhood love of aviation by learning to fly while still in high school. He pursued his passion for flying at the United States Air Force Academy, where he received the Outstanding Cadet in Airmanship Award.

He went on to serve as a fighter pilot in the United States Air Force, serving in both North America and Europe, and became a flight leader and training officer attaining the rank of captain.

After serving our nation in uniform, Captain Sullenberger became an airline pilot with Pacific Southwest Airlines in 1980, which was then later acquired by U.S. Airways, and he flew with U.S. Airways until his retirement in 2010, though he still flies privately.

Throughout his career, Captain Sullenberger has been an active and passionate safety advocate. While in the Air Force, he was selected to perform accident investigation duties and later he also served as a representative of the Airline Pilots Association during National Transportation Safety Board accident investigations.

Captain Sullenberger served as APA's local air safety chairman, where he contributed to FAA advisory circulars. He was also instrumental in developing, implementing, and eventually teaching U.S. Airways' crew resource management course.

Of course, Captain Sullenberger may be best known for his heroic actions on January 15th of 2009 when he and his crew safely guided U.S. Airways Flight 1549 through an emergency water landing in New York City's Hudson River after their Airbus A-320 lost thrust following bird strikes in both engines.

Thanks to the calm and collected leadership of Captain Sullenberger and his fellow crew members, tragedy was avoided that day and all 155 people aboard Flight 1549 were rescued and reconnected with their families.

Because of him and his crew, children still have their parents, grandmothers and grandfathers were there for the birth of their grandchildren, and many more lives were impacted positively than just the 155 he saved on that day.

Time Magazine ranked Captain Sullenberger second in its top 100 most influential heroes and icons of 2009, and France awarded him their highest order of merit, the Legion of Honor.

Captain Sullenberger is presently an international lecturer and keynote speaker focusing on the importance of aviation safety, high-performance systems improvement, leadership and crisis management, among other topics.

It speaks to Sully's love of country that after already serving his nation in uniform and after a second career ensuring the safety of the flying public he is now willing to take on this new tour of duty.

When he called me and said he was thinking of accepting this nomination, I both cheered him on and offered him words of caution because he is taking on a heck of a lot, and I am so grateful that he is willing to do it.

We Americans are lucky to have Captain Sullenberger on our side and that he will be our representative, and the world is lucky that he will be there, once confirmed, as Ambassador to the ICAO to truly regain aviation safety as a premier institution when it comes to the traveling public.

If confirmed, I have no doubt that Captain Sullenberger will continue his long-standing passion for safety and cooperation in global air travels as our nation's Ambassador to the ICAO.

I thank the committee for allowing me to introduce my friend and strongly encourage all senators to support Captain Sullenberger's nomination to be ICAO Ambassador.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator Duckworth, for that very eloquent and, I would say, poetic as well introduction.

And I am just going to introduce briefly the members of our second panel. I will have a fuller introduction later. We just had introductions from the three distinguished nominees on our first panel. We have another round of equally distinguished nominees on the second panel and I am just going to go through that list.

We have with us Mr. Kent Doyle Logsdon to be Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova, Ms. Sharon L. Cromer to be Ambassador to the Republic of Gambia, Ambassador Virginia E. Palmer to be our Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana, and Howard A. Van Vranken to be Ambassador to the Republic of Botswana.

I am going to keep my opening remarks short because we have a lot to cover, and as Senator Rounds and my colleagues know, we also have a couple of votes that are scheduled to take place shortly. We will have to juggle those.

These hearings, of course, are a very important part of the Senate's constitutional responsibility of advice and consent, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has historically taken this responsibility very seriously.

This hearing is part of that process. I will say, and the chairman of the full committee, Senator Menendez, has mentioned this, we do have a backlog of nominees who have been appointed by the President, recommended by the President, but still do not have hearings scheduled.

And so it is really important as we do our constitutional duty and also make sure that we are addressing the national security and foreign policy concerns of our country that we get those folks through the hearing process just as quickly as possible.

With that said, I am pleased that we have these seven exceptional nominees before us today on two panels. These nominees, if confirmed, will help promote the United States' interests on issues of central importance to our country and to this committee, including aviation safety, climate change, bolstering the global pandemic response and vaccine rollout, and strengthening our relationships in key countries in Europe and in Africa.

We have big challenges ahead but I am made more optimistic by the sterling credentials, diverse backgrounds, and impressive careers of today's nominees.

We are joined by several distinguished career members of the Foreign Service, a Senate-confirmed Ambassador, a respected state legislator, a leading surgeon and public health researcher and writer, and one living breathing Miracle on the Hudson.

And by the way, if you have not seen the movie "Sully" I recommend it to you. I just saw it again recently.

Welcome to all of you. Now I want to turn it over to my colleague, Senator Rounds, for any opening remarks, and then we will begin with witness testimony.

Senator Rounds?

**STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROUNDS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA**

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon to all of you on what is no doubt one of the proudest days of your life and that of your families. Your commitment to public service is commendable. I want to thank you and your families for your willingness to serve.

Let me just begin by just saying I am a part of the Sully Sullenberger fan club. Captain Sullenberger, you were piloting U.S. Airways Flight 1549 on January 15 of '09 when it struck a flock of geese, taking out both engines. Your quick action to ditch the plane in the Hudson River saved all 155 souls on board.

After serving as an Air Force pilot and 30 years as an ATP—an air transport pilot—you have spent the last 10 years as an international lecturer and keynote speaker on a number of topics, including aviation safety.

I will be interested to hear about your concerns and priorities for the ICAO, China's rising influence in international bodies such as the ICAO, and whether ICAO might play a role in helping restore post-pandemic international air travel.

Dr. Gawande, if confirmed, you will bring decades of experience in medicine and public health to the USAID. I believe your work running various public health nonprofits may provide management and logistics experience relevant to USAID's enormous global health supply chains.

If confirmed, you will need to navigate a highly fractured U.S. Government response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. You will also have to manage USAID's relationship with the CDC, which for decades has been fraught with conflict, particularly in countries where both agencies have a presence.

I will be interested to hear your views on how you plan to help elevate global health security and pandemic preparedness as a national security priority.

As the ranking member of the Africa and Global Health Policy Subcommittee, I would appreciate hearing your views about the future of U.S.-China collaboration on public health in Africa generally and the Africa CDC specifically.

I also note that you have described abortion as a woman's right to choose. I am pro-life. I would like to hear whether you think USAID funding should go to support abortion in foreign countries.

Ms. Cronin, as we all know, the United States and Ireland enjoy close relations and have extensive historical and cultural ties. More than 31.5 million U.S. citizens and residents claim Irish ancestry, and I suspect even more on the 17th of March.

Ireland is a reliable international partner and is currently a rotating member of the U.N. Security Council. We have worked closely with Ireland, particularly on pushing back on China's abuses.

That does not mean there is not hard work to be done. There is room for improvement in the area of countering human trafficking, for example.

It will also be a challenge to persuade Ireland to adopt widely-accepted economic measures that it perceives might make it less attractive for foreign investment, such as the 15 percent global corporate tax minimum.

I also look forward to hearing about how you might draw upon your background as an attorney, mediator, and skilled politician to reinvigorate implementation of the Good Friday Agreement in the wake of COVID and the post-Brexit and Northern Ireland Protocol.

Thank you all for being here today and I look forward to your comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Now we will go straight to our witness testimony and why do not we lead off with Captain Sullenberger?

Captain Sullenberger, let me turn it over to you.

**STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN C.B. SULLENBERGER III OF TEXAS,
NOMINATED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA ON THE COUNCIL OF THE INTER-
NATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION WITH THE RANK
OF AMBASSADOR DURING HIS TENURE OF SERVICE**

Captain SULLENBERGER. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, members of the committee, I am deeply honored to be with you today as the President's nominee to become the U.S. Representative on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Please allow me to begin my statement today with a few comments about my biggest supporters, my wife, Lorrie, and our two daughters, Kate and Kelly. Kate, our older daughter, is a doctor of veterinary medicine in an emergency clinic. Kelly is working full time as a manager of enrollment for a major university and will finish her Ph.D. in the spring.

My wife, Lorrie, put her career on hold to stay home with our girls when, as an airline pilot, I was gone two-thirds of every month. We were equal partners in leading our family through decades of airline life, and we are so grateful that both of our young women found their life passions early and have pursued them so enthusiastically and successfully. If confirmed, Lorrie and I are looking forward to an exciting new chapter in our lives.

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply grateful to the President for this nomination and the confidence in me that he and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by asking that I assume this important role.

I seek this position because I want to once again serve this nation that has afforded me such wonderful opportunities that have filled my life with purpose and meaning.

In leveraging my life experience, I want to help restore and rebuild U.S. leadership in global aviation and increase economic opportunity for all Americans while improving their safety and security when they travel by air.

With COVID, climate change, and security threats, we are at an inflection point. While we are facing great challenges, we also have great opportunities to positively affect global aviation standards and recommended practices for decades to come.

At several points in my over half-century aviation career, along with my many colleagues, I have made significant contributions to our aviation progress.

At each juncture, after each success, I have hoped that my greatest contributions might still lie ahead, and at this juncture that is still my hope and my goal.

The International Civil Aviation Organization may be far from a household name but its purpose and performance are crucial to U.S. national security, and it benefits from the history of American leadership, dating to its founding in 1947.

A remarkable growth in civil aviation over the last 75 years is a testament not just to American innovation but also to the tangible value in multilateral bodies such as ICAO that facilitate cooperation, coordination, and mutual benefit.

If confirmed, I would strive to extend the legacy of U.S. leadership on matters related to aviation safety and security and to harmonize the global aviation standards.

I would underscore the administration's commitment to meaningful action on carbon offsets, sustainable aviation fuels, and gradual direct emissions reductions.

I would also focus intently on actions to strengthen ICAO's culture of transparency and accountability, actions that cannot be delayed, given the recent history of mismanagement at the organization.

I believe corrective measures became more achievable with the recent election of Juan Carlos Salazar as the organization's new secretary general and, if confirmed, I would be a relentless advocate for necessary reforms.

I would also be attentive to the risks posed to international organizations such as ICAO by authoritarian states who see benefit in undermining the purpose and performance of these multilateral venues.

Standard-setting bodies such as ICAO must work for the benefit of all its members, and in keeping with their intended roles, principles, and values. For ICAO, that means the safety, security, and sustainability of civil aviation.

That mission is threatened when member states disregard their international commitments, as in the case of the Belarus Ryanair incident or the repeated unannounced launch of missiles by the North Korean regime.

I also understand that successful American engagement at ICAO requires the strongest possible relationships across federal agencies, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Department of Transportation, and continuous conversation with aviation industry groups.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I would succeed many capable American representatives before me, and I would make every effort to live up to their collective standard.

If I am fortunate enough to represent the United States at ICAO it would be the honor of my lifetime.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

[Prepared statement of Captain Sullenberger follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHESLEY BURNETT SULLENBERGER III

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee: I am deeply honored to be with you today as the President's nominee to become the U.S. Representative on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization. Please allow me to

begin my statement today with a few comments about my biggest supporters, my wife Lorrie and our two daughters, Kate and Kelly. Kate, our older daughter, is a doctor of veterinary medicine in an emergency clinic. Kelly is working full time as a manager in enrollment for a major university and will finish her PhD in the spring. Lorrie put her career on hold to stay home with our girls when as an airline pilot I was gone two thirds of every month. We were equal partners in leading our family through decades of airline life. And we are so grateful that both of our young women found their life passions early and have pursued them so enthusiastically and successfully. If confirmed, Lorrie and I are looking forward to an exciting new chapter in our lives.

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply grateful to the President for this nomination and the confidence in me that he and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by asking that I assume this important role.

I seek this position because I want to once again serve this nation that has afforded me such wonderful opportunities that have filled my life with such purpose and meaning. In leveraging my life experience, I want to help restore and rebuild U.S. leadership in global aviation and increase economic opportunity for all Americans, while improving their safety and security when they travel by air.

With COVID, climate change, and security threats, we are at an inflection point. While we are facing great challenges, we also have great opportunities to positively affect global aviation standards and recommended practices for decades to come.

At several points in my over half-century aviation career, along with many colleagues, I have made significant contributions to our aviation progress. At each juncture, after each success, I have hoped that my greatest contributions might still lie ahead. And at this juncture, that is still my hope and my goal.

The International Civil Aviation Organization may be far from a household name, but its purpose and performance are crucial to U.S. national security, and it benefits from a history of American leadership dating to its foundation in 1947. The remarkable growth in civil aviation over the last 75 years is a testament not just to American innovation, but also to the tangible value in multilateral bodies such as ICAO that facilitate cooperation, coordination, and mutual benefit.

If confirmed, I would strive to extend the legacy of U.S. leadership on matters related to aviation safety and security, and to harmonize global aviation standards. I would underscore the administration's commitment to meaningful action on carbon offsets, sustainable aviation fuels, and gradual direct emissions reductions.

I would also focus intently on actions to strengthen ICAO's culture of transparency and accountability—actions that cannot be delayed given the recent history of mismanagement at the organization. I believe corrective measures became more achievable with the recent election of Juan Carlos Salazar as the organization's new Secretary General, and if confirmed, I would be a relentless advocate for necessary reforms.

I would also be attentive to the risks posed to international organizations such as ICAO by authoritarian states who see benefit in undermining the purpose and performance of these multilateral venues. Standard-setting bodies such as ICAO must work for the benefit of all its members and in keeping with their intended roles, principles, and values. For ICAO, that means the safety, security, and sustainability of civil aviation. That mission is threatened when member states disregard their international commitments, as in the case of the Belarus Ryanair incident, or the repeated, unannounced launch of missiles by the North Korean regime.

I also understand that successful American engagement at ICAO requires the strongest possible relationships across federal agencies, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Department of Transportation, and continuous conversation with aviation industry groups.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed I would succeed many capable American representatives before me, and would make every effort to live up to their collective standard. The United States has every reason to be proud of its leadership and continued pre-eminence in civil aviation, and I carry that pride with me. If I am fortunate enough to represent the United States at ICAO, it would be the honor of my lifetime.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Captain Sullenberger.

And as I mentioned, we are going to have some votes going on but we are going to try and keep this hearing going.

And I understand my colleague, Senator Rounds, is going to go vote and then he will return and I will go vote.

Next, let us turn it over to Dr. Gawande, who has been nominated to be Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development for Global Health.

Dr. Gawande?

**STATEMENT OF DR. ATUL A. GAWANDE OF MASSACHUSETTS,
NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE
UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Dr. GAWANDE. Thank you.

Senator Van Hollen, Ranking Member Rounds, members of the committee, I am honored to appear today as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Administrator for Global Health at USAID.

I am immensely grateful to President Biden and Administrator Power for putting their trust in me at this critical time. Serving in this role would be a privilege and responsibility my parents could not have imagined for a child of theirs when they met in Brooklyn in the 1960s as young new doctors from India.

I would like to thank my late father, and among my family attending I would like to thank my mother and my sister, Sumeeta, for their love and support, my children, Walker, Hattie, and Hunter, who have made me so proud, and my wife, Kathleen, whose encouragement and sacrifices have made this opportunity possible.

I have been among the beneficiaries of USAID's vital work. My father grew up in a village in Maharashtra that went from suffering recurrent famine and praying for food aid to growing cash crops like sugar cane and cotton for export, thanks to USAID's critical support of agricultural development in India years ago.

Then as a child born in New York, I had an anaphylactic reaction to the smallpox vaccine, preventing my ability to complete vaccination and travel abroad.

USAID's leadership in helping eradicate smallpox in 1979 meant that I could not only travel and work in global health but even be nominated to lead the bureau and dedicated people behind that effort.

If I am confirmed, I commit to working with you and others in Congress in a bipartisan manner to strengthen and support USAID's staff and to further the agency's longstanding leadership in global health, and I will seek to specifically address three simultaneous colossal needs: controlling COVID-19, preparing for the next pandemic, and strengthening global health systems to regain the massive ground lost in advancing life expectancy.

The global health challenges that are facing USAID and our country are daunting. But if I am confirmed, I believe my career as a surgeon, journalist, and public health leader have prepared me for service as assistant administrator.

Over the last two decades, I have had a singular focus on reducing suffering and saving lives through leadership and innovation, to reduce disparities in systems of health care and public health worldwide.

In my research and writing, I have endeavored to expose gaps and produce solutions, and then in my public health roles I have worked to deliver those solutions widely.

And from this firsthand experience, I have learned not just how to make investments but how to use them to make systems work across a wide range of domains in health.

For instance, I led a global partnership that created a two-minute surgical safety checklist that was found in a trial in hospitals from Seattle to rural Tanzania to reduce complications and deaths by more than one-third. Then I helped lead a decade of work that has produced daily use of that checklist in 75 percent of surgical procedures globally.

Through Lifebox, an NGO I co-founded, we lowered the cost of oxygen-monitoring equipment for operating rooms in low income countries by 80 percent.

I also co-founded Ariadne Labs, a center for health systems innovation where we have improved the safety of childbirth in India and sub-Saharan Africa, strengthened outbreak response in the H1N1 Ebola and coronavirus pandemics, and improved primary care in low income countries.

Early in 2020, I turned my work toward the coronavirus pandemic. I co-founded CIC Health, a public benefit corporation to provide logistics and operations for U.S. COVID-19 needs that our existing health system struggled to meet.

We have provided now 3 million coronavirus tests and vaccinations across the Northeast and are now feverishly working to deliver testing capacity for thousands of schools in need.

This experience, along with my publications in medical journals, the New Yorker, and elsewhere during the pandemic led to two additional roles.

I was privileged to serve on the Biden-Harris Transition COVID-19 Advisory Board and then as a co-leader of STAT, a Rockefeller Foundation-supported alliance of COVID-19 officials for 40-plus states who have met weekly in a bipartisan manner for the last year to design and share solutions for controlling the pandemic.

Across my work, I have seen the quiet unrecognized heroism of the people in our public health and development agencies across the country and the world.

They have saved and are saving more lives than most will know by taking on the toughest health challenges of our time, and that is why I could not be more excited by the possibility of joining them at USAID.

It is an extraordinary privilege to be here. I look forward to answering your questions.

[Prepared statement of Dr. Gawande follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. ATUL GAWANDE

Senator Van Hollen, Senator Rounds, members of the committee, I am honored to appear today as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Administrator for Global Health at the U.S. Agency for International Development. I am immensely grateful to President Biden and Administrator Power for putting their trust in me at this critical time.

Serving in this role would be a privilege and responsibility my parents could not have imagined for a child of theirs when they met in Brooklyn in the 1960s as young new doctors from India. I would like to thank my mother, my late father, and my sister, Sumeeta, for their love and support; my children-Walker, Hattie, and Hunter-who have made me so proud; and my wife, Kathleen, whose encouragement and sacrifices have made this opportunity possible.

I have been among the beneficiaries of USAID's vital work. My father grew up in a village in Maharashtra that went from suffering recurrent famine and praying for food aid to growing cash crops like sugar cane and cotton for export, thanks to USAID's critical support of agricultural development in India. Then, as a child, I had an anaphylactic reaction to the smallpox vaccine, preventing my ability to complete vaccination and travel abroad. USAID's leadership in helping eradicate smallpox in 1979 meant that I could not only travel and work in global health, but even be nominated to lead the bureau and dedicated people behind that effort.

If confirmed, I commit to working with you and others in Congress in a bipartisan manner to strengthen and support USAID's staff and to further the agency's long-established leadership in global health. And I will seek to specifically address three simultaneous, colossal needs: controlling COVID-19; preparing for the next pandemic; and strengthening global health systems to regain the massive ground lost in advancing life expectancy.

The global health challenges facing USAID and our country are daunting. But if confirmed, I believe my career as a surgeon, journalist, and public health leader have prepared me for service as Assistant Administrator. Over the last two decades, I have had a singular focus on reducing suffering and saving lives through leadership and innovation to reduce disparities in systems of health care and public health worldwide. In my research and writing, I've endeavored to expose gaps and produce solutions. In my public health roles, I've worked to deliver those solutions widely. And from this first-hand experience, I've learned not just how to make investments, but how to use them to make systems work across a wide range of domains in health.

For instance, I led a global partnership that created a two-minute surgical safety checklist that was found in a trial in hospitals from Seattle to rural Tanzania to reduce complications and deaths by more than one-third. Then I helped lead a decade of work that has produced daily use of the checklist in 75 percent of surgical procedures globally. Through Lifebox, an NGO I co-founded, we lowered the cost of oxygen-monitoring equipment for operating rooms in low-income countries by 80 percent. I also founded Ariadne Labs, a center for health systems innovation that has improved the safety of childbirth in India and sub-Saharan Africa; improved U.S. care in serious, life-limiting illness; strengthened outbreak response in the H1N1, Ebola, and coronavirus pandemics; and improved primary care in low-income countries.

Early in 2020, I turned my work toward the coronavirus pandemic. Nothing has made the gaps in the delivery of health and survival clearer. I co-founded CIC Health, a public benefit corporation to provide logistics and operations for U.S. COVID-19 needs that our existing health systems struggled to meet. We have provided three million coronavirus tests and vaccinations across the northeast and are now working to deliver testing capacity for thousands of schools in need. This experience—along with my publications in medical journals, the New Yorker, and elsewhere during the pandemic—led to two additional roles. I was privileged to serve on the Biden-Harris Transition COVID-19 Advisory Board, and as co-leader of STAT, a Rockefeller Foundation-supported alliance of COVID-19 officials for 40-plus states who have met weekly for the last year to design and share solutions for controlling the pandemic.

Across my work, I have seen the quiet, unrecognized heroism of the people in our public health and development agencies across the country and the world. They have saved and are saving more lives than most will ever know by taking on the toughest health challenges of our time. That is why I could not be more excited by the possibility of joining them at USAID.

It is an extraordinary privilege to be here. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Leader Claire D. Cronin, who has been nominated to be our Ambassador to Ireland.

Leader Cronin?

STATEMENT OF THE HON. CLAIRE D. CRONIN OF MASSACHUSETTS, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO IRELAND

Ms. CRONIN. Thank you to Senator Markey for the kind introduction.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, it is my honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Ireland. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and confidence.

If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge to work closely with Congress and the administration to advance United States priorities and reinforce our shared values in Ireland.

First, I would like to thank my husband, Ray, as well as our daughters, Kara and Kerry, for their love and support. I am also grateful to have the strong support of my brothers and sisters, and my close extended family—in-laws, cousins, nieces, and nephews, and of course, my dear friends, who have become a second family to me.

My career is rooted in public service and the law. My path was shaped by the example set by my parents. My mother was a public school teacher and my father a Pearl Harbor survivor who served in the Pacific throughout World War Two. He attended law school with the help of the GI Bill when he returned home.

I was honored to be elected to serve in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 2012. I was grateful for the opportunity to serve as the first woman to chair the Judiciary Committee in the House and today as the first woman House Majority Leader.

My experience as a mediator shaped my ability to work within the House in a constructive and bipartisan manner. When my grandfather left Donegal for the promise that America held, I cannot help but wonder what he would have thought if he knew his granddaughter will one day be testifying before this esteemed committee as the nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to Ireland.

The Irish first arrived on our shores before the founding of our nation. Their significant contributions, sacrifice, and hard work helped define the American spirit and shape our success today.

Over 30 million Americans claim Irish heritage. The historical, cultural, and economic ties between the United States and Ireland are undeniable and will forever unite our countries.

This strong relationship is demonstrated within my own family. We are blessed and forever enriched by the addition of my sister-in-law Breffni, who was born and raised in Dublin.

If confirmed, the safety and security of Americans in Ireland will be my top priority. If confirmed, I will also advance the shared values that are the bedrock of our enduring ties.

These priorities include addressing global challenges together, increasing our shared prosperity, and strengthening our people-to-people ties.

Ireland has a strong commitment to multilateral institutions, which is central in promoting peace, prosperity, and stability.

While maintaining a policy of military neutrality, Ireland continues to be a valuable partner in maintaining global security through sustained contributions to U.N. peacekeeping, dependable humanitarian assistance, and membership in the D-ISIS Coalition.

If confirmed, I will work with Ireland to ensure that addressing global challenges and partnering in global security continue to be strong elements of our bilateral relationship.

Our economic relationship is the pillar of our strong ties. The U.S. is Ireland's strongest and largest trade and investment part-

ner. More than 900 U.S. firms operate in Ireland, and Ireland is currently the ninth largest investor in the U.S.

If confirmed, I will promote the United States as an investment and exchange destination for Irish companies and individuals, and advocate for increased two-way trade and investment to create jobs in the United States and Ireland.

The United States and Ireland remain committed to the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, which has been the bedrock of peace, stability, and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

If confirmed, I will encourage the United Kingdom, the European Union, and Ireland to engage in productive and cooperative dialogue to resolve the differences over the Northern Ireland Protocol. Our relationship is close and enduring, one that will continue to grow ever stronger as we work together on a range of shared issues.

If confirmed, I will advance our shared priorities and values, expand our rich economic and commercial cooperation, and strengthen our people-to-people ties.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Cronin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CLAIRE D. CRONIN

Thank you, Senator Markey, for the kind introduction.

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I was honored to be elected to serve in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 2012. While serving, I was grateful for the opportunity to serve as the first woman chair of the Judiciary Committee in the House, and today as the first woman House Majority Leader.

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If confirmed, I will work with Ireland to ensure that addressing global challenges and partnering in global security continue to be strong elements of our bilateral relationship.

Our economic relationship is a pillar of our strong ties. The United States is Ireland's strongest and largest trade and investment partner. More than 900 U.S. firms operate in Ireland and, Ireland is currently the ninth largest investor in the United States.

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If confirmed, I will encourage the United Kingdom, the European Union, and Ireland, to engage in productive and cooperative dialogue to resolve differences over the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The United States' relationship with Ireland is close and enduring—one that will continue to grow ever stronger as we work together on a range of shared issues.

If confirmed, I will advance our shared political priorities and values; expand our rich economic and commercial cooperation and strengthen our people-to-people ties.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Leader Cronin, and thank all of the nominees for their testimony here today, and now we will begin questions. We have got a lot of ground to try to cover.

Let me start with you, Captain Sullenberger, and it really is a two-part question. You referenced in your testimony the fact that ICAO is conducting an investigation of the May 2021 forced landing by Belarus of Ryanair.

That was the flight bound for Lithuania, and they did it in order to arrest a dissident journalist, a flagrant violation of human rights, assault on the free press, and potentially a contravention of international aviation law.

What options does ICAO have to address this kind of conduct in order to prevent a repeat of these kind of actions?

Captain SULLENBERGER. Mr. Chairman, thank you for that important question, and it is a very important question internationally.

The forced diversion of Ryanair Flight 4978 by Belarus for the arrest of an opposition journalist showed flagrant disregard for international norms of aviation security and safety and, clearly, undermined the critical trust between pilots and air traffic control in the flight information region.

ICAO, as a U.N. organization responsible for setting global standards for the safety and security of international civil aviation, must ensure that those standards are upheld.

If confirmed, I will continue to encourage our partners and allies to fully participate in the ICAO investigation by sharing all information relevant to the incident with ICAO's investigative team and to push for substantive findings, including a chronology of events to be presented to the Council in November.

Already steps have been taken to sanction those involved, including the Belarus minister of transport, the air navigation commissioner, and another official.

I think more action needs to be taken. There is, in the ICAO Charter Article 88, that in certain conditions we can temporarily remove the voting rights of a state for violating international norms.

I think it requires a whole of government approach. We should be pulling every lever necessary to hold accountable those responsible for this act.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you for that response. Let me ask you briefly about the issue of climate change and ICAO's role in curbing carbon emissions from international aviation.

I know you are aware of the CORSIA initiative. What more should we be doing in this area and what role can you and ICAO play in making even more progress, going forward?

Captain SULLENBERGER. CORSIA is an important interim step and it is important that we begin immediately.

As you know, with any crisis any denial or delay lowers our chances of success. The sooner we start, the more options we are going to have to deal with this existential threat, the better those options will be, and the lower the cost total in the long run.

The administration supports legislative action to enable full U.S. implementation of CORSIA and, if confirmed, I will support this effort. Many U.S. airlines are already voluntarily beginning taking such action. Those actions remain voluntary through 2026.

I think, again, a whole of government approach. Everything we can be doing we should be doing, including a wide distribution of sustainable aviation fuels in particular.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. I am now going to—I see Senator Rounds has returned and I am going to turn it over to him for questioning and go vote.

And Senator Rounds, I see Senator Shaheen is next after you but let me turn it over to you. I will be back. Thank you all.

Senator ROUNDS. [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just curious, will we be doing separate questioning for each of the members or can we discuss our questions with the entire panel at this time?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I think—feel free to ask anybody. If there is interest, we can do another short round for this panel because I did have some questions for some of the other witnesses on this panel as well.

Senator ROUNDS. Excellent. If it is okay with you, Mr. Chairman, I will do my questions with the entire panel and allow Senator Shaheen to do the same, and by that time you should be back in charge again.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right. Take care. Thanks. Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just begin, first of all, by thanking all of you once again for participating and I want to begin with Captain Sullenberger.

In your opening statement, you identified some priority areas that you will focus on at the I-C-A-O, or ICAO. Can you elaborate on what you see as the major U.S. interests for participation in

ICAO, and also what benefits does the United States receive from membership?

Captain SULLENBERGER. Thank you, Senator, for that important question.

And that is part of why I want to serve in this capacity. I think it is important that we raise the level of awareness among the American people about what ICAO is and what it does and why it is important, and I want to use my public profile to help do that along with all my colleagues at FAA, at DOT, at TSA and in conference with your committee and the members.

It is important that the American people understand that in ICAO they are responsible for setting and enforcing the best practices, the standards and recommended procedures that airlines and all aviation operators use globally, and it is important for safety and security of everyone who travels internationally by air that those standards be as high as are practicable and that they are uniform and harmonized throughout the world.

And for American companies it is important that we try to harmonize these standards and practices globally so there are not great differences in procedures and standards between areas of the world, and it makes the whole use of airspace more efficient and makes our companies more successful and profitable.

It is important that we—go ahead.

Senator ROUNDS. No. Please finish.

Captain SULLENBERGER. It is important in advancing U.S. economic interests, and one of the things that has been brought up already that we really need to do is to restore and make more robust U.S. leadership in global aviation because we have powerful strategic competitors out there, and particularly the PRC.

And so we need to rally our allies, our partners, and like-minded states to promote values of democracy, of free markets, and not some of the values of autocratic states that appear in some ICAO documents at the request of the PRC that have been certified by the Communist Chinese Party, or that may include some of their rhetoric and their ideology.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. That kind of leads into my second question, sir. Some policymakers are concerned about the increasing influence and role of countries that are viewed as U.S. competitors in U.N. bodies.

For example, in recent years, U.N. specialized agencies, including ICAO, are increasingly being led by Chinese nationals. What is your assessment of China's efforts to increase its standing and influence in ICAO?

Captain SULLENBERGER. Currently, because of the methodology that is used based upon nations' contributions to U.N. agencies, we are allowed certain members of U.S. nationals to work in certain U.N. agencies.

Based upon our contributions and our funding for U.N. agencies, we should have at ICAO over 30 U.S. employees and now we have less than 10.

That is one of the things that is foremost in my mind is to improve opportunities for employment at ICAO for Americans who have the knowledge, the skill, the expertise to improve aviation globally and to advance U.S. values and interests and not those of

authoritarian states. That is one of the most important things that we can do.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir. And, look, I appreciate your stepping forward and participating in the public policy discussions. Thank you.

Dr. Gawande, various provisions of law restrict the use of U.S. taxpayer funds to perform or promote abortion overseas. If confirmed, will you commit to upholding these laws in both letter and spirit?

Dr. GAWANDE. I am very clear Congress makes the laws. USAID is not permitted to fund abortion and I am committed to continuing to comply with the laws and regulations that are—that pertain here.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

The committee recently passed a bill to elevate global health security and pandemic preparedness as a national security priority, including by establishing a global health diplomacy lead at the State Department to better align the work of USAID and CDC in the field.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with this committee to make sure it is faithfully implemented?

Dr. GAWANDE. I will, certainly, work closely with the committee if the bill goes through to law to make sure it is appropriately—that we are in compliance with the law and that it is implemented.

I strongly support improving our pandemic preparedness and global health security response and look forward to working with you for ways that we can expand our capabilities even further.

Senator ROUNDS. Dr. Gawande, thank you very much.

Ms. Cronin, Ireland's economic environment attracts foreign investment due to its low tax rates. There has been tension over Ireland's resistance to the 15 percent global corporate tax minimum that over 130 countries have already signed on to.

How will you support efforts to advance solutions on tax issues with Ireland? And also, how would you help reconcile Ireland's differences with the global corporate tax minimum, or is there an alternative to be pursued?

Ms. CRONIN. Thank you very much, Senator, for your question. It is, certainly, an issue that has driven a great amount of discussion and, at times, controversy as we are moving forward with the U.S. proposed global minimum tax rate.

As you rightly stated, over 130 countries have come to reach consensus on this rate, and the idea behind it to level the playing field relative to foreign direct investment in other countries.

Ireland is one of the three countries within the EU who has not agreed to the minimum tax rate. I, certainly, recognize their desire for tax sovereignty, although Ireland has a very strong and positive climate for investment.

They have a well-educated English-speaking and multilingual workforce, a strong judiciary, proximity to both the United States and the EU, good transportation links. All of these things are factors that businesses do consider when they decide to locate in another country or do business there.

I think we have already seen that we have many, many industry leaders have a footprint in Dublin or in Ireland. Certainly, the tax

rate—the 12.5 percent tax rate—is something that may have been attractive to those seeking to invest.

But as I said earlier, there are many, many other factors which come into that decision. I think it is important to note the minimum global tax is a floor, not a ceiling. It does still allow good competition and a level playing field.

I know Ireland is very committed to work within a multilateral framework. I would work, try to facilitate discussions with tax experts from the U.S. to meet with Irish government officials, work within the EOCED to, hopefully, over time, promote this minimum tax with Ireland and hope that without too much longer that they may join with 130 other countries who have agreed to do so.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, and thank you once again for stepping forward. My time has expired, and at this time I would turn to Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Rounds, and congratulations to all of the nominees this afternoon. We look forward to the opportunity to serve with you.

I want to begin, Captain Sullenberger, with you, because you mentioned in your opening remarks the Ryanair flight, and I had the opportunity to be in Lithuania shortly after that flight was brought down by Lukashenko in Belarus.

And there was a real outrage not just in Lithuania but in Eastern European countries about the impact of a dictator being able to bring down a flight and how that would affect the freedom of all air travel.

I wondered if you could speak to what you think ICAO could do to address any future attempts like we saw in Belarus that brought down a plane just for political purposes.

Captain SULLENBERGER. It is very clear to me, Senator, that the United States must have an effective leadership role, again, with our allies, our partners, our like-minded states, to strengthen ICAO's standards so there is not a gap that autocrats can use and use our freedoms against us through deception, through coercion, to pose a situation where they say that there is a bomb threat and that the device might detonate if they fly into the next airspace or destination and that they must be diverted to Belarus.

And again, that fractures the trust between air traffic in that region and—air traffic control and the pilots and it violates every norm.

There is a debate about whether or not it violates international law. Perhaps the laws and the requirements, the standards, need to be strengthened to close these gaps that others might use to do something similar.

We should be using every lever of power, every bit of influence we can, to isolate, to punish those who do these kinds of acts and make it less likely that anyone else will do that.

But it is going to require a whole of government approach and a real effective partnership achieving consensus among many nations to do what needs to be done. It is going to be hard, but we have to start right now.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much for that response, and I hope you will, once confirmed, take the lead in trying to help make that happen at ICAO.

Dr. Gawande, I want to follow up with you. I remember your—some of your articles were, really, blueprints as we were looking at trying to do the Affordable Care Act and put in place an improved health care system. Thank you so much for all of your writings and your research.

I want to ask you about the global gag rule, because when the Biden-Harris administration took over one of the first things they did was to rescind the global gag rule, which I think has been very important to women and to families around the world because we know that it affects the ability of family planning agencies to really engage—often engage with their patients.

Can you speak to the difference that that makes in the ability to provide for the health of women around the world?

Dr. GAWANDE. Thank you, and thank you for the kind words, Senator.

First, I want you to understand I am a strong believer in the evidence that voluntary family planning and reproductive health services are essential to women's health and that there is ample evidence of benefit to infant and child health as well.

Second, I know there is a strong difference of views about the global gag rule and President Biden's decision to rescind the policy.

But I think we can agree that we have had now decades of bipartisan support that has made the U.S. government the global leader in funding voluntary family planning. And not only that, it has made USAID the global leader in technical expertise for enabling voluntary family planning support.

My core commitment, if I am confirmed to the agency, is going to be to, first, follow the law and applicable regulations, and then also advance our leadership in this space.

The global gag rule rescission allows the reach of our programs at USAID to a wider range of organizations that are having a remarkable commitment while also complying with the laws that require that USAID not fund abortion.

And so that ability to expand that leadership and that reach is the primary value that comes from that policy decision.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I really appreciate that answer and pointing out that family planning is not abortion, and we should stop including those organizations that help women determine their children, and how many children they can have and want to have and how to space out their families is different than abortion and we should stop treating them the same way. I appreciate that.

Ms. Cronin, congratulations to you as well. As a neighbor—a neighboring legislator, I appreciate the barriers that you have broken in Massachusetts.

And I wanted to—I am also the chair of the Subcommittee on Foreign Relations that deals with Europe and so I have been following the challenges relating to the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocols as Britain has left Brexit.

Can you talk about how you will work to ensure that the U.S. upholds its commitment to support trade to Northern Ireland and help ensure that the issues are being addressed in the framework of the protocol?

Ms. CRONIN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. And not only are we neighbors, I lived in Londonderry, New Hampshire, when you were elected as governor.

Senator SHAHEEN. Oh, good.

Ms. CRONIN. Yes.

[Laughter.]

Ms. CRONIN. Clearly, President Biden has stated that he is unequivocally committed to the preservation of the Good Friday Agreement. This is also very clearly shown with strong bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate in Congress—the Senate—and very strong bipartisan support as well.

This will be a shared priority for both the United States and, certainly, for Ireland as well. They have repeatedly expressed great concern that the hard-fought gains of the Good Friday Agreement have been maintained.

Recently, there has been some unrest regarding the Northern Ireland Protocol and its implications. If I were confirmed, I would work with Embassy London, Consul General in Belfast, and the Irish government to make sure that everyone would still come to the table and do everything possible and engage in constructive dialogue in order to preserve the hard-fought gains of the Good Friday Agreement.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I think that will be a real challenge as you take over your post, once confirmed.

I look forward to working with all of you—I am sure I am out of time at this point—and really appreciate your responses.

Ms. CRONIN. Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

I know that our chairman is on his way back, and prior to stepping into the next panel, I just—I wanted to ask Dr. Gawande one more question.

I wanted to ask you a question touching on China, Africa, and public health. Amid an otherwise increasingly challenging relationship, the United States and China collaborated to assist the African Union stand up the Africa CDC.

This offered hope that we and China could work together to address some of the world's most challenging problems. Has that collaboration continued in the wake of COVID-19 and will China's construction of the Africa CDC headquarters in Addis give China leverage when it comes to addressing public health concerns in Africa?

Dr. GAWANDE. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Africa CDC has been an important organization for building capacity in Africa for public health services, public health structures and organization, and I think the critical part of my role, if I am confirmed, to the Global Health Bureau would be to engage directly with Africa CDC to ensure that our leadership, our close connection to Africa CDC, is sustained and that the global values that are reflected by the way we do our work are continued.

We know that China has approached our—their contributions on COVID vaccines in a very transactional way. Where we have donated at the world's most massive level to COVAX and bilateral agreements for vaccines, China has approached it by only providing—primarily providing sales for profit and not upholding the

same kinds of values and standards. I do think it is very important for us to be engaged in these organizations like Africa CDC.

I will, lastly, point out that President Biden has elevated the Africa CDC director to become the head of PEPFAR and lead HIV/AIDS here as a nominee, and so he will come before this group as well, I suspect, and I think that this is all an important reflection of how much value Africa CDC has added in a short period of time.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Doctor.

And, Mr. Chairman, I will turn the virtual gavel back over to you, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN [presiding]. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Rounds, and thank you all for your indulgence of all of us as we go to vote.

And Senator Rounds really covered the question to Dr. Gawande that I want to focus on and just elaborate a little bit, because I think we are all pleased with the leadership that President Biden has shown in working to get vaccines deployed around the world and our contributions to COVAX.

But we have got a long way to go, we, meaning the international community, especially in Africa where we have got 17 percent of the world's population but only 2 percent of all the shots that have been delivered to date have been in Africa.

And according to the most recent estimate from the World Health Organization, less than 4 percent of the African continent's population has been fully inoculated.

We, on this committee and on the Africa Subcommittee and African Global Health Subcommittee, are going to want to work with you to address those issues.

My final question is also to you, which is, obviously, we want to have all hands on deck to defeat the pandemic. But as you well know, there are all sorts of other diseases that claim people's lives around the world, including especially in Africa. And in many cases, as we have sort of surged resources to deal with COVID we have seen spikes in some of the other areas—diseases in other areas.

Could you just talk a little bit about how we address both at the same time, even with the limited resources that we have got?

Dr. GAWANDE. Yes. These are colossal and daunting challenges to both take on the COVID-19 threat that we have right in front of us, prepare for the next pandemic, but realize that the response and the effects of COVID have severely damaged health care systems and public health gains we have made over the last couple of years.

We have seen vaccination for other conditions, for childhood illnesses, retreat. We have seen progress in preventing maternal and child death retreat. We have seen some of the same kinds of losses in our TB work.

And I think the most critical opportunities that we have there are to now reengage, understanding that we still have—we will have well into 2022 and beyond coping with COVID and, therefore, we will have to reinvigorate our prevention of maternal and child death programs, our HIV/AIDS work, and our TB work.

There are many opportunities to use our focus on COVID to strengthen the systems as a whole, help them get back on their

feet, and make it possible to move forward on basic fronts like primary care and delivery of these kinds of capabilities.

I think the bottom line will be that we have a extensive capability at USAID in those global health arenas. I think everybody has been all hands on deck on the COVID work and this is our opportunity to enable those teams now to also get back to advancing their lines of work, and if I am confirmed that is exactly what I will want to make sure we are doing.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Doctor.

And Leader Cronin, I think Senator Shaheen asked one of the questions I was going to pose to you regarding Ireland and our efforts to establish at least some minimum international corporate tax and, really, the role that you will play in urging Ireland to really support that effort to prevent a race to the bottom.

And I am going to submit for the record a couple questions regarding Brexit and its impact in relations with Northern Ireland and Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement.

But let me say to all of you what a terrific group of nominees with great experience, and we are looking forward to, hopefully, having a fairly rapid markup and vote in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on all your nominations.

I thank all of you for joining us, and now we are going to go to the second panel, unless there are any other members who have anything else to say.

If not, round one is over and we are going to start the second round. Thank you all for being here and for joining us, and congratulations on your nominations.

Dr. GAWANDE. Thank you.

Captain SULLENBERGER. Thank you.

Ms. CRONIN. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Ms. CRONIN. Thank you very much.

[Pause.]

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right. I, certainly, see some of the nominees for the second panel and I am going to kick this off with introductions for each of you, and then you can make your statements and then we will have a round of questions.

I see another vote has just started so Senator Rounds and I will try to juggle this the way we did before.

Let me just introduce all of our distinguished nominees. We have Kent Doyle Logsdon, who is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and has spent the bulk of his three decades-long career in the European and Eurasia regions.

He is currently chief of staff to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment. Among his past assignments he served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Energy Resources, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, and chief of staff to both the Deputy Secretary of State for Management Resources and the Deputy Executive Secretary of the State Department.

He is the recipient of Presidential Meritorious Service Awards—the Presidential Meritorious Service Awards, as well as numerous other State Department performance awards.

He speaks Russian, Ukrainian, Thai, and German, holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame and a Master's degree from the University of Virginia.

Welcome to you, Mr. Logsdon.

We also have Sharon L. Cromer, who is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as the USAID Mission Director at the U.S. Embassy in Accra, Ghana. Among her many past assignments, Ms. Cromer served as USAID Mission Director at the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam and at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja.

Ms. Cromer has also served in USAID as the Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator and Acting Assistant Administrator in the Africa Bureau, as Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Management Bureau, and as Acting Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator and Acting Assistant Administrator in the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance.

She is a recipient of a Presidential Rank Award, the USAID Administrators Reengineering Award, and a State Department Superior Honor Award.

Ms. Cromer earned her BA from Barnard College and her JD from Georgetown University Law School.

Welcome to you, Ms. Cromer.

Ambassador Virginia E. Palmer is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as both Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and as Acting Assistant Secretary for the State Department's Bureau of Energy Resources.

Previously, she served as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi where she oversaw an annual bilateral assistance budget of over \$500 million and the work of 11 U.S. government agencies.

Among her other past assignments Ambassador Palmer has also served as Deputy Chief of Mission and charge d'affaire ad interim at the U.S. Embassy in South Africa and Deputy Chief of Mission and charge d'affaire ad interim at the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam.

Ambassador Palmer is the recipient of numerous superior honor, meritorious honor, and senior performance awards and speaks both Chinese and French. She received her Bachelor's of Science in Foreign Service degree from Georgetown University and her MA from the University of Virginia.

Welcome to you, Ambassador Palmer.

And Howard A. Van Vranken is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Secretary at the State Department's Executive Secretariat.

He previously served as Executive Director and Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, and as Deputy Executive Director in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, and South and Central Asian Affairs.

Earlier, Mr. Van Vranken served as Management Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, and as Deputy Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Past postings also include assignments in Norway, Yemen, Lebanon, Tunisia, Ireland, and the U.K. He is the recipient of multiple State Department awards and the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, and speaks Arabic, Farsi, and Norwegian. Mr. Van

Vranken received his BA from UC Davis and his MA from the Harvard Kennedy School.

Welcome to Mr. Van Vranken.

I am now going to—I do not know, Senator Rounds, if you have any statements here. If not, I was going to turn it over and begin the testimony.

Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Chairman, I will tell you what. I will enter my statement for the record and allow you to begin the testimony, and if you would like to coordinate a plan for both of us getting in to vote in a timely fashion, I would be all ears.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right. I am happy to go first—vote first or second, whichever your preference is.

Senator ROUNDS. I will head out right now and, hopefully, get back in time to spell you sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right. Thank you.

All right. Again, to all our nominees, thank you for your understanding. Senator Rounds is going to go vote, and then he will return and I will go vote as well.

Let us please begin in the order in which I made the introductions and we will begin with Mr. Logsdon.

STATEMENT OF KENT DOYLE LOGSDON OF PENNSYLVANIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Mr. LOGSDON. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, I am honored to appear today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova.

I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with Congress to advance our nation's interests in Moldova.

I would not be here without the love and support of my family: my wife, Michelle, who just retired after 35 years of service as a Foreign Service officer, initially with the U.S. Information Agency and then as a public diplomacy officer at the State Department, our children, who accompanied us to our overseas postings. We are very proud of their resilience and achievements.

Nora is a law student at the University of Virginia and Will is studying music production at Shenandoah University.

And, of course, my parents, who encouraged me in this career—my mother, Carroll, who passed away last year after contracting COVID, and my father, Bill, who just retired after nearly 60 years as a patent attorney.

The world changed after I joined the Foreign Service. The Berlin Wall and the USSR disappeared and the Cold War ended. My wife and I joined many of our colleagues in establishing and building relationships with new countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

I focused most of my diplomatic career working in or on issues involving the countries in this region, and it is exciting to see their progress and development in the past 30 years.

If confirmed, leading our mission in Chisinau would be a highlight of my diplomatic career. The U.S.-Moldova relationship is grounded in shared democratic values and support for a democratic, secure, and prosperous Moldova, anchored in Europe.

With an historic mandate, President Sandu and a reform-oriented government have launched an ambitious program to establish a more transparent and accountable democracy, build a stronger economy, and combat endemic corruption.

At the U.N. General Assembly, President Biden told the world about Moldovan voters' success in delivering a landslide victory for the forces of democracy with a mandate to fight graft to build a more inclusive economy.

Corruption threatens Moldova's economic prospects and democratic future. We must continue to support the Moldovan government's efforts to strengthen the capacity of its institutions to identify, investigate, and prosecute corruption. If confirmed, I will make the fight against corruption one of my top priorities.

We must also continue to be a steadfast partner to civil society, independent media, and other organizations committed to developing participatory democracy and promoting good governance.

Progress in the fight against corruption will strengthen Moldova's investment climate and ensure a level playing field for U.S. business. Moldova has strengthened its financial sector oversight and transparency, and continued reforms will help Moldova unlock further budgetary support from the European Union and IMF to strengthen its economy in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

Support from the United States and the European Union is helping Moldova expand trade and market linkages with the West. The EU is now Moldova's largest trading partner. Moldova is linking its energy infrastructure to Europe and diversifying its energy supply to reduce dependence on Russian gas imports.

Moldova is also committed to transforming its defense forces and their capacity to contribute to international security and peacekeeping missions. U.S. security assistance has been key to this effort. The United States respects Moldova's constitutional neutrality and welcomes its efforts to build a more modern military equipped to counter emerging threats.

Russian malign influence and disinformation threaten Moldova's democratic development, ambitious reform agenda, and European trajectory.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the government leaders, civil society, and international partners to support Moldova's democratic reform agenda and build resiliency against malign influence and disinformation.

Resolving the Transnistria conflict remains a priority. The United States supports OSCE-led efforts to uphold Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity while acknowledging a special status for Transnistria.

We need to continue to press Russia to honor its commitments to withdraw its troops and munitions from Moldova, and we are committed to protecting the fundamental freedoms of citizens on both sides of the Dniester River.

If confirmed, I will continue to promote confidence-building measures and seek tangible results through the OSCE-led 5+2 process.

The Moldovan people have chosen a bold path of reform and Western integration. It is in our interest to support them. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the members of this committee and the Congress to do just that.

Improving Moldova's democracy, prosperity, and security will help us develop a key partner in Eastern Europe.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Logsdon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KENT D. LOGSDON

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, I am honored to appear today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with Congress to advance our nation's interests in Moldova.

I would not be here without the love and support of my family. My wife Michelle, who just retired after 35 years of service as a foreign service officer, initially with the U.S. Information Agency, and then as a public diplomacy officer at the State Department. Our children, who accompanied us to our overseas postings. We are proud of their resilience and achievements—Nora is a law student at the University of Virginia and Will is studying music production at Shenandoah University. And my parents, who encouraged me in this career—my mother Carroll, who passed away last year after contracting COVID, and my father Bill, who just retired after nearly 60 years as a patent attorney.

The world changed after I joined the foreign service. The Berlin Wall and the USSR disappeared, and the Cold War ended. My wife and I joined many of our colleagues in establishing and building relationships with new countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. I have focused most of my diplomatic career working in or on issues involving the countries in this region and it is exciting to see their progress and development in the past thirty years. If confirmed, leading our mission in Chisinau would be a highlight of my diplomatic career.

The U.S.-Moldova relationship is grounded in shared democratic values and support for a democratic, secure, and prosperous Moldova, anchored in Europe.

With an historic mandate, President Sandu and a reform-oriented government have launched an ambitious program to establish a more transparent and accountable democracy, build a stronger economy, and combat endemic corruption. At the UN General Assembly, President Biden told the world about Moldovan voters' success in delivering "a landslide victory for the forces of democracy with a mandate to fight graft, to build a more inclusive economy."

Corruption threatens Moldova's economic prospects and democratic future. We must continue to support the Moldovan Government's efforts to strengthen the capacity of its institutions to identify, investigate, and prosecute corruption. If confirmed, I will make the fight against corruption one of my top priorities. We must also continue to be a steadfast partner to civil society, independent media, and other organizations committed to developing participatory democracy and promoting good governance.

Progress in the fight against corruption will strengthen Moldova's investment climate and ensure a level playing field for U.S. business. Moldova has strengthened financial sector oversight and transparency. Continued reforms will help Moldova unlock further budgetary support from the European Union and IMF to strengthen its economy in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

Support from the United States and the European Union is helping Moldova expand trade and market linkages with the West. The EU is now Moldova's largest trading partner. Moldova is linking its energy infrastructure to Europe and diversifying its energy supply to reduce dependence on Russian gas imports.

Moldova is also committed to transforming its defense forces and their capacity to contribute to international security and peacekeeping missions. U.S. security assistance has been key to this effort. The United States respects Moldova's constitutional neutrality and welcomes its efforts to build a more modern military equipped to counter emerging threats.

Russian malign influence and disinformation threaten Moldova's democratic development, ambitious reform agenda, and European trajectory. If confirmed, I will work closely with government leaders, civil society, and international partners to support Moldova's democratic reform agenda and build resiliency against malign influence and disinformation.

Resolving the Transnistria conflict remains a priority. The United States supports OSCE-led efforts to uphold Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity while acknowledging a special status for Transnistria. We need to continue to press Russia to honor its commitments to withdraw its troops and munitions from Moldova. And we are committed to protecting the fundamental freedoms of citizens on both sides of the Nistru River. If confirmed, I will continue to promote confidence building measures and seek tangible results through the OSCE-led 5+2 process.

The Moldovan people have chosen a bold path of reform and Western integration. It is in our interest to support them. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the members of this committee and the Congress to do just that. Improving Moldova's democracy, prosperity, and security will help to develop a key partner in Eastern Europe. Thank you for your time and consideration.

I look forward to your questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you for your testimony.

Next, we will hear from Ms. Cromer.

STATEMENT OF SHARON L. CROMER OF NEW YORK, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

Ms. CROMER. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today.

I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me as their nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Gambia.

If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with you and other distinguished members of Congress to advance our nation's security and foreign policy interests.

Mr. Chairman, I am here today the product of a loving family. My mother, Thelma Cromer, now deceased, showed me how to care for others and live abundantly despite having so little.

My father, Walter Cromer, Sr., drove a taxi right here in the nation's capital for 60 years and inspired in me the desire to explore the world.

My loving husband of 33 years, Arnold Sobers, Jr., supported my every step. Together, we raised two brilliant daughters, Courtney and Simone, and we now have two adorable grandchildren, Tanoor and Dunia.

I am very grateful to all of my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors across the globe. They are my heroes.

I have served proudly the American people for the past 35 years as a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development.

I successfully advanced U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and managed programs to reduce poverty, halt HIV/AIDS, eradicate malaria, and promote girls' education and women's economic empowerment.

I have mentored and sponsored employees of every race, gender, and sexual orientation, helping them to grow professionally and fully contribute to advancing U.S. goals. I am committed to enhanc-

ing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce and in our programs.

As a young university student traveling in the Gambia, I experienced the warm hospitality and proud traditions of the Gambian people.

Today, Americans and Gambians share ideals of democracy, religious tolerance, good governance, and economic prosperity. If confirmed, I will strengthen the U.S.-Gambian partnership.

After 22 years of authoritarian rule, in 2016 Gambians voted for a new president and commenced the transition from dictatorship to democracy. While some reforms have occurred, more must be done to realize the aspirations of Gambians for transparent, democratic, and accountable governance.

If confirmed, I will be a staunch advocate of the Gambia's ongoing democratic transition. I will combat corruption, promote economic prosperity, speak up for human rights, explore ways to improve the primary health care system, and maintain a strong security partnership.

I will pursue U.S. national security and foreign policy interests by helping the Gambian people achieve their goal to become a prosperous, secure, and democratic nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to address you today. I am happy to answer questions.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Cromer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SHARON L. CROMER

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown me as their nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia. If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with you and other distinguished members of Congress to advance our nation's security and foreign policy interests.

Mr. Chairman, I am here today, the product of a loving family. My mother, Thelma Cromer, now deceased, showed me how to live a life of abundance despite having so little. My father, Walter Cromer, Sr., drove a taxi right here in the nation's capital for over 60 years and inspired me to explore the world. My loving husband of 33 years, Arnold Sobers, Jr., supported my every step. Together, we raised two brilliant daughters, Courtney and Simone and we now have two adorable grandchildren. I am very grateful to all of my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors across the globe. They are my heroes.

Mr. Chairman, I have proudly served the American people for the past 35 years as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development. I successfully advanced U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and managed large, complex inter-agency programs, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the President's Malaria Initiative, Feed the Future, Power Africa, and wildlife anti-trafficking. I championed girls' education, women's empowerment, youth employment, and the rights of marginalized people, including LGBTQI+ communities, to prosper and live in peace and dignity. I have enjoyed mentoring and sponsoring employees of every color, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation; helping each one to grow professionally, assume greater responsibilities, and fully contribute to advancing U.S. goals. If confirmed, I will continue to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion in the workforce and in our programs.

Mr. Chairman, the U.S. and The Gambia have a close bilateral relationship based on shared ideals of democracy, religious tolerance, good governance, security, and economic prosperity. As a young, university student traveling in The Gambia, I experienced the warm hospitality and proud traditions of the Gambian people. It was clear then, and I believe it is true today, that Gambians admire American culture and traditions. If confirmed, I will strengthen the U.S./Gambian partnership for the benefit of both countries.

After 22 years of authoritarian rule, in 2016 Gambians voted for a new president and commenced the transition from dictatorship to democracy. While some promised reforms have been implemented, much more remains to be done if the aspirations of the Gambia people for a transparent, democratic government accountable to the people are to be realized. The upcoming December presidential election will be an opportunity for Gambians to show the world that they are committed to solidifying their hard-won democratic gains. The U.S. has been a steadfast partner, supporting the Independent Election Commission's successful voter registration effort and helping civil society organizations empower citizens through voter education. This December, Gambians will determine their path forward through a free, fair and peaceful election.

Given the opportunity, I will support The Gambia's ongoing democratic process. I will combat corruption and promote economic prosperity which will allow both U.S. and Gambian firms to invest and create good jobs. I will encourage trade and the use of the American Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA). I will speak up for human rights, and explore ways to improve the primary health care system. Of paramount importance is the need to maintain a strong security partnership. I will pursue U.S. national security and foreign policy interests by helping the Gambian people achieve their goal to become a prosperous, secure, and democratic nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee for the opportunity to address you today. I am happy to answer any questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you for your testimony.

Next, we are going to hear from Ambassador Palmer, who has been nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana.

Ambassador Palmer?

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. VIRGINIA E. PALMER OF VIRGINIA,
A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE,
CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AM-
BASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF
GHANA**

Ms. PALMER. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and members of the committee, it is a great honor to appear before you today as the nominee to serve as America's Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana.

I appreciate the confidence that President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me and [inaudible] today to have the opportunity to publicly thank my family for their love and support.

My husband Ismail Asmal, a retired Foreign Service Officer, is a wonderful partner and helpmate. My daughters Aliya and Nadia Amal and my son-in-law Paul Adamson are a source of great joy and pride and have a wonderful commitment to helping others. And my mother, Becky Palmer and late Richard Palmer, I want to thank them for their encouragement and example and for letting me take the grandbabies overseas.

I have had the great fortune to represent the country I love around the world for 35 years, 15 in Africa. I have worked in models of democracy and governance and private sector-led growth.

As Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi I oversaw an annual budget of \$500 million and led a talented team which helped Malawi achieve HIV epidemic control, improve food security, and serve as a democratic model for the continent. If confirmed, my experience gained as deputy coordinator [inaudible] to support Ghana's work to counter the spread of violent extremism, and as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources to help Ghana deal with significant energy sector challenges.

I bring to the job a commitment to the security and well being of embassy staff and a passion for diversity and inclusion, essential to getting policy right and to properly representing our values overseas.

Our close partnership with Ghana spans more than 60 years and is rooted in our shared commitment to democracy and human rights for all, peace and security and economic opportunity and prosperity. Ghana's long democratic tradition, robust media, religious tolerance, and strong civil society make it a leader in West Africa and a model for the continent. With democratic backsliding in the region, Ghana's example and leadership are now more important than ever.

If confirmed, my priorities will be encouraging inclusive economic growth and strengthening regional stability to make the United States—and Ghana—more secure and more prosperous. Essential to success in these endeavors will be work to help Ghana strengthen its democracy and accountability institution.

Until COVID-19 disrupted global markets around the world, Ghana's economy was one of the fastest growing in the world. With the economy beginning to recover from the pandemic, close to 120 American businesses are active in Ghana.

If confirmed, I will be a vigorous advocate for American companies and innovation, and will ensure U.S. public and private investments continue to support pandemic recovery in Ghana's journey to self-reliance.

We will do this by facilitating trade, improving access to credit, boosting agricultural production and enhancing domestic resource mobilization, and improving health and education outcomes.

Working in partnership with our Ghanaian friends to combat corruption and ensure a transparent business environment will be fundamental to these efforts.

Ghana is a key security partner and its leadership is critical to U.S. efforts to promote regional stability and combat violent extremism. We enjoy robust military and law enforcement cooperation.

Ghana is one of the top 10 contributors to U.N. peacekeeping missions and regularly hosts regional military exercises with the United States. It is an exporter of security.

If confirmed, I will work to drive integrated programs on economic growth, rule of law strengthening, security cooperation, and maritime and border security.

I also look forward to working with Ghana as it chairs the Economic Community of West African States, takes up a seat on the U.N. Security Council, and hosts the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which will create a trading bloc of more than 1.3 billion people.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to partnering with you to advance America's interests in Ghana and stand ready to answer any questions you may have now and in the future.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Palmer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. VIRGINIA E. PALMER

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, It is a great honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as Ambas-

sador to the Republic of Ghana. I appreciate the confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me by putting my name forward for your consideration. I am deeply grateful for the love and support of my husband Ismail Asmal, a retired Foreign Service Officer, my daughters Aliya and Nadia Asmal and son-in-law Paul Adamson, my mother Becky Palmer and late father Richard Palmer. I would also like to thank my foreign and civil service colleagues across the Government and Embassy locally engaged staff who do tremendous work, in very challenging circumstances, to strengthen U.S. partnerships with countries around the world.

I have had the good fortune to have represented the country I love in fascinating countries around the world for 35 years, 15 in Africa. Throughout my career, I have worked to share American models of democracy and governance and private sector-led growth. As Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi, I oversaw an annual budget of \$500 million and led a talented team which helped Malawi achieve HIV epidemic control, improve food security, and serve as a democratic model for the Continent. As Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires in South Africa, I helped manage one of our largest missions and most complex relationships in Africa. If confirmed, I will also draw on experience gained as a leader of the State Department's Counter Terrorism Bureau to support Ghana's work to counter the spread of violent extremism in the region, and as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources to help Ghana deal with significant energy sector challenges—and opportunities. I bring to the job a commitment to the security and well-being of Embassy staff and a passion for diversity and inclusion, essential to getting policy right and properly representing our values overseas.

Our close partnership with Ghana spans more than 60 years and is rooted in our shared commitment to democracy and human rights for all, peace and security, and economic opportunity and prosperity. Ghana's long democratic tradition, robust media, religious tolerance, and strong civil society make it a leader in West Africa and a model for the continent. With democratic backsliding in the region, Ghana's example and leadership is ever more important.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and Congress to advance U.S. interests in Ghana. My priorities will be encouraging inclusive economic growth and strengthening regional stability to make the United States—and Ghana—more secure and more prosperous. Essential to success in these endeavors will be work to help Ghana strengthen its democracy and governance institutions.

Close to 120 American businesses are active in Ghana and the country's economy is beginning to recover from the pandemic. Until COVID-19 disrupted global markets, Ghana's economy was one of the fastest-growing in the world, with GDP growth of seven percent from 2017 to 2019. Bilateral trade exceeded \$1.5 billion in 2020. If confirmed, I will be a vigorous advocate for American companies and innovation and will ensure U.S. public and private investments continue to support pandemic recovery efforts and Ghana's journey to self-reliance. We will continue to help Ghana create an enabling environment for inclusive private sector-led growth by facilitating regional trade, improving access to credit, improving agricultural production and market access, enhancing domestic resource mobilization, and improving health and education outcomes. Working in partnership with our Ghanaian friends to combat corruption and ensure a welcoming and transparent environment for business will be crucial to success of these efforts.

Ghana is a key security partner, and its leadership is critical to U.S. efforts to promote regional stability and combat violent extremism. We enjoy robust bilateral military and law enforcement cooperation. Ghana is among the top dozen contributors to U.N. peacekeeping missions and regularly hosts regional military exercises in partnership with the United States, including this year's Gulf of Guinea maritime security exercise, Obangame Express. If confirmed, I will work to drive integrated programs on economic growth, security sector cooperation, cyber security, and maritime and border security through our bilateral Security Governance Initiative. I also look forward to working with Ghana as it chairs the Economic Community of West African States, serves on the U.N. Security Council, and hosts the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which will create a trading block of more than 1.3 billion people.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to partnering with you to advance America's interests in Ghana and stand ready to answer any questions you may have now and in the future.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you for your testimony.

And now we will hear from Mr. Howard Van Vranken, who has been nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Botswana.

I turn it over to you, and I see that my colleague, Senator Rounds, has returned. I apologize. I am going to go vote. But I got somebody here who is going to report to me on your testimony when I return.

All right. I turn it over to you, Senator Rounds.

And Mr. Vranken, please proceed with your testimony.

Senator ROUNDS. [presiding.] Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

STATEMENT OF HOWARD A. VAN VRANKEN OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

Mr. VAN VRANKEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, members of the committee. It is a great honor and privilege to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Botswana.

I thank the President and Secretary Biden for the—excuse me, Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. I am also grateful for this distinguished committee's consideration.

I am especially grateful for my wife, Rebecca, who supported me during nearly two decades of marriage in the Foreign Service and for the endurance of my children—Grace, Robert, and Victor. I would not be here today without their tremendous and ongoing support.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, Robert and Helen, who tirelessly inspired me to explore and embrace the world beyond my native California. I am forever grateful for their sacrifices on my behalf.

During my 33 years of service with the Foreign Service, my work in Africa and the Middle East as well as assignments in Washington have prepared me to deliver impactful results for the American people in the important role for which I have been nominated.

I have served in senior leadership positions in a number of posts, including most recently in Morocco and in Iraq. If confirmed, I will work diligently and with integrity to further strengthen ties between the United States and Botswana.

Botswana is a strategically important and reliable partner on the African continent. We work with Botswana to advance shared global priorities including strengthening democratic institutions and promoting the respect for human rights, ending HIV and the COVID-19 pandemic, and advancing global health security.

Together, we also work on regional and bilateral priorities, including conserving the environment and natural resources, expanding trade and investment, and addressing regional transnational criminal and security challenges.

Our relationship is further strengthened through our valuable university partnerships and education linkages. If confirmed, as we emerge from the pandemic I will look to expand our in-person engagement to advance these priorities, especially through programming focused on youth and young women and girls.

Economic ties between the United States and Botswana were growing before the pandemic. Even as the United States remains

the world's top purchaser of Botswana's diamonds, we will support Botswana's efforts to diversify its economy, to build a knowledge-based economy, and to improve opportunities for American businesses.

U.S. tourists attracted to the country's globally significant national parks and reserves will continue to present an important opportunity for Botswana as the pandemic recedes and travel resumes.

If confirmed, I will work with Botswana to deter and dismantle poaching organizations. I will also work with Botswana to realize the potential offered by Power Africa's mega solar project, an initiative which would transform Botswana into a regionally significant solar power producer, consumer, and exporter.

If confirmed, I will also continue to advance the priorities articulated in the DELTA Act to promote responsible natural resource and wildlife management practices in the Greater Okavango River Basin.

The United States has invested more than a billion dollars in Botswana's health sector through the President's emergency plan for AIDS relief, the PEPFAR program.

While there is still an estimated 9,000 new HIV infections annually in the country, Botswana has made impressive progress in its fight against HIV and it is near epidemic control.

That said, the threat posed by HIV cannot be underestimated. If confirmed, I look forward to securing the sustainability of our PEPFAR investment and leading our interagency health team as we continue to work with the government of Botswana on its HIV response.

If confirmed, I will also work to affirm President Biden's commitment to deliver additional COVID-19 vaccines to Botswana and its neighbors.

The Botswana Defense Force is one of the most professional militaries on the continent and our military engagement remains strong. The United States also sponsors the International Law Enforcement Academy, which has trained more than 12,000 law enforcement and criminal justice professionals from Africa, the Americas, and Southeast Asia.

Support for these institutions improve the rule of law in the country and on the continent, including the capacity to effectively respond to global issues like wildlife and timber trafficking, violent extremism, cybercrime, corruption, and trafficking in persons.

If confirmed, I will work to expand the U.S.-Botswana military partnership and our regional security role through education and training programs.

We expect to see a resurgence in the number of Americans visiting Botswana once we emerge from the pandemic. If confirmed, the safety of our staff and U.S. citizens in Botswana will remain paramount.

The U.S. Ambassador to Botswana also serves as a U.S. representative to the Southern African Development Community, and I am excited about the opportunity to work towards increased security, health, and economic development across the region with our Southern African nation partners.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to your questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Van Vranken follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HOWARD A. VAN VRANKEN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is a great privilege and honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Botswana. I thank the President and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. I am also grateful for this distinguished committee's consideration. I am especially grateful for my wife, Rebecca, who has supported me during nearly two decades of marriage, and for the endurance of my children, Grace, Robert, and Victor. I would not be here today without their tremendous support. Finally, I can say that my parents, Robert and Helen, tirelessly inspired me to explore and embrace the world beyond my native California and I am forever grateful for their sacrifices on my behalf.

During my thirty-three years in the Foreign Service, my work in Africa and the Middle East, as well as assignments in Washington, have prepared me to deliver impactful results for the American people in the important role for which I have been nominated. I have served in senior leadership positions in a number of posts including, most recently, in Morocco and Iraq. If confirmed, I will work diligently and with integrity to further strengthen ties between the United States and Botswana.

Botswana is strategically important and a reliable partner on the African continent. We work with Botswana to advance shared global priorities, including strengthening democratic institutions and promoting respect for human rights, ending AIDS and the COVID-19 pandemic, and advancing global health security. Together, we also work on regional and bilateral priorities, including conserving the environment and natural resources, expanding trade and investment, and addressing regional transnational criminal and security challenges. Our relationship is further strengthened through our valuable university partnerships and education linkages. If confirmed, as we emerge from the pandemic, I will look to expand our in-person engagement to advance these priorities, especially through programming focused on the youth and young women and girls.

Economic ties between the United States and Botswana were growing before the pandemic. Even as the United States remains the world's top purchaser of Botswana's diamonds, we will support Botswana's efforts to diversify its economy, to build a knowledge-based economy, and to improve opportunities for American businesses. U.S. tourists, attracted to the country's globally significant national parks and reserves, will continue to present an important opportunity for Botswana as the pandemic recedes and travel resumes. If confirmed, I will work with Botswana to deter and dismantle poaching organizations. If confirmed, I will work with Botswana to realize the potential offered by Power Africa's Mega Solar project, an initiative which could transform Botswana into a regionally significant solar power producer, consumer, and exporter. If confirmed, I will also continue to advance the priorities articulated in the DELTA Act to promote responsible natural resource and wildlife management practices in the greater Okavango River Basin.

The United States has invested more than \$1 billion in Botswana's health sector through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program. While there are still an estimated 9,000 new HIV infections annually in the country, Botswana has made impressive progress in its fight against HIV/AIDS and is near epidemic control. That said, the threat posed by HIV/AIDS cannot be underestimated. If confirmed, I look forward to securing the sustainability of our PEPFAR investment and leading our interagency health team as we continue to work with the Government of Botswana on its HIV response. If confirmed, I will also work to affirm President Biden's commitment to deliver additional COVID-19 vaccines to Botswana and its neighbors.

The Botswana Defense Force is one of the most professional militaries on the continent, and our military engagement remains strong. The United States also sponsors the International Law Enforcement Academy, which has trained more than 12,000 law-enforcement and criminal justice professionals from Africa, the Americas, and Southeast Asia. Support to these institutions has improved rule of law in the country and on the continent, including capacity to effectively respond to global issues like wildlife and timber trafficking, violent extremism, cyber-crime, corruption and trafficking in persons. If confirmed, I will work to expand U.S.-Botswana

military partnerships and our regional security role through education and training programs.

We expect to see a resurgence in the number of Americans visiting Botswana once we emerge from the pandemic. The safety of our staff and U.S. citizens will remain paramount.

The U.S. Ambassador to Botswana also serves as the U.S. representative to the Southern African Development Community, and I am excited about the opportunity to work towards increased security, health, and economic development across the region with other southern Africa nations.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Van Vranken.

I have submitted my opening statement for the record. But I really feel it is important that we just share with you personally that I would suspect that every career diplomat wonders whether someday, after years of service, they might be nominated by the President of the United States to serve as an ambassador somewhere.

I just want to say congratulations, because after today none of you will have to ask that question again. For Ambassador Palmer, this is twice.

To all of you, thank you for your public service and your continued service on behalf of our country.

I have got a series of questions that I will start with, and then by then I would suspect that our chairman will be back in as well, and I am sure that he has a series of questions as well.

Let me begin with Mr. Logsdon. If confirmed as Ambassador, you will be going to Moldova at a very important time in its history. The president, Maia Sandu, and the new parliament have been elected on a platform of reform and plan to make changes to fight corruption across government, especially in the judiciary.

As Ambassador, how will you work with the new government to support the reforms and see them through to success?

Mr. LOGSDON. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate that question. And, obviously, as you mentioned, this is an historic moment, I think, for the government of Moldova, the people of Moldova, and the United States and our opportunity to assist.

It will not be just us saying we think these are good reforms. This is something we can do to assist the government. The government of Moldova has asked for some very specific kinds of support.

We have worked for many years with different parts of the government and with civil society, and I think the goal for us now is to find ways that we can continue to support President Sandu and her government's desired end state, which is to push back on corruption. That is exactly why the government and President Sandu were elected by the people of Moldova.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir.

Ms. Cromer, the Gambia's democratic transition, spurred by the ouster of dictator Yahya Jammeh at the ballot box in 2016 was an unexpected victory for democracy on the continent.

Given recent challenges to democracy in West Africa, including four coups in the last year, what are the regional implications for Gambia's continued democratic development and what tools can the U.S. consider to continue to appropriately support democratic and economic reforms as well as economic recovery from the Jammeh era, and more recently, the impacts of COVID-19?

I know I am giving you a multiple question item, but if you could, please, and I will ask again if there is any part of it that you are not comfortable with.

Ms. CROMER. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate the question.

First of all, let me say that the Gambians have decided their own fate. They have voted back in 2016 a new president and have moved on the path from authoritarianism to democracy. It is a difficult path, it is a lengthy path, and it takes a steadfast partner like the U.S. to help them build that democracy.

The top priorities of the U.S. Government, ones which, if given the opportunity to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Gambia, I would lead, would be, one, to help build a truly democratic state in the Gambia.

The second would be advancing country-owned, country-led, and sustained development that improves the lives and well being of Gambians.

And third, promoting an investment climate where both U.S. and Gambian enterprises can thrive and trade between the two countries creates good jobs and economic prosperity.

On the COVID front, I had the opportunity this morning to take a walk to the Washington Monument, and on the grounds of the monument there are over 660,000 flag, small flags that have been put in the soil of the Washington Monument grounds, each representing—each flag representing an American who has died of COVID.

This is a moving, beautiful, but sobering memorial to American lives and precious souls, and I would just like to say that the Gambia and other countries in Africa do not have the equipment, the vaccines, the trained staff, PPEs, to address the COVID pandemic, and the capacity to fight COVID-19 and future pandemics is extremely limited in the Gambia.

If confirmed, I will work with the stakeholders on the ground in the Gambia and here in Washington to see what more we can do to build up the Gambia's capacity.

Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Ms. Cromer.

Ambassador Palmer, Ghana has long been seen as a key U.S. ally in Africa and held up as a stable, democratic, and economic partner and a regional leader. I was impressed by what I saw when I visited Ghana in early 2020.

Given the deeply worrying trends in West Africa, does the U.S. need to adjust its engagement with Ghana to support the resiliency of its institutions and its leadership in the region? If yes, what would be your recommendations?

Ms. PALMER. Thank you for that question, Senator.

I believe that, indeed, Ghana's example and leadership are very important in the context of democracy backsliding in the region.

I think we need to continue to work to fight corruption in Ghana and to ensure the sanctity of contracts so that Ghana can continue to be a welcoming environment for investment and trade and that sort of beacon or bastion to countering violent extremism.

I do not think we need to reorient. I think we need to continue to integrate our work to ensure inclusive economic growth, particularly in the north, to strengthen Ghana's accountability institutions

and work, as I said, to improve contract sanctity and fight corruption.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Mr. Van Vranken, Botswana is a key partner in southern Africa, particularly given its historic credentials in democracy and maintaining stability and security.

However, challenges and opportunities in the southern Africa region abound including with a mounting extremist threat in Mozambique, the ongoing political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, efforts to address significant levels of corruption in Angola and South Africa, and the recent democratic transition in Zambia.

As the U.S. Ambassador to Botswana, how will you engage with our Botswanan partners on issues of regional significance? And also, do you view Botswana as an opportunity for bolstered U.S. trade and investment and, if yes, what tools will you employ to encourage increased trade and investment in a diversity of sectors including but beyond the tourism and extractive industries?

Mr. VAN VRANKEN. Thank you for those questions, Senator. They are very pertinent.

In terms of regional challenges, I think that, as you rightly identified, Botswana has a long tradition of democracy and, in that sense, stands as an example in the region.

The government of Botswana has also been a founding member of the Southern African Development Community, the group of Southern African nations, and the government of Botswana has never been shy about voicing outspoken views on regional peace and security issues, and sometimes differing publicly with the policy of the Southern African Development Community.

I think we should continue to encourage the engagement that Botswana has had in the recent past through the Southern African Development Community.

I would note that it was through SADC that Ghana or, excuse me, Botswana deployed nearly 300 troops as part of a standing force to northern Mozambique, and I think that that is something that we should applaud and encourage.

Regarding economic development and, particularly, trade and investment beyond the extractive or diamond sector as well as tourism, I think that there are areas that we can support Ghana.

We have already initiated an agreement—excuse me, a memorandum of intent between Botswana and Namibia for the Power Africa, the mega solar project. That would provide two to five gigawatts of solar power and would replace coal—imported coal-fired electricity that Botswana currently imports from South Africa, and would enable it to be a—potentially, a significant exporter of solar power in the region.

I think that there is ample opportunity for American firms in a project such as that. I also think that we should continue to find areas in AGOA as well as through Prosper Africa to facilitate trade between the two countries.

I do think that this is a potential area where we can collaborate to both of our satisfaction.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir.

And I know that our chairman is on his way back from the vote. I am going to take advantage of a few more minutes here to ask a couple of questions, and when the chairman comes in I know he will have a hard stop, but he is going to try to get some questions in. I see the chairman has just arrived back on the thing.

Mr. Chairman, I finished with my questions. I know that you have a hard stop coming up. Whenever you are completed it is fine with me if you close the meeting, sir.

And once again, I want to say just thank you to all of our guests here today in front of us, our applicants. Clearly, we have to say thank you for their hard work and dedication to public service and to the State Department here in our country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Rounds, and thank all of you for your testimony. And I got a report on the questions that Senator Rounds asked, not surprisingly because we work together. He covered a lot of the territory that I would have between his questions and your comments.

I would, Mr. Van Vranken, just like to follow up on the issue of loss of dollars in Botswana as a result of the huge drop off in tourism because of COVID-19.

One of the other issues, though, in Botswana, as you know, in terms of their long-term sustainability and the sustainability of—continue to attract tourists is protection of wildlife, and there is a serious poaching issue still in Botswana.

Can you just talk a little bit about how the United States, through your efforts and USAID and others, can help address that poaching issue?

Mr. VAN VRANKEN. Thank you very much, Senator.

That is an excellent point. There has been a significant drop off in tourism dollars. To date, the United States has provided very important support to the government of Botswana to help them combat wildlife trafficking.

We have helped to build the capacity of the government to conduct intelligence-led operations focused on poachers. We have, for more than a decade, have provided wildlife trafficking intervention training through our International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana.

That has helped not only Botswana but also regional partners. I think that we should sustain those efforts and continue to work through the Southern African Development Community on law enforcement and anti-poaching efforts.

Thank you, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. I also had one follow-up as well on Ghana for Ambassador Palmer, because as you indicated, Ghana has had a robust democracy and peaceful transitions of power and have been supporters, overall, of human rights.

There was, though, a recent report by Human Rights Watch regarding discrimination—harsh discrimination against the LGBT community there as well as a proposed draconian anti-LGBT bill.

Could you just comment on that and what your role can be in addressing that matter?

Ms. PALMER. Thank you for that question, Senator.

It is an issue of a great deal of concern to me. I think it is important that we note that we are not asking for special rights for members of the LGBT community but only the rights that other Ghanaians enjoy under the Ghanaian constitution and the international human rights charters to which Ghana is a signatory.

There are moral and legal reasons for ensuring that the rights of the LGBT community are respected. But, importantly, there are also public order and public health reasons why draconian legislation and discrimination are a bad idea.

I think it is also very important to think about this just in terms of discrimination. What the LGBT community in Ghana is asking for, I understand, is freedom from violence, freedom from harassment, freedom from discrimination.

I am not equating my situation with that, but when I was falling in love with a nonwhite South African 35 years ago, our relationship was illegal and that is because his humanity was not respected and was not believed to be the same as mine. And, fortunately, those laws have changed and we think now how could that ever have been.

And I hope that that will be the case all over for vulnerable groups, including women and girls and the LGBT community, and I will work to ensure that those human rights are respected.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you for that statement, and also your own experiences and how they can relate to this situation.

I want to thank all of you. I want to thank your family members, who you introduced. Usually, we have a chance to meet people in the hearing room. Unfortunately, we are not able to do that now.

As Senator Rounds said, I have a hard stop at 4:00 o'clock, but I do not know, Mike—Senator, if—I am happy to turn this over to you for additional questioning if you would like or we can close the hearing now.

Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Chairman, I intend to submit a couple of questions for the record. But other than that, I am prepared to close it at this time, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay.

Let me just, again, underscore the comments my partner, Senator Rounds, made just a few minutes ago and thanking all of you for your service.

As somebody who grew up in a Foreign Service family, I am proud of the service of our Foreign Service officers and the entire family at the State Department, and look forward to supporting your confirmation.

And maybe Senator Rounds and I will have a chance to come visit those of you in your countries where you are going to be representing the United States.

Thank you all very much.

[Whereupon, at 4:01 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO CAPT. C.B. SULLENBERGER III BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

COVID-19

Question. What actions do you believe ICAO should take to protect the air traveling public, and flight crews aboard commercial airlines, from the COVID-19?

Answer. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on civil aviation is unprecedented. ICAO moved quickly to establish the Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) to provide guidance to governments and industry operators to restart the international air transport sector safely and promote recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on a coordinated global basis.

ICAO is convening a ministerial conference on COVID and aviation in mid-October to rally governments from every region to implement the CART recommendations and enable the recovery of international civil aviation. I believe these are the right first steps to move toward a safe restart of the aviation sector, and if confirmed, I will continue to promote these efforts to protect the air travelling public and flight crews aboard commercial airlines.

Question. Do you believe the global airline industry will adopt adequate policies to protect its customers and employees?

Answer. Airlines have already taken significant steps to protect customers and employees by implementing health mitigation measures such as requiring the use of masks on board aircraft, enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures, health assessments of crew and passengers, enhancing airport security checkpoint procedures, and the minimizing of in-person interaction through use of new technologies. For transportation and travel to resume safely and sustainably, it is in the best interest of the global airline industry to continue all of these measures, and if confirmed, I will continue to promote these actions.

Question. Do you believe ICAO has the authority and mandate to coordinate and establish some set of uniform standards or protections against the spread of the COVID-19?

Answer. The United States participated actively in ICAO's CART task force, which has issued three reports since the beginning of the pandemic. Each report provided substantive and actionable recommendations for promulgating a framework for the detection and control of COVID-19 among air passengers and crew such that more stringent control measures, such as mandatory quarantines, could be relaxed or removed entirely.

In the long-run, ICAO must continue to work with member States and the WHO to implement WHO recommendations on science and public health in the civil aviation domain, as well as to facilitate the efficient and secure flow of limited health information among air passengers and States to prevent and mitigate the effects of future pandemics on air transport. If confirmed, this will be a top priority of mine at ICAO.

Climate Change

Question. The ICAO Assembly at its 40th Session in 2019 adopted a resolution that reiterated two aspirational goals for the international aviation sector: a 2 percent annual fuel efficiency improvement through 2050 and carbon neutral growth from 2020 onwards.

- Do you think these goals is adequate?

Answer. It is important that ICAO Member States were able to come together to adopt these goals. If confirmed, I look forward to working with colleagues across the government to determine how best the United States can help achieve the existing climate goals and lead efforts to increase ambition where possible, consistent with the President's policy to press for enhanced climate ambition and the integration of climate considerations across a wide range of international fora, including on aviation. Aviation's recovery from the global pandemic also provides ICAO an opportunity to reassess whether these current goals are truly sufficient in light of the global recognition of the need to address climate change.

Question. What do you foresee as the biggest challenges to meet these goals?

Answer. Some of the biggest challenges ahead include making sure there is robust global participation, particularly for countries with significant international aviation activity, on ICAO measures like CORSIA, and accelerating both state and private sector deployment of cleaner technology, sustainable aviation fuels, and implementa-

tion of more efficient operations. Different countries have different profiles for aviation growth: some have very developed networks and industries with more opportunities for reducing emissions, while others are seeing significant expansion of aviation markets and are less likely to support increased ambition globally if they believe it will affect their industry.

Question. What tools should the Biden Administration provide to meet these goals?

Answer. The United States already plays a critical role at ICAO. To achieve these goals or to push for more ambitious goals, the United States needs to be a leader, and needs to work to develop a strong coalition of states to work with us both bilaterally and at ICAO. The Biden Administration is committed to working toward reducing the sector's emissions in a manner consistent with the goal of net zero emissions for our economy by 2050.

Question. In September 2021, a coalition of 100 environmental groups called on the Biden Administration to strengthen greenhouse gas emission standards in the airline industry.

- Do you think the current ICAO standards are sufficient? If not, what changes do you believe are necessary?

Answer. The current standards represent the first ever greenhouse gas emission standard for commercial aircraft. Establishing this global standard was an important achievement and a critical first step, but it is likely to be insufficient as technology advances. It will be critically important to strengthen these standards, and, if confirmed, that is something that I plan to pursue in ICAO.

Question. ICAO adopted the Carbon Offset and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) in 2016 and in 2018 the parties to ICAO took further action to advance the CORSIA through the establishment of Standards and Recommended Procedures (SARPs) for parties to comply with the CORSIA.

- Does FAA have sufficient authorities to comply with the CORSIA that would meet the threshold of the SARPs?

Answer. It will be critical for the United States to be in a position to fully implement CORSIA, which U.S. airplane operators have broadly supported. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress, in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, and Department of State colleagues to ensure there is the necessary legislative authority to implement CORSIA and other ambitious climate measures.

Question. Will you commit to working with FAA on advising Congress on the development of legislation that may be necessary to ensure the U.S. is in full compliance with ICAO's CORSIA?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress, in coordination with FAA, DOT, and DOS colleagues to ensure there is the necessary legislative authority to implement CORSIA and other climate measures.

Malevolent Influence in International Organizations

Question. Will you commit to working with likeminded countries to ensure the agenda and decisions of ICAO and Parties to the Chicago convention operate transparently, and that you will maintain vigilance of the weight and influence of countries that do not share the U.S.' values and economic interests?

Answer. Standard-setting bodies are essential to the national security and economic security of the United States, our partners, and allies. Organizations such as ICAO must remain transparent and accountable to member states, focused on mandates and core competencies, and led by independent, qualified individuals. If confirmed, I will prioritize working with allies and partners to strengthen ICAO's governance and its ability to fulfill its mandate: the safety, security, and sustainability of civil aviation. This will include opposing efforts by states, including the PRC, that seek to make ICAO and other international organizations less transparent and accountable or to use the organization to advance their own interests. If confirmed, I will also continue to support greater U.S. representation at ICAO, including by advocating for qualified and independent candidates.

Air Safety and Boeing 737 Max

Question. What role do you believe ICAO has to intervene or resolve country decisions to ground or prohibit Boeing 737 Max from their airspace?

Answer. It is up to a State's regulatory authority to determine whether to allow an aircraft to conduct operations within its territory. On November 18, 2020, the

FAA published the final Airworthiness Directive with its findings and decisions regarding recertification of the Boeing 737 MAX flight control systems. The FAA worked alongside Transport Canada Civil Aviation (TCCA), the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the National Civil Aviation Agency of Brazil (ANAC) in approving all the design changes to the Boeing 737 MAX. Following the FAA's rescission of its prior grounding order on November 18th, 2020, over 178 countries have since taken steps to allow the reintroduction of the aircraft.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO CAPT. C.B. SULLENBERGER III BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In 2019, the State Department withheld about \$2 million in contributions pursuant to Sec. 7048(a) of the FY2019 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which mandates the withholding of 15 percent of contributions to international organizations that do not implement sufficient whistleblower protections. After the adoption and implementation of key ethics and oversight reforms, the U.S. restored full funding.

- If confirmed, will you direct the U.S. Mission to ICAO to push for the full adoption and implementation of the remaining ethics and oversight reforms?

Answer. The Administration is committed to improving transparency and accountability at ICAO, including eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse, as well as protecting whistleblowers from retaliation. If confirmed, I will focus intently on and fully support actions to help ICAO leadership develop a culture of transparency and accountability within the organization—actions that cannot be delayed given the recent history of mismanagement.

Question. How will you hold the body accountable for doing so given it has fallen way short in the past?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be a relentless advocate for necessary reforms. I believe corrective measures at ICAO became more achievable with the recent election of Juan Carlos Salazar, the former head of Colombia's civil aviation authority, as the organization's new Secretary General. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. engagement with ICAO leadership and other member states to ensure that ICAO's transparency and accountability mechanisms meet UN System-wide best practices.

Question. Are you familiar with the whistleblower scandal at ICAO in recent years where the secretary general of ICAO, Fang Liu, was accused by a senior official-turned-whistleblower of "toxic and hostile" leadership marked by "cronyism" and "favoritism," and where no investigation place and the whistleblower was fired by ICAO?

Answer. I am familiar with the whistleblower scandal that occurred at ICAO, and with the cyberattack that spurred it. Following a high-level claim of retaliation in June 2019, I understand that the U.S. Mission increased its efforts to address deficiencies in ICAO's ethics framework, investigation procedures, and Secretariat transparency. Concerted action on the part of the United States led to ICAO's adoption of a new whistleblower protection policy and new procedures for investigating complaints of staff misconduct in 2020. If confirmed, I will continue to work to assure that whistleblowers can report wrongdoing without fear of reprisal and will also commit to working closely with the organization to ensure it is effectively implementing its new whistleblower protection policy.

Question. In brief, a breach of ICAO's servers by a Chinese state-sponsored hacker group which took place in 2019 and revealed in 2019. The hackers reportedly gained access to the agency's system through a compromised laptop belonging to the son of then-ICAO Council President Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu. The hackers compromised the laptop of an ICAO official was in Beijing. Leaked documents show that ICAO staff sought to cover up the incident, and Liu reportedly ignored internal recommendations to investigate further. Are you familiar with this case which has been widely reported on?

Answer. Yes, I am familiar with the serious cyberattack at ICAO that was revealed in 2019, and the deeply flawed response within the organization. Important reforms were subsequently put in place to deal with the lack of accountability in the handling of this issue, and if confirmed, I will press for continued implementation of those reforms to ensure enhanced transparency in the handling of these types of cases.

Question. What is your perspective on protecting whistleblowers and do you commit to withholding the legislatively mandated portion of funds from ICAO if the agency reneges on its whistleblower protection reforms?

Answer. If confirmed, I will push to ensure that ICAO's transparency and accountability mechanisms meet UN System-wide best practices, and I will work closely with the organization to ensure it is effectively implementing its new whistleblower protection policy. I will also work to ensure that whistleblowers can report wrongdoing without fear of reprisal. I will ensure that the Department's actions with respect to ICAO are consistent with U.S. law, and that all options are explored in support of the organization's whistleblower protections.

Question. On January 8, 2020, the Islamic Republic of Iran shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752, a civilian aircraft departing a Tehran airport. 176 innocent passengers and crew members were killed, including 138 people with ties to Canada. More than a year after the downing, the governments of Canada and Ukraine have rejected Iran's handling of, and investigation into, the PS752 downing, pushing for Iran's full adherence to international conventions. The G7 Summit Communique reaffirmed the G7's commitment to addressing this case.

- If confirmed, will you commit to publicly and meaningfully supporting our allies and partners in Canada and Ukraine to pursue full accountability, transparency, and justice in this case, including at ICAO?

Answer. The United States participated in the investigation of the shoot down of Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752, with the inclusion of an accredited representative on the investigation team. I understand that the ICAO Accident Investigation Panel formed a working group to continue to discuss some of the unique circumstances raised by the accident. If I am confirmed, I am committed to continuing to work with our international partners to ensure the integrity of the accident investigation process, to push for accountability for those responsible for the shoot-down of Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752, and to call on Iran to uphold its responsibilities to the victims and families of this tragic incident.

Question. Since 2013, Taiwan has been systematically excluded from participating at ICAO, including during key discussions to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the early days of the pandemic. Taiwan operates one of the busiest airports by passenger and cargo traffic in the world.

- Can you commit to championing Taiwan's bid to attain observer status at ICAO?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be committed to supporting Taiwan's meaningful participation in ICAO, in line with longstanding U.S. policy. Aviation security, safety, and environmental impacts are matters of global importance, and should involve all interested stakeholders, including Taiwan, which has a major aviation sector and can both benefit from and contribute to technical discussions on aviation safety and security based on its own aviation experiences.

Question. How will the U.S. Mission to ICAO, in conjunction with the State Department, specifically work to assist Taiwan in its bid?

Answer. If confirmed, I will press ICAO leadership to provide meaningful participation for Taiwan at all appropriate levels and events. It is critical that Taiwan both contribute to and benefit from technical aviation safety and security discussions that occur at ICAO in various fora. If confirmed, I will make this a priority at ICAO and work with the State Department and other agencies to identify opportunities and events to support Taiwan's participation so that the international community can benefit from its contributions on this important issue.

Question. On May 23, 2021, Ryanair flight FR4978 was forcibly diverted by the government of Belarus and a passenger was arrested. ICAO has taken up an investigation of this event.

- Can you commit to ensuring that the fact-finding investigation into Ryanair Flight FR4978 is completed with transparency?

Answer. The forced diversion of Ryanair Flight 4978 by Belarus and subsequent arrest of an opposition journalist and a colleague showed flagrant disregard for international norms of aviation security and safety and undermined the critical trust between pilots and air traffic control. ICAO, as the UN organization responsible for setting global standards for the safety and security of international civil aviation, must work to ensure those standards are upheld.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure our partners and allies, and all related parties fully participate in the ICAO investigation by sharing all information relevant to the

incident with ICAO's investigative team and to push for substantive findings, including a chronology of events, to be presented to the ICAO Council in November.

Question. How will you work to combat malign Chinese influence at ICAO?

Answer. Standard-setting bodies are essential to the national security and economic security of the United States and our partners, friends, and allies. Organizations such as ICAO must remain transparent and accountable to membership, focused on mandates and core competencies, and led by independent, qualified individuals. If confirmed, I will prioritize working with allies and partners to strengthen ICAO's governance and its ability to fulfil its mandate: the safety, security, and sustainability of civil aviation. If confirmed, I will oppose efforts by states, including the PRC, that seek to make ICAO and other international organizations less transparent and accountable or to use the organizations to advance their own interests. If confirmed, I will also continue to support greater U.S. representation at ICAO, including by advocating for qualified and independent candidates.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO CAPT. C.B. SULLENBERGER III BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. What leadership role, if any, do you think ICAO could and should take in lifting travel restrictions and restoring post-pandemic international air travel?

Answer. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on civil aviation is unprecedented. ICAO moved quickly to establish the Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) to provide guidance to governments and industry operators to restart the international air transport sector safely and promote recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on a coordinated global basis.

While it is up to member states to lift restrictions on travel across borders, ICAO can continue to play an important role in identifying the tools and resources necessary to do so. In the long run, ICAO must continue to work with member states and the World Health Organization to ensure a more robust disease surveillance and contact tracing capability in the civil aviation domain, as well as to facilitate the efficient and secure flow of limited health information among air passengers and states to prevent and mitigate the effects of future pandemics on air transport. If confirmed, this will be a top priority of mine at ICAO.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO DR. ATUL A. GAWANDE BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

COVID-19

Question. Nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic access to the COVID-19 vaccine in poor and developing nations remains a challenge. For example, Africa has vaccinated only 3 percent of its population due to lack of supply.

- What are the major challenges to increasing the global supply of COVID-19 vaccines produced in the United States and Europe and what role if any will you play relative to helping overcome those challenges?

Answer. While there have been significant improvements and scale-up in global manufacturing, there remain constraints in the supply of some key input materials, as well as constrained capacity to "fill and finish" vaccines into vials. I understand that USAID is working closely with the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and other partners to expand global vaccine manufacturing, including by supporting efforts to build human resource capacity for vaccine production and enabling the regulatory environment to review the safety and quality of vaccines before sale and use. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues across the U.S. Government to spur innovative solutions to these challenges.

- What is your understanding of the efficacy of vaccines produced in China and Russia, and if confirmed what messages, if any, should you deliver to countries about the safety and efficacy of these vaccines?

Answer. While Sinopharm and Sinovac have been shown in certain studies to be less effective than several other COVID-19 vaccines, studies against prior prevailing SARS-CoV-2 strains have shown Sinopharm and Sinovac have a favorable protective impact against critical illness and both have received Emergency Use Listing from the World Health Organization (WHO). Russia's Sputnik V vaccine produced by Gamaleya Research Institute has not yet received Emergency Use Listing from the

WHO or a stringent regulatory authority. I note that the Biden-Harris administration is dedicated to increasing U.S. vaccine sharing efforts and ensuring broad availability of safe and effective vaccines to more countries in need, through COVAX and bilaterally, and continues to call on others to do the same.

- Assuming availability of supply comes on line, what will be the most significant challenges to what is commonly referred to as “putting shots in arms” in countries with weak health systems, and what role will you play if confirmed to ensure those challenges have been addressed prior to COVID–19 vaccination doses become available?

Answer. Accelerating worldwide vaccine administration is an even bigger challenge than increasing supply. If confirmed, I will support USAID’s efforts in this area as a top priority. Bolstering country readiness is critical to the success of the U.S. donation of Pfizer doses and other vaccines, in particular. I understand that the President has announced that USAID plans to allocate additional American Rescue Plan funds for vaccine readiness. This builds on previous investments to support partner countries to strengthen their vaccination programs, including setting up vaccination sites, training vaccinators, providing logistics support to the “last mile,” fighting vaccine misinformation, and securing cold chain equipment.

- If confirmed, what actions would you plan to take, related to implementing the objectives of the September 2021 U.S. COVID–19 Summit?

Answer. At the September COVID–19 Summit, the President announced that USAID plans to provide \$195 million in support for country vaccine readiness efforts in support of the “Vaccinate the World” target and \$50 million to expand access to oxygen in support of the “Save Lives Now” target. I understand that USAID will provide an additional \$100 million for rapid response interventions, including addressing needs in COVID–19 hot spots and will also play a key role supporting the administration of an additional 500 million Pfizer vaccines to be donated by the United States. If confirmed, I commit to supporting these efforts as well as working with our partners, the private sector, and other countries to support reaching the Summit targets.

- What is your view of the role the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) can play in combatting the COVID–19 pandemic, and future pandemics, and what level of funding should USAID provide to the organization?

Answer. I understand that USAID currently provides support to CEPI’s core vaccine development program. If confirmed, I intend to consider all possible avenues where USAID can improve country COVID–19 vaccine capacity. CEPI has been an effective innovator. If I am fortunate enough to lead the Bureau for Global Health, I will explore how CEPI’s work aligns with the U.S. funding portfolio for efforts to expand use of existing vaccines and prepare for new variants.

Health Systems Strengthening

Question. If confirmed, how will you prioritize Health Systems Strengthening? Will you commit to consulting with my staff on your plans in this area, if confirmed?

Answer. Health systems strengthening has been a major focus of my career, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with USAID colleagues, and your staff, to prioritize this work. I understand that USAID recently released a new Vision for Health Systems Strengthening, and I plan to ensure that USAID’s approach described in the Vision is implemented across the Agency’s programs. In particular, I will prioritize support for local organizations and locally-derived solutions and work with countries and partners to leverage health resources across public, private, and community sectors. This includes supporting USAID’s efforts to optimize the impact of those resources to advance equity and quality of healthcare.

Tuberculosis

Question. If confirmed, how will you prioritize tuberculosis control efforts, in particular case finding, equitable and high quality treatment, and research and development of innovative diagnostics, therapies, and vaccines?

Answer. COVID–19 has had a devastating impact on the global tuberculosis (TB) response. If confirmed, I will ensure USAID continues its TB recovery efforts in the highest impacted countries, focusing on expanding access to TB detection, such as with TB and COVID–19 bi-directional testing and community-based contact investigations. If confirmed, I look forward to overseeing efforts to improve the quality of TB and drug resistant TB treatment through, for example, innovative digital technology, and supporting research for new and better treatment and diagnostic

tools. I will also support coordination with other partners, leveraging their additional resources for late-stage development and uptake of new TB vaccines.

Global Women's Health

Question. As the world continues to confront COVID-19, women's health services must be part of any comprehensive response to the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased incidences of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence as well as decreased access to reproductive and maternal health care. In March 2021, the United Nations Population Fund reported that an estimated 12 million women experienced disruptions in access to family planning due to the pandemic, leading to 1.4 million unintended pregnancies. These impacts have been especially devastating for women and girls already in the grip of humanitarian crises, from Afghanistan to Venezuela. Already, women's progress over the past 25 years has begun to be reversed.

- How will USAID meet the expanding health needs of women and girls impacted by the secondary effects of COVID-19, including gender-based violence? What steps will USAID's Bureau of Global Health take to halt the reversal of progress in women's health and rights?

Answer. U.S. investments in reproductive and maternal health, and gender-based violence prevention and response, are vital to women's health, gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls. They also support the Biden-Harris administration's health and development priorities. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to reach those most vulnerable, especially women and girls; ensure continued and equitable access to life-saving voluntary family planning and maternal health care; support countries to develop enabling environments for healthy behaviors; and increase the health sector's capacity to prevent and address gender-based violence.

- How will USAID seek to ensure that women in humanitarian emergencies who have been disproportionately impacted by the secondary impacts of COVID-19 receive access to critical health care services?

Answer. I understand USAID's humanitarian programming in the context of COVID-19 takes an integrated health and protection approach to ensure women and girls in humanitarian emergencies have access to critical healthcare services, including antenatal care, safe delivery at birth, postnatal care, and voluntary family planning. Programs also address myths, misconceptions, and misinformation. In light of the dramatic increase in gender-based violence (GBV) resulting from the pandemic, I understand that USAID partners are expanding services to directly address pandemic-related GBV needs. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that USAID's longer term global health investments build on the important work of the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance in countries where the Agency works.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO DR. ATUL A. GAWANDE BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

In General

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to upholding the statutory structure and organizational principals of the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID), whereby the agency operates as an independent agency under the foreign policy direction of the U.S. Secretary of State?

Answer. Yes, I will uphold the statutory structure and organizational principles by which USAID formulates and executes U.S. foreign economic and development assistance policies and programs, subject to the foreign policy guidance of the President, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Council.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to working in a bipartisan manner with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including by providing timely, accurate, and complete information on relevant U.S. global health strategies, initiatives, and funding?

Answer. Yes.

Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

Question. A recent report by the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) Anti-Corruption and Governance Center suggests that an estimated five to ten percent of annual humanitarian aid is lost to corruption, while an estimated seven percent of global spending on public health is lost to waste, fraud, and abuse.

The United States is, by far, the single most generous donor of both humanitarian and global health assistance.

- If confirmed, will you commit to upholding a zero tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the programs under your purview?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, will you also uphold a zero tolerance policy for USAID staff and implementing partners who engage in the sexual exploitation and abuse of the vulnerable communities they are meant to serve?

Answer. Yes.

Management

Question. USAID has a diverse workforce, supported by 22 different hiring mechanisms, that has been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to persistent management challenges, budget uncertainty, and COVID-19 and its associated stresses. To further complicate matters, if confirmed, you will be charged with managing an operational bureau that consumes roughly one third of the USAID budget and programs that cut across nearly every development sector. With the perceived importance of bureaus and initiatives all-too-often measured by the resources they manage, competition can be fierce and cooperation difficult.

- What is your understanding of morale within the Bureau for Global Health?

Answer. I understand that the COVID pandemic has created challenges for the entire Federal workforce, and USAID has the relatively unique additional challenges of a substantial overseas workforce. More broadly, I understand that USAID has been asked to take on expanding duties, and the staff at the Bureau have been under tremendous pressure for the past 18 months as the Agency has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale across the bureau?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to addressing morale and strengthening community at USAID. Among my top, early priorities will be to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting morale, as well as the agency's personnel structure and human resources and management mechanisms that can be used to address the most critical issues. Through two decades of management experience, I have come to understand the value of listening to my teams, creating opportunities for personal and professional growth at all levels, and ensuring that the often incredibly difficult work undertaken by my staff or organization is publicly and privately acknowledged.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision across the bureau, while also accounting for the areas of overlap with other agencies, bureaus, offices, and initiatives?

Answer. I understand that the size and scope of the Global Health Bureau can create coordination challenges within the Agency, and across other departments and agencies. At the same time, I see tremendous opportunity in leveraging the expertise and experience of the Global Health Bureau in coordination with the State Department, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, and others, at a policy level and on specific public health issues. If confirmed, I commit to building constructive relationships with my colleagues and counterparts at USAID and across the interagency to further U.S. foreign policy interests and strengthen global health.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I work hard to be an effective leader of leaders. That means, in managing organizations small and large, I've worked to establish, communicate, and win support for clear priorities; to secure the leaders and resources to achieve them; and to build the transparency and relationships that enable people to pull together in the same direction. When these come together, extraordinary things happen.

Question. In your view, how would your management style translate in a USAID setting, where your workforce is composed of career foreign and civil servants, as well as a dizzying array of political appointees, Foreign Service Limited appointments, Participating Agency Service Agreements, contractors, and grantees?

Answer. Establishing clear priorities, the needed talent and resources, and the strong relationships required for execution is particularly challenging in federal government. But these principles of effective leadership apply equally in the public sector as the private sector.

Question. As a political appointee rather than career foreign or civil servant, do you believe it is incumbent upon Agency leaders to integrate themselves into bureau operations and culture? If yes, how do you intend to do so?

Answer. Yes. I believe that USAID is made stronger as an Agency by combining the talents and skill sets of all its staff, regardless of their hiring mechanism. If I am confirmed, I will seek to integrate myself into that ecosystem, both to understand how the Global Health Bureau works and to add my perspective as a physician and public health leader. If confirmed, I will do this by holding listening sessions to understand the challenges facing current staff and solicit advice on how we can create a workforce that is more diverse and inclusive.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or in private?

Answer. No.

Question. In order to incentivize and ensure employee excellence at USAID, accurate performance reviews for all categories of employees are critical, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I do. I understand that USAID has five performance management systems which emphasize ongoing, constructive feedback and require formal conversations during the annual performance cycle. USAID also has a robust awards and recognition program that includes annual performance bonuses and incentive awards. If confirmed, I commit to working within these systems to encourage employees to achieve success both within and on behalf of USAID.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage the managers in your bureau to provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. I would encourage managers to continue providing clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees on a regular basis and as part of their annual performance appraisals. Constructive feedback is critical to helping employees be successful and to ensure that underperforming employees get back on track. It also allows managers to recognize and reward individuals and groups for contributions to the accomplishment of USAID's mission, goals, and objectives.

Global Health Security

Question. Should the United States engage in highly risky public health research—such as gain-of-function or other life sciences research that poses dual-use concerns—in cooperation with countries that do not have adequate biosecurity standards, that have violated or failed to uphold the International Health Regulations, or where the United States cannot certify that such country is in compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention?

Answer. I do not support USAID conducting research that would make viruses more lethal or transmissible in cooperation with such countries. Furthermore, it is my understanding that USAID does not fund gain-of-function research, and that USAID has not funded or conducted any studies or experiments anywhere in the world that would make viruses more lethal or transmissible.

Question. If confirmed, will you ensure USAID's research and development grants are fully vetted and do not flow to partners, including through sub-grants, engaged in such research, particularly in countries with lax biosecurity standards?

Answer. I understand that USAID provides clear guidance in all Global Health Security (GHS) programming to implementing partners on compliance and adherence to rigorous biosafety and security protocols and that USAID does not fund any gain-of-function research through prime or sub-partners. USAID requires regular reporting on implementing partners' activities supported with its funding, which must adhere to the criteria laid out in the award. This reporting is closely monitored by USAID staff to ensure compliance with U.S. Government regulations pertaining to GHS research. If confirmed, I will continue to implement this guidance and will not fund any gain-of-function research with USAID funds.

Question. If confirmed, how would you enhance USAID's monitoring and evaluation of sub-grants related to life sciences research?

Answer. It is my understanding that for all awards, USAID requires regular reporting on partners' activities supported with Agency funding, which must adhere

to the parameters of each award. If confirmed, I will work to ensure USAID continues to provide robust oversight of awards to monitor activities and the appropriate use of funds, and that award-level safeguards related to monitoring sub-awards are included in each applicable award.

Question. In your private capacity, you have asserted that the “lab leak” theory—i.e. that the COVID-19 pandemic may have its origins in an accidental exposure or leak from a lab in Wuhan, China—is plausible and merits further investigation.

- If confirmed, will you commit to conducting a comprehensive review, to include lessons learned, of all USAID grant funding to entities in the People’s Republic of China for the previous 10 years and sharing the results of such review with this committee?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with the committee regarding USAID-funded global health activities in the People’s Republic of China. Lessons learned from past programming can and should help shape the Agency’s future approaches. I supported the President’s decision to direct the Intelligence Community to conduct a full investigation into the origins of COVID-19, as well as administration efforts with partners and allies to seek a second phase study by the WHO. We also know getting to the bottom of the origin of this pandemic will help us understand how to prepare for the next pandemic.

Question. If confirmed, will you also commit to providing this committee with all requested information on USAID funding to EcoHealth Alliance?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to responding to the committee’s requests for information on USAID’s prior funding for EcoHealth Alliance which, I understand, has concluded.

Question. In your testimony, you indicate that your top three priorities as USAID Assistant Administrator for Global Health would be to accelerate the global response to COVID-19, prepare for the next pandemic, and strengthen health systems. In July, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed S. 2297, the International Pandemic Preparedness and COVID-19 Response Act, with overwhelming bipartisan support. The top three priorities you have outlined align with this bill.

- Are you familiar with S. 2297, the International Pandemic Preparedness and COVID-19 Response Act?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree with the legislation’s basic principles that: (1) U.S. global health security and diplomacy are inextricably linked; (2) enhanced leadership by the Department of State will be required to advance an effective U.S. global health security and diplomacy strategy overseas; (3) while a competent entity at the Department of State should align and coordinate U.S. foreign assistance efforts, the technical experts at USAID and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should be trusted to lead in design and implementation of programs under such strategy; (4) international early warning systems are lacking and must be strengthened; and (5) an international financing mechanism that incentivizes countries to identify and close measurable gaps in health security, including through enhanced early warning, will be required to help us get ahead of the next pandemic.

Answer. I support the idea of improving our pandemic preparedness and global health security activities, and I agree that diplomacy and assistance are both critical tools in these efforts. I know that USAID works closely with the Department of State, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others to ensure the U.S. is best positioned to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats. If confirmed, I commit to working with you on all efforts to advance global health security.

Question. USAID missions have the authority to make cross-cutting investments in health systems strengthening while implementing disease- and sector-specific initiatives, yet often fail to do so. S. 2297 thus seeks to incentivize USAID investments in health system strengthening through the creation of a pilot program.

- If confirmed, which countries and investments would you prioritize under such a pilot program?

Answer. Health systems strengthening (HSS) has been a major focus of my career, and if confirmed, I look forward to working within the Agency to ensure this work is prioritized, including by identifying opportunities for future investments in specific partner countries. I understand USAID recently released a Vision for Health System Strengthening, which outlines a clear approach for designing, implementing and monitoring HSS activities. If confirmed, and if such a pilot program is created,

I will seek to partner with countries interested in fully implementing USAID's HSS approach.

Question. Where are the greatest opportunities for success, and where are the greatest obstacles?

Answer. Since programs have the opportunity to make efficiency gains by addressing common health system challenges, I think the countries that implement a range of global health programs offer the greatest opportunity for success. I also understand that this same dynamic can be an obstacle to integrated programming because different programs operate under their own unique sets of objectives. If confirmed, I will work to better integrate global health programming to overcome this obstacle.

Question. The President's FY2022 budget request for the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs proposes a substantial increase for global health security.

- If confirmed, which partners and investments would you prioritize?

Answer. I understand that the President's FY2022 budget request would increase global health security funding with a significant portion focused on USAID. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, the National Security Council staff and relevant Departments, and colleagues at the Agency on potential plans to scale up bilateral country programs as well as support multilateral organizations working to develop tools to end the COVID-19 pandemic and more effectively prevent and respond to future ones. I will also work to ensure that USAID's Global Health Security programming continues to build resilience for future epidemics and pandemics by supporting partner countries scale up the core public health capacities that are needed to prevent avoidable epidemics, detect threats early, and respond rapidly and effectively to disease outbreaks to stop them from becoming national or global emergencies. Moreover, I will ensure that global health security investments complement the broader approach to health systems strengthening so that USAID's investments help countries withstand future shocks.

COVID-19

Question. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provided USAID with \$905,000,000 to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, to include support "for a multilateral vaccine development partnership to support epidemic preparedness." Though there was virtually no consultation on the authorizing language, the authors reportedly intended to require USAID to dedicate a substantial portion of this amount for a substantial contribution to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). More than six months later, the substantial contribution envisioned in the ARP has yet to materialize. This has raised questions about the level of confidence USAID has in CEPI's model and operations.

- If confirmed, will you commit to provide to this committee a complete, detailed spending plan for the funds received through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) for the international COVID-19 response, to include all aspects of the response, from vaccine sharing to second order impacts?

Answer. I understand that the State Department and USAID provide Congressionally-mandated reporting on COVID-19 funding, including obligations and disbursements by country and partner, every 60 days. If confirmed, I will ensure consultations with the committee continue and that USAID provides regular briefings on the use of American Rescue Plan funding.

Question. If confirmed, would it be your intention to engage with CEPI for the research and development of COVID-19 vaccines, including vaccines to combat COVID-19 variants, as well as vaccines to disrupt transmission of new and emerging infectious diseases with pandemic potential?

Answer. I understand that USAID currently provides support to CEPI's core vaccine development program. While I am not privy to administration discussions on the use of American Rescue Plan funding, if confirmed, I intend to consider all possible avenues where USAID can improve COVID-19 vaccine capacity. CEPI has been an effective innovator. If I am fortunate enough to lead the Bureau of Global Health, I will explore how CEPI's work aligns with the U.S. funding portfolio for efforts to expand use of existing vaccines and prepare for new variants.

Question. What is your assessment of CEPI's performance to date? For what reason might USAID be hesitating to make contributions?

Answer. While I am not privy to administration discussions on the use of American Rescue Plan funding, if confirmed, I will assess how CEPI's capabilities would

advance the administration's efforts to support a multilateral vaccine development partnership to enhance epidemic preparedness and look forward to consulting with you on those efforts.

Question. USAID, in coordination with the U.S. Department of State, currently is managing United States contributions to COVAX.

- How would you assess the performance of COVAX to date?

Answer. I understand that COVAX has performed well in the context of unforeseen and ongoing constraints to the global vaccine supply, including the restricted export of vaccines from India. While it appears that COVAX is below its original delivery projections, vaccine donations from the United States and other donors continue to increase the immediate supply to low and lower-middle income countries. If confirmed, I will continue to support efforts to expand the availability of safe and effective vaccines globally to bring this pandemic to an end.

Question. How can USAID ensure that COVAX is working expeditiously to get shots in arms while guarding against waste, fraud, and abuse?

Answer. It is my understanding that USAID's \$4 billion in contributions to Gavi/COVAX in 2021 was provided in tranches, allowing USAID to ensure Gavi/COVAX obtained the funding needed from other donors to scale up global vaccine access, while closely monitoring COVAX's performance. USAID also participates in Gavi's Audit and Finance Committee, and has the opportunity to regularly review risks involved in procuring and delivering COVID-19 vaccines. It is my understanding that Gavi/COVAX has established methods for receiving reports of fraud, and that all allegations are overseen by Gavi's Investigation Managing Director and Whistleblower Compliance Officer. If confirmed, I will support efforts by USAID to strengthen and reinforce existing systems to mitigate these threats to multilateral and bilateral vaccine campaigns and strengthen fraud awareness and reporting.

Question. How can USAID ensure that U.S. financial contributions to COVAX are not used to underwrite the purchase and distribution of substandard Chinese COVID-19 vaccines, particularly following the announcement that COVAX would, in fact, begin making major purchases of Chinese vaccines?

Answer. My understanding is that Gavi allocated the \$4 billion contribution from the U.S. prior to the decision to purchase Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines, and that no U.S. funds were used for those purchases. If confirmed, I look forward to working within the administration and with Congress to make certain that the U.S. continues to engage constructively with Gavi to ensure a robust supply of safe, effective, and high-quality vaccines to COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) countries.

Question. Under what circumstances would U.S. bilateral vaccine contributions be more appropriate than contributions via COVAX?

Answer. Donating doses through the multilateral COVAX initiative is, in most cases, generally more cost-effective and efficient than a bilateral donation, as it allows the U.S. Government to utilize COVAX's existing legal agreements with manufacturers and countries, and ensures that countries have access to necessary ancillary materials (e.g. syringes) and logistics support. Bilateral donations, in contrast, require the U.S. Government to arrange logistic support directly with recipient countries and develop new legal agreements. In some specific instances, particularly with high-income countries, bilateral donations offer a faster and more direct route for sharing vaccines.

Question. The Biden administration has identified critical shortages in COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccine readiness, particularly in developing countries. Within the Access to COVID-19 Tools (Act) Accelerator, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria's COVID-19 Response Mechanism is responsible for the diagnostics and health systems strengthening pillars. The United States has committed \$3.5 billion to the Global Fund for this purpose.

- Given your own private sector experience in expanding access to COVID-19 diagnostics, what is your assessment of the Global Fund's performance to date? What is the Global Fund getting right, and what would you do differently?

Answer. The Global Fund (GF), a valued U.S. Government partner, moved quickly to announce COVID-19 funding that allowed countries to respond to the escalating crisis. I understand that GF has leveraged volume commitments to reduce the cost of rapid antigen based test kits by 40 percent and is expected to supply more than 110 million tests during 2021. If confirmed, I will work with the GF to provide robust assistance to countries to support the achievement of GF grant targets, while acknowledging that adjustments may be necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If confirmed, I will also work with the Global Fund to ensure their core mission remains fulfilled, given the increased needs globally to address HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

Question. USAID overseas missions have a long history of stretching the boundaries when it comes to permissible uses of PEPFAR funds, including when using PEPFAR funds to finance the construction of schools in Malawi despite the availability of education funds earmarked by appropriators annually for this purpose, or when using PEPFAR funds statutorily set aside to support children who have been made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS for activities with no discernable connection to HIV/AIDS.

- If confirmed, will you commit to working closely with the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy (OGAC) at the U.S. Department of State to ensure that USAID's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS are efficient, effective, aligned and complementary to the work of OGAC?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to working with OGAC to ensure USAID's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS are efficient, effective, aligned, and complementary to the work of OGAC. I understand that USAID has established planning, monitoring, and oversight procedures and has dedicated personnel for monitoring activities to foster greater accountability for the use of resources toward epidemic control and the attainment of PEPFAR goals. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that USAID employs the core principles that have been paramount in realizing programmatic success to date, including: demonstrating clear outcomes and impact of U.S. Government investments through robust data and analytics, finding efficiencies to increase impact, and managing for results and accountability.

Question. Will you work to ensure that USAID missions meaningfully contribute to, but also adhere to, PEPFAR's Country Operating Plan (COP) process?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that USAID Missions continue to contribute and adhere to PEPFAR's COP process. It is my understanding that USAID Mission teams engage actively in strategic planning discussions with their interagency team, USAID Global Health Bureau counterparts, and local stakeholders -- including the host government and implementing partners -- to analyze new data, discuss prior performance, and reach consensus on the new COP's direction to ensure full accountability and ownership.

Multilateral and Bilateral Global Health Programs

Question. There has been strong focus over the last year and a half on multilateral institutions to address global health challenges, including but not limited to the U.S. international response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Recognizing that multilateral and bilateral programs work collaboratively, and that each have their own unique strengths and challenges, what would you consider to be the appropriate balance between multilateral and U.S. bilateral global health assistance and programs to address existing and emerging global health challenges?

Answer. Multilateral institutions bring together bilateral donors, foundations, and other entities and support global alignment around common objectives. I think it is critical that USAID engage with global institutions to influence and support policy and practice worldwide. At the same time, USAID's bilateral programs work directly with country institutions on implementation. USAID's comparative advantage is its collaboration globally and at the country level with multilateral and bilateral partners. That collaboration is the catalyst for sustainability and the achievement of U.S. foreign policy and development goals.

Family Planning and Reproductive Health

Question. The President's FY2022 budget request for the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs proposes a substantial increase for Family Planning and Reproductive Health (FP/RH), through both bilateral aid programs and contributions to the U.N. Population Fund.

- If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full and complete USAID compliance with current law, which prohibits the use of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, support involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you recognize the fungibility of U.S. foreign assistance? If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance does not enable implementing partners to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, perform involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion?

Answer. USAID funding does not support abortions or involuntary sterilizations. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to comply with all applicable laws, including the Helms and Siljander amendments, in implementing the Agency's programs.

Question. To your knowledge, is the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-led government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) deploying coercive abortion, forced sterilization, or other involuntary population control measures in Xinjiang Province?

Answer. While I do not have direct knowledge nor have I studied the documentation on this issue, I do know that the People's Republic of China is committing atrocities against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang Province.

Question. You have written extensively about the correlation between increased access to contraception and reduced demand for abortion. If confirmed, will you ensure that information on family planning is locally sensitive and includes options for natural family planning?

Answer. Yes.

Preventable Maternal and Child Deaths

Question. Thanks in large part to commitments under the 2012 global Call to Action, and subsequent U.S. leadership and investment through USAID's Acting on the Call strategy, significant gains have been made in reducing preventable maternal and child deaths around the globe. Unfortunately, much of this progress is now at risk.

- USAID's Acting on the Call strategy expired in 2020. If confirmed, how would you renew and reinvigorate the strategy to reflect the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, ensure local input, and galvanize other donors to join the fight to end preventable child and maternal deaths by 2030?

Answer. I understand that USAID is finalizing a new strategy to guide its child and maternal programming, and will prioritize proven interventions and support countries in their efforts to end preventable child and maternal deaths by 2030. If confirmed, I commit to working with the global health community to continue focusing on building healthier, stronger, and more self-sufficient partner countries, and to leverage other donor, private sector, and host country resources towards addressing this shared goal.

Question. How important is restoring access to routine vaccinations to this effort, particularly in areas plagued by insecurity and conflict?

Answer. Restoring access to routine vaccinations is critical to USAID's efforts to prevent child and maternal deaths. WHO-UNICEF global immunization estimates indicate 23 million children missed out on basic vaccines through routine immunization services in 2020—3.7 million more than in 2019. Most of these children live in communities affected by conflict, in under-served remote places, or in informal or slum settings with limited access to basic health and key social services. If I am confirmed, restoring and shoring up immunization services will be an urgent priority in order to stop a wave of preventable outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, and backsliding in child mortality gains made over the past two decades.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Question. Access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in healthcare facilities is critical to: establishing and sustaining strong health systems; preventing the spread of infectious diseases; addressing the growing challenge of antimicrobial resistance; and to ensuring quality care and the safety of patients and health workers. Yet, a recent WHO/UNICEF report cited that globally, 1-in-3 healthcare facilities does not have access to safe drinking water, soap, and hand sanitizers, and every year 17 million women give birth in facilities without adequate WASH.

- If confirmed, would incorporating WASH into the bureau's health systems strengthening programs, and particularly those led by the Office of Health Systems, be a priority?

Answer. As a medical professional, I understand that access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in healthcare facilities is essential to providing quality healthcare and protecting healthcare workers and patients from infections, such as

COVID-19. I have also seen firsthand how the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of WASH in disease prevention and infection control. If confirmed, I commit to working with public and private development partners to strengthen WASH in healthcare facilities to improve quality of care.

Question. Will you commit to working with the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security and the USAID Global Water Coordinator to prioritize WASH across each of the bureau's health programs, ensure alignment of effort, and eliminate duplication and waste?

Answer. Health is one of the most critical and well demonstrated WASH benefits. My understanding is that there is strong coordination between the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS) and the Global Water Coordinator. This includes intra-agency coordinating groups and the integrated management of programs and Mission support by the RFS Center for Water, Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene; GH Office of Maternal, Child Health and Nutrition; and Regional Bureaus. If confirmed, I commit to continue to ensure effective collaboration through existing platforms and to work with colleagues to improve internal USAID WASH program alignment.

Polio

Question. USAID has long worked with U.N. agencies and private sector partners, including Rotary International and the Gates Foundation, to eradicate polio. These efforts have achieved notable success. Since the launch of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988, more than 2.5 billion children have been immunized, two of the three known strains of wild poliovirus have been eradicated, and global cases have been reduced by 99 percent. Today, wild poliovirus remains endemic in just two countries: Pakistan and Afghanistan. Still, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan threaten to reverse these gains.

- If confirmed, will you prioritize efforts to eradicate polio globally, including through the reinvigoration of public-private partnerships and utilization of innovative approaches to track infections and expand access to vaccinations in vulnerable, hard to reach communities?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to continuing USAID's 25-year history of collaborating with public and private partners to eradicate polio, including through the use of international and local non-governmental organizations, and community and faith-based organizations, to reach the hardest-to-reach communities through gender-inclusive and equity-focused approaches.

Question. How can USAID and its partners expand the reach of polio vaccines in Pakistan and Afghanistan while ensuring the protection of vaccinators?

Answer. The threat to polio workers continues to be grave; in this year alone, more than 10 people have been killed while supporting polio eradication efforts. I understand that USAID's polio work in Pakistan and Afghanistan has focused on funding a network of staff to detect, track, and report wild and vaccine-derived polio cases. This surveillance data is essential for WHO, UNICEF, and others to plan polio campaigns and to implement timely outbreak response measures. USAID collaborates with multilateral organizations and other partners to mitigate risks to healthcare workers that support polio eradication. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure USAID and its partners maintain and expand access to polio vaccines, while prioritizing the safety and security of all polio program staff.

Localization

Question. Successive administrations—both Democrat and Republican—have launched initiatives to “localize” U.S. foreign assistance, including by building the capacity of local partners to design programs and manage U.S. funds directly, rather than working as sub-awardees to large, U.S.-based development contractors and non-governmental organizations. Each of these initiatives has had mixed results.

- What is your view of “localization”?

Answer. In my view, localization can increase the input, ownership, and decision-making of the people who live development challenges daily in their communities. If confirmed, I will support Bureau approaches to localization efforts that reinforce implementation of global health activities that are guided by the people and institutions who drive change in their own countries and communities. I understand this is a key feature of USAID's Vision for Health System Strengthening that guides the work of the Office of Health Systems.

Question. How can the Bureau for Global Health more effectively empower local partners through its program consultation, design, and implementation processes?

Answer. Local capacity for development program design and management often requires development itself. I agree it is important that USAID work to support and grow a diverse set of partners who understand specific development needs and challenges, and continue to ease their access to Agency grant and contracting opportunities. If confirmed, I will work with USAID's global health programs and broader Agency efforts that I understand to be underway, to better enable local actors to define priorities and lead their communities' and countries' development agendas.

Question. Is it appropriate to set targets for "localization" and, if so, what would you consider to be reasonable and appropriate?

Answer. I do not believe that localization can be solely based on providing increased numbers of grants to local organizations or management targets that emphasize inputs over impact. If confirmed, I will work with USAID's global health programs and broader Agency efforts that I understand to be underway, to better enable local actors to define priorities and lead their communities' and countries' development agendas.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO DR. ATUL A. GAWANDE BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In 1998, you wrote an article titled, "The Human Cost of Crippling Castro" where you criticized the longstanding U.S. policy of withholding financing and support for the Castro and Diaz-Canel regimes. For years, I have sought to clarify that the U.S. does not sanction Cuba, or sanction the Cuban people, but on a regime that is the number one reason why Cuba is the only country in the world where Cubans cannot succeed. For proof, we just need to look at the most recent protests in July, where Cubans across the island took to the streets against the regime's long history of economic mismanagement and violation of Cuban's basic rights.

- Understanding that you wrote this article more than two decades ago, do you oppose U.S. efforts to deny funding to the Castro-Diaz-Canel regime in Cuba?

Answer. If confirmed, I will abide by existing restrictions concerning Cuba, including the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996. As you rightly note, the Cuban regime's violent crackdown on dissent both preceding and in response to the July 11 protests demonstrates the Government's blatant disregard for its people and economic mismanagement. I agree that no funding for Cuba should go to the regime. I understand that current funding only benefits the Cuban people, carried out by independent organizations and strictly adheres to the relevant U.S. laws governing the provision of assistance in Cuba.

Question. In that same article, you praise the high quality of Cuba's medical sector, which the regime uses to promote its international medical missions. However, the U.S. State Department, in its most recent Trafficking in Persons Report, found that these missions are only possible through forcing Cuban doctors to work.

- In your opinion, is a health care system that relies on the forced labor of its doctors and nurses really something to admire?

Answer. Based on these findings and evidence that has emerged in recent years, I believe this system ultimately is exploitative and coercive to its participants. Any system that relies on systematic and deliberate violations of people's human rights should be publicly denounced. As stated in the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report with regard to participants in Cuba's international medical missions, "The Government failed to inform participants of the terms of their contracts, which varied from country to country, confiscated their documents and salaries, and threatened medical professionals and their family members if participants left the program."

Question. You have written significantly on the subject of abortion. Some of this writing indicates a seemingly nonchalant attitude to abortion as a method of family planning, which raises grave concerns for your role, if confirmed, of overseeing all USAID assistance for global health programs.

- Do you support abortion as a tool of family planning?
- Do you believe the United States should no longer prohibit the use of U.S. Government funds for the performance of abortion?
- Do you support the use of partial-birth abortions?

Answer. I am clear that USAID does not fund abortions and that Congress passes the laws governing the use of U.S. Government funds. Since 1973, the Helms Amendment has prohibited the use of U.S. foreign assistance funds to pay for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning, or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortions. I take this and other restrictions, including other restrictions related to abortion, very seriously. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that USAID continues to comply with the law, including the Helms and Siljander amendments, in implementing the Agency's programs.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. CLAIRE D. CRONIN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. On September 13, the British Government unilaterally announced that customs checks on EU imports were delayed from October 2021 until January 2022. The checks were part of the Brexit deal that kept Northern Ireland within the EU single market and avoids the need for a hard border with Ireland. Will you convey to the Irish government your staunch support for the Northern Ireland Protocol in the Brexit withdrawal agreement? How will you make clear that many in Congress do not support a U.S.-UK FTA without full implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol?

Answer. If confirmed, I will protect the hard-fought gains of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. I will encourage all parties to prioritize political and economic stability and to negotiate when differences arise. I would emphasize the need to ensure any Brexit outcomes do not undermine the progress made since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Question. The British Government has proposed an across-the-board amnesty for all criminal prosecutions related to the Troubles. This amnesty would be wider than more than 300 other post-conflict amnesties, including the one issued by Pinochet in Chile, according to a study from Queen's University Belfast. This proposed amnesty is incompatible with the human rights-related commitments of the GFA. What steps should the U.S. take to ensure that victims of Troubles-era violence and their families receive proper justice and accountability?

Answer. There are many complexities surrounding the past in Northern Ireland and addressing these issues in a constructive way is essential. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Irish government and colleagues at Embassy London and our Consulate General in Belfast to urge Northern Ireland's political parties to negotiate when differences arise in order to build a peaceful and prosperous shared future in Northern Ireland.

Question. Ireland was elected to the United Nations Security Council for 2021—2022. During its Presidency in September, Ireland focused on the UN-led peace process in Libya, the Middle East Peace Process, and the situations in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, and South Sudan. Given Ireland's leadership on peacekeeping, climate, and security, how will you work with Irish partners to build coalitions that address our mutual priorities?

Answer. Ireland is already a strong advocate for many shared priorities. If confirmed, I will ensure U.S. priorities remain top agenda issues for my engagement with Irish officials. I will seek the most effective ways to work with Ireland to advance key U.S. policy objectives, including expanding the bilateral business and economic relationship, combatting the global pandemic, countering the destructive influence of bad actors, strengthening transatlantic ties, and providing a safe and business-friendly environment for American citizens and companies working in Ireland.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. CLAIRE D. CRONIN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Despite generally good relations between the two countries, one of the sticking points in our relationship is the rather high level of illegal immigration of Irish citizens into the U.S. While this issue tends to fly under the radar, there are an estimated 10,000-50,000 Irish citizens residing illegally in the United States.

- Do you believe that illegal Irish immigrants should be lumped together in immigration reform bills with other groups of illegal immigrants?

Answer. The history of Irish immigration to the United States is as old as our country and contributes to our strong bonds of friendship and history. During President Biden's March meeting with Taoiseach Micheál Martin, the leaders expressed their support for an earned path to citizenship for immigrants to the United States, as proposed in the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021. If confirmed, I will work to implement the applicable U.S. immigration laws and policies for Irish immigrants, in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security and other Administration partners and in support of the Administration's commitment to the humane enforcement of U.S. immigration law.

Question. Do you commit to working to find a legal remedy for this issue?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to supporting the Administration's efforts to create a humane and effective immigration system, recognizing both that strong borders are fundamental to our national security and that welcoming immigrants is core to our national identity. I will support and defend any legal remedies to this issue, if I am confirmed.

Question. Many in the U.S. Congress have vocally told London that they will not ratify any U.S.-UK trade deal if the Good Friday agreements are seen to be undermined in any final post-Brexit agreements that the UK may make with the European Union.

- Do you agree with this stance? Why or why not?

Answer. If confirmed, I will protect the hard-fought gains of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. I will encourage all parties to prioritize political and economic stability and to negotiate when differences arise. I would emphasize the need to ensure any Brexit outcomes do not undermine the progress made since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Question. Ireland has signed on to the Paris Climate Agreement, however it has continued to lag behind its emissions reduction goals.

- How do you plan on engaging with Irish government and organizations to encourage them to reach their emissions goals under the Paris Agreement?

Answer. Ireland is eager to work with the United States to raise the profile of the issue. In July, Ireland passed a Climate Action Bill committing to halving carbon emissions by 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. As member of the European Union (EU), Ireland has no country-specific Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement—they are currently working to meet the bloc's collective target. However, with agriculture constituting the biggest share of carbon emissions, Ireland is now in the process of setting ambitious legally-binding targets for climate change mitigation and adaptation. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. and Irish Government officials and scientific experts to ensure that ambitious climate goals are met.

Question. In May 2021, the regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka forced down a Ryan Air flight that was in Belarusian airspace on its way from Athens, Greece, to Vilnius, Lithuania. Once on the ground, the Lukashenka regime forcibly removed Belarusian opposition journalist Raman Pratasevich and his girlfriend from the flight. Mr. Pratasevich has since been seen to be forced to make confessions of his sins against the regime on Belarusian television. Ryan Air is an Irish airline, and after the hijacking, many questions were raised about the airline's role in allowing the plane to be escorted to the ground.

- Now, after several months of EU-forced routing around Belarusian airspace, airlines are beginning to question when the restrictions will disappear. The stance of Ryan Air is particularly important. If confirmed, will you commit to working to maintain this overfly ban over Belarus?

Answer. Belarus's forced diversion of a commercial Ryanair flight under apparently false pretenses and the subsequent removal and arrest of Raman Pratasevich, a Belarusian journalist, and his traveling companion, was a direct affront to international norms. The United States strongly condemned these actions and has since taken measures, including issuing a Level 4 travel warning against travel to Belarus, and imposed sanctions and air travel restrictions. The United States has also strongly supported the investigation of the incident by the International Civil Aviation Organization, which is slated to present its findings in November. If confirmed, I would work with the Irish government to support the Belarusian people in their aspirations for a free, democratic, and prosperous future and support their call for the regime to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Question. According to the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, Ireland was listed on Tier 2 Watch List for the second year in a row. Tier 2 Watch List, by definition, states:

Countries and territories whose governments do not fully comply with the Act's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and: The estimated number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing and the country is not taking proportional concrete actions; or There is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year.

- Ireland seems to be in both categories. If confirmed, what steps would you take to engage with the host government on this critical issue?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with U.S. and Irish authorities to encourage cooperation and regularly raise trafficking in persons at the highest levels of the Irish government. While the government recently convicted two traffickers for the first time under its trafficking law, I will continue to urge the Irish government to take concrete actions in addressing the recommendations from this year's Trafficking in Persons Report. Specifically, I will encourage the government of Ireland to vigorously investigate, prosecute suspects, and convict traffickers using the human trafficking law as well as improve systemic deficiencies in their victim identification, referral, and assistance.

Question. If confirmed, how would you engage with the office of the Ambassador at Large for Trafficking in Persons?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with U.S. authorities, including a confirmed U.S. Ambassador at Large for Trafficking in Persons, and the relevant Irish authorities, to encourage cooperation to make progress in combating trafficking in persons.

Question. Do you believe that progress is possible in Ireland? Is there sufficient political will to tackle this growing problem?

Answer. The Irish government continues to work with the U.S. government to address these issues. As noted in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, the government made some significant efforts to combat trafficking during the reporting period, including designating an independent human trafficking national rapporteur and increasing funding for victim assistance, awareness campaigns, and training. In June 2021, Ireland convicted two Irish citizens—the first convictions under the anti-trafficking law since it was amended in 2013. In September, courts sentenced the traffickers to over five years' imprisonment. If confirmed, I will engage with U.S. and Irish authorities to encourage cooperation and progress in combating trafficking in persons. In addition, I believe that progress can be made by effectively using public diplomacy tools to increase awareness and victim identification.

Question. There are certain statutory limitations on how long a country can be consistently listed on the Tier 2 Watch List. After a certain amount of time, they must improve to Tier 2 or be moved to Tier 3. What do you believe are some concrete steps that the United States and the government of Ireland can take together to prevent further slipping to Tier 3?

Answer. For the second consecutive year, Ireland remained on the Tier 2 Watch List in the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons report. If confirmed, I will urge the Irish government to take concrete actions in addressing the prioritized recommendations the Department highlighted in this year's Trafficking in Persons Report, especially with regard to increased prosecutions and victim identification and assistance. While the government has made some progress in recently convicting two traffickers for the first time under its trafficking law, if confirmed, I will encourage the government of Ireland to vigorously investigate, prosecute suspects, and convict traffickers of both sex and labor trafficking.

Question. Embassy Dublin has been under enormous stress over the past few years dealing with COVID and the local lockdowns it caused.

- What is your understanding of morale in Embassy Dublin?

Answer. Ireland has enforced three strict national lockdowns. The Foreign Service Officers and Locally Employed Staff at Embassy Dublin have dealt with significant challenges posed by COVID-19. I am grateful for their service, despite the difficulties. If confirmed, I will prioritize meeting with Embassy employees, including the Deputy Chief of Mission, to understand the impact of the pandemic on the mission.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale across the Embassy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure everyone on my team is treated professionally, their rights are respected, they are safe and secure, and they have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. I believe that all members of U.S. Embassy Dublin are one team working for the good of the U.S.-Ireland relationship, and the interests of the United States and the American people.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision across Embassy Dublin?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure everyone on my team is treated professionally, their rights are respected, they are safe and secure, and they have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. My commitment will be to ensure we use our available resources as effectively as possible to advance our top policy priorities. I believe that all members of U.S. Embassy Dublin are one team working for the good of the U.S.-Ireland relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My career is rooted in public service and my experience as a mediator shaped my ability to work with colleagues of all backgrounds in a constructive manner. My management style is also shaped by my service as the first woman House Majority Leader in Massachusetts. My leadership style is collaborative and team oriented. I regularly engage with members of my team and always seek to create a space for open dialogue and diversity of thought. Despite the team approach, I recognize that decision making authority rests with me and that I am responsible for the outcome of the decision. If confirmed, I will work hard to foster an environment of respect as the Embassy carries out important work on behalf of the American people.

Question. How do you believe your management style will translate to an embassy setting, where resources may not be readily available and your diplomatic workforce are career employees?

Answer. As I understand it, the State Department continuously reviews its priorities, organization, and staffing relevant to the needs of each mission. If confirmed, my commitment will be to ensure we use our available resources as effectively as possible to advance our top policy priorities. If necessary, I would advocate for additional resources to carry out our mission.

Question. As a political appointee rather than career diplomat, do you believe it is incumbent on new chiefs of mission to integrate themselves into embassy operations and culture? If yes, how do you intend to do so?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, one of my first actions as ambassador will be to meet the entire team at our Embassy in Dublin, including the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission to advance U.S. priorities in Ireland, including: protecting the safety and security of Americans, growing our economic relationship, and advancing shared political priorities. I expect to have a positive working relationship and to work together closely.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my first actions as ambassador will be to meet the entire team at our Embassy in Dublin, including the Deputy Chief of Mission. I will consult closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on a range of issues and value the institutional knowledge provided.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Ireland? What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The deep cultural, familial, and economic U.S.-Ireland connections provide a strong foundation on which Embassy Dublin promotes U.S. policy goals, such as recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, responding to the climate crisis, and standing up for our shared democratic values. With a sophisticated knowledge of American history, customs, and politics, many Irish enjoy positive experiences in the

United States as tourists, students, or professionals. If confirmed, I will use public diplomacy tools including cultural programming, exchanges like the Fulbright program, and traditional and social media to bolster people-to-people ties across the country and expand the pool of key influencers who advocate for U.S. interests.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. The State Department's foreign policy goals—whether in Washington, DC or Ireland—are the same. The public diplomacy team at Embassy Dublin presents information to their local audience using their understanding of that audience and the local environment. The Embassy blends rapid reposting or amplification of Department or administration messaging with post-generated content directly tailored to contextualize the material to achieve the greatest impact with local audiences. If confirmed, I will continue to deploy public diplomacy staff and resources to analyze, engage, inform, and influence Irish audiences in support of U.S. foreign policy goals.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. CLAIRE D. CRONIN BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. Recently, the COVID pandemic and the post-Brexit Northern Ireland Protocol have posed challenges to further implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. Political turmoil over the issue has again given rise to public unrest, including outbreaks of violence from loyalists in Northern Ireland in April 2021. As Ambassador, how can you use your role to facilitate dialogue and de-escalation around Northern Irish sectarian issues, from the Irish side of the border?

Answer. Recent unrest in Northern Ireland underscores the importance of safeguarding the gains of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. If confirmed, I would work with colleagues in London and Belfast, and with the Irish government, to encourage political and community engagement to ensure the gains of the hard-won peace are protected.

Question. Ireland has recently been downgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List in the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons report. Ireland has only rarely prosecuted anyone for human trafficking. As Ambassador, what will you do to raise the profile of this issue of concern?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with U.S. and Irish authorities to encourage cooperation and regularly raise trafficking in persons at the highest levels of the Irish government. While the Government has made some progress in recently convicting two traffickers for the first time under its trafficking law, I will urge the Irish government to take further concrete actions to address the recommendations from this year's Trafficking in Persons Report. Specifically, I will encourage the government of Ireland to vigorously investigate, prosecute suspects, and convict traffickers using the human trafficking law as well as improve systemic deficiencies in their victim identification, referral, and assistance.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO KENT DOYLE LOGSDON BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. In November 2017 and December 2018, parties to the OSCE's 5+2 format reached agreements on elements of the Berlin-plus Protocol. If confirmed, how will you leverage the United States' status as an observer to the format to continue to make progress towards full implementation of the protocol?

Answer. If confirmed, I pledge to continue our close and collaborative engagement with the OSCE and likeminded allies and partners to ensure productive, results-oriented discussions under the 5+2 format. The United States hopes to see continued progress on remaining confidence-building measures, underlying political and security issues, and maintaining a focus on advancing human rights. If confirmed, I am ready to work with the Government of Moldova and international partners under the OSCE framework to support full implementation of the protocol, including: enhanced movement through the Nistru River security zone, registration and facilitation of international traffic, and resolution of criminal cases.

Question. In a recent address to the U.N. General Assembly, President Sandu called for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria and the destruction

or removal of weapons caches in the region. How would you engage parties in the 5+2 format to ensure that Moldovan independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are recognized?

Answer. The United States fully supports President Sandu's and the Government of Moldova's call on Russia to honor its Istanbul Summit commitments and withdraw its troops and munitions from Moldovan territory. If confirmed, I will actively continue this support through direct dialogue with our partners in the OSCE and with the parties to and mediators of the OSCE-led 5+2 process. I will uphold the U.S. commitment to the 5+2 process and its goal to achieve a comprehensive, peaceful, and sustainable settlement that upholds Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity, with a special status for Transnistria within Moldova's internationally recognized borders.

Question. President Sandu and Prime Minister Gavrilita have embarked on an ambitious reform agenda since Moldova's parliamentary elections in July 2021. The reforms aim to root out corruption at all levels of the Moldovan Government and have been welcomed by the international community. However, an August 2021 open letter signed by Moldovan civil society groups called for increased transparency with regard to reform efforts. How will you work to support the Moldovan Government's anti-corruption efforts while also encouraging appropriate public consultation?

Answer. The United States is committed to supporting President Sandu and the Moldovan Government as they pursue reforms to strengthen democratic institutions and combat corruption. Engagement with Moldovan civil society is a key component of U.S. support. Civil society plays an important role in promoting accountability of elected leaders, driving meaningful reform, promoting access to justice for vulnerable communities, and strengthening independent media. If confirmed, I will support an open and consultative reform process that incorporates a diverse range of stakeholders, including civil society and international experts. I will also ensure that the U.S. Embassy amplifies successes of the Moldovan Government's anticorruption efforts.

Question. LGBTI individuals in Moldova continue to be victims of discrimination, hate crimes, and verbal and physical assaults. What will be your strategy for supporting civil society groups that work with the LGBTI community?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with civil society organizations and likeminded international partners to urge the Moldovan Government to adopt policies to protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons and to address impunity for hate-based crimes against all vulnerable communities and minority groups. I will ensure the United States continues to support improving accountability for perpetrators of hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ persons and protecting the rights of victims of these crimes. If confirmed, I also will focus on building the capacity of civil society to advocate for all individuals to fully exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms and to support investigations of hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ persons.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO KENT DOYLE LOGSDON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What areas in the U.S.-Moldova relationship do you see as most ripe for improvement?

Answer. The United States has two key priorities for our bilateral relations. The first is to promote the development of strong government institutions that advance accountability, democracy, and human rights, and that work for the Moldovan people. The second is to strengthen Moldova's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity to counter Russian malign influence and empower Moldovans to pursue their chosen European path. The United States, in coordination with our European partners, is focused on providing the political and technical support needed to advance the new government's reform agenda. The United States is also ready to assist Moldova's economic recovery through market-oriented reforms and increased transparency.

Question. Moldova's forward progress has at times been hampered by their inability to fulfil the conditions required by the IMF to receive much needed funds. As many neighboring states have moved forward economically, Moldova's economy has remained stagnant and dependent on remittances.

- As one of the major contributors to the IMF, what role do you believe the United States should play in helping rebuild ties between Moldova and the IMF?

Answer. The United States is committed to assisting Moldova in building a robust, diversified, and export-oriented economy with stronger links to Western trade partners. IMF assistance and associated reforms have helped Moldova make important progress in strengthening transparency and oversight in its financial sector. If confirmed, I will support ongoing dialogue between Moldova and the IMF on reaching agreement on future assistance packages that will encourage the strengthening of the rule of law in Moldova and deliver both important governance reforms and much-needed financial assistance as Moldova builds back its economy in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

Question. Moldova remains completely dependent on Russia for its gas supplies. If confirmed, do you commit to helping Moldova explore and develop other, non-Russian sources of power, and to helping push the country to implement programs that will make it more energy efficient and thus use less Russian gas?

Answer. If confirmed, I would focus on supporting Moldova's energy security and diversification by leveraging U.S. technical assistance to promote renewable energy and alternative sources of gas supply and encourage reforms to better link Moldova to European energy markets. Collectively, these efforts can help to reduce Moldova's dependence on Russian gas imports. In addition, linking Moldova's energy infrastructure to its neighbors, such as Ukraine and Romania, will support further diversification.

Question. Moldova's struggle with Russian-backed and institutionalized corruption are well-chronicled. In 2014, for instance, \$1 billion disappeared from Moldovan banks and has not been retrieved.

- Do you believe that the United States should assist the Government of Moldova in their fight against corruption by providing them with intelligence on the whereabouts of certain individuals or their financial accounts who are suspected of having stolen from or defrauded the Moldovan people?

Answer. We support the Moldovan Government's efforts to implement anti-corruption reforms and to investigate and prosecute those involved in corruption, including those who participated in the 2014 billion-dollar bank fraud. Corruption continues to slow economic development and threatens Moldova's European trajectory. If confirmed, I am committed to working with Moldova to promote and ensure accountability for corrupt actors and assist the Moldovan Government's investigations to hold those complicit in the 2014 billion-dollar bank fraud to account in whatever way we can.

Question. Do you believe that visa or financial sanctions should be utilized by the United States against the aforementioned individuals? Why or why not?

Answer. The United States stands with the Moldovan people in their fight against corruption. If confirmed, I will seek to use all available tools, as appropriate, to promote accountability for corrupt actors undermining the integrity of democratic institutions and rule of law in Moldova, regionally, and globally.

Question. A new anti-corruption-focused government has recently come to power in Moldova. But time is short for them to make progress, and the entrenched interests working to maintain their grip on Moldova's politics and economy are strong.

- What role do you think the United States should play in helping Moldova fight corruption?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make the fight against corruption one of my top priorities. Moldovan voters chose a new government with a clear anticorruption mandate. U.S. assistance to Moldova is focused on promoting the development of strong, independent, and democratic justice sector institutions. As the new Moldovan Government seeks to implement its ambitious reform agenda, the United States can help Moldova build capacity within key anticorruption institutions, promote global best practices, and increase the effectiveness of its justice sector.

Question. What tools does the new government have to begin the fight to corruption, and what new anti-corruption tools could they develop to enhance reform efforts.

Answer. Moldova's fight against corruption has benefited from an increasingly independent judiciary, the development of specialized anticorruption and integrity bodies, and robust exchanges with the United States and our European partners to implement international best practices. To achieve its anticorruption goals, the new

government can continue to strengthen accountability and transparency within judicial and prosecutorial oversight bodies. In the financial sector, Moldova is working to improve financial transparency and develop its financial intelligence capabilities. If confirmed, I would support Moldova's push to expand its anticorruption agenda, in consultation with independent experts and civil society.

Question. In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Moldova was identified as remaining on Tier 2 due to lack of prosecutorial efforts and systemic corruption in law enforcement.

- How will you work with the Moldovan authorities to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Moldovan Government to strengthen its investigative and prosecutorial capacity to combat human trafficking, as well as press for improved government support, services, and justice for trafficking victims. U.S. support in the fight against human trafficking in Moldova is centered on victims and includes programs to increase access to services. Rooting out corruption in law enforcement and the judiciary, as well as building capacity within Moldovan law enforcement agencies, will improve Moldova's ability to prosecute and prevent trafficking.

Question. In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Moldova was identified as partially tolerant of religious freedom, with noted anti-Semitic incidents.

- What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. While Moldova's constitution and laws provide for religious freedom, discrimination against members of religious minority groups persists, particularly anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred. If confirmed, I will work closely with the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, civil society, the Moldovan Government, and religious communities to combat religiously motivated hatred and to promote respect for all religious groups. Efforts to strengthen Moldova's anti-discrimination body will support accountability for perpetrators of religiously motivated hate crimes. If confirmed, I will also work to advance freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression within the Transnistria region.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Moldova was identified as having serious human rights concerns, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the freedom of expression, assembly, and movement.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. The United States welcomes the commitment of the new government to advance human rights as a policy priority. The United States remains concerned about pervasive human rights issues, including discrimination and impunity for hate crimes against members of minority groups and vulnerable communities. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Moldovan Government to improve the human rights situation in the country. The United States remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Transnistria, including the prosecution of individuals for exercising their human right and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I will press for improved protection of vulnerable communities in Transnistria.

Question. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with civil society organizations to help us assess human rights issues, develop programs, and advocate for stronger policies and reforms. The U.S. Embassy in Chisinau enjoys strong and longstanding relationships with civil society on human rights and democracy issues. Civil society has played an important role in promoting accountability of elected leaders, driving meaningful reform, supporting the rights of members of minority groups and access to justice for vulnerable communities, and strengthening independent media.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Embassy Chisinau?

Answer. Embassy Chisinau continues to attract a talented and diverse group of foreign service professionals and their families. The COVID pandemic, as well as movement restrictions and strain on Moldova's healthcare system, presented new challenges for the Embassy in Chisinau. However, access to vaccinations for all staff and U.S. family members, as well as continued U.S. assistance to support Moldova's

recovery from the pandemic, have contributed to improved resiliency and health and safety. In addition, the team in Chisinau has been energized through engagement with the new pro-reform, Western-oriented government. If confirmed, I would fully support Embassy staff and continually seek ways to promote good morale at post.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Embassy Chisinau?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my deputy chief of mission to ensure that we create an atmosphere in which our staff knows that they can bring serious issues to us and know that they are being heard at the highest level. I will ensure that everyone in the mission understands that my highest priority is the safety and security of the team. If confirmed, I will promote training and professional development, and ensure that all staff members are aware of the employee and family support resources that the Department offers to assist employees.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Embassy Chisinau?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to establish a strong team with a clear understanding of our goals and objectives, maintain open and transparent communications throughout the mission by sharing information, and seek ways to support and ensure the safety and community of the mission the community—both American and local staff.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.

- How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I have a collaborative management style. I believe in sharing information and empowering my team, being open to ideas and suggestions from throughout the mission, and providing clear guidance and decisions as needed to lead.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. I do not believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

Question. What lessons did you learn from your tenure as deputy chief of mission in Berlin?

Answer. As Deputy Chief of Mission in Berlin, I learned it is important to build a strong team and to provide the guidance needed to empower the members of your team to lead their own sections and agencies in support of overall mission goals and objectives. As Deputy Chief of Mission, I focused on increasing diversity throughout the mission, but especially within the senior team. I also learned it is important to take care of your team, including their families, especially in difficult and uncertain times.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. I have been a deputy chief of mission (DCM) twice—in Tbilisi, Georgia, and in Berlin, Germany. To be successful, a DCM must be the Chief of Mission's alter ego, confidante, and partner in managing and leading the mission. If confirmed, I fully expect to have that kind of positive relationship with my DCM in Chisinau.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I anticipate entrusting my deputy chief of mission to manage the day-to-day operations of the mission, and to be fully engaged on and informed about all aspects of policy and mission management should the deputy need to step in to lead.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Given your time as chief of staff to the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I believe it is critical to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles. I will hold accountable those who have performance or conduct issues. This is what I have done throughout my career.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers. I will hold accountable those who have performance or conduct issues.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Moldova.

- In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In my experience, U.S. diplomats have gotten outside of our embassy walls sufficiently to accomplish our mission, and if confirmed I would stress the importance of getting outside of our Embassy by example. Access to and engagement with local contacts and populations is an important part of our work overseas. Throughout my career, I have participated in public outreach to all parts of society—from students to non-governmental organizations to the media—and will continue to do so.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage embassy staff to spend time engaging with local populations and developing contacts. I will also lead by example to demonstrate to my team that it is important to engage with our local counterparts and to participate in public outreach to provide information about our goals in a country and to learn from our hosts about local conditions.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Moldova? What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The United States enjoys dynamic people-to-people ties with Moldovans through many U.S.-sponsored exchange programs, and Moldovan alumni of U.S. programs have become key leaders in government and civil society. Moldovans are eager to engage with U.S. diplomats and the Embassy has a robust program of public outreach. The media environment remains challenging, as consolidated ownership and disinformation create a narrow space for independent media. The United States has consistently supported the development of independent media and resiliency against disinformation. If confirmed, I would engage in public outreach and work to improve the ability of Moldovan citizens to get their news from reputable media outlets.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on closely coordinating the efforts of Washington- and Chisinau-based public affairs teams to ensure there is a unified approach to highlighting key messages and U.S. policies in Moldova. The small size of the Moldovan media market and the great public interest in the U.S.-Moldova relationship enables the mission to take advantage of the local media platform to convey U.S. priorities and build cross-cultural ties. In addition, the embassy has focused on expanding outreach to amplify U.S. messages for a wider range of audiences outside Chisinau.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SHARON L. CROMER BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. President Adama Barrow has reneged on his promise to serve a three-year term, declaring his intention to stand for reelection in a presidential poll scheduled for December 4 of this year. In addition, his party has blocked the approval of a new constitution, which would have established presidential term limits, and he reportedly formed a political alliance with the party of his predecessor, Yahya Jammeh, whose term in office was characterized by severe political repression and human rights abuses.

- What are the prospects for credible elections in the face of what appears to be Barrow's backsliding relative to democracy?

Answer. Presidential elections in December 2021 will be a critical benchmark. The Government is encouraging free, fair, and transparent election campaigns in what could be the first election without government interference and intimidation in a generation. Credible ballot counting will be essential. Both the ruling party and main opposition party were responsible for blocking the constitutional referendum. That said, President Barrow's recent comments about closing down space for the opposition to operate are troubling. For the December 2021 presidential election, I understand the U.S. election observation mission will work in concert with our like-minded partners to ensure that electoral authorities are accountable to the public and that any attempt to improperly alter the election's outcome will be detected and publicized.

Question. What are the most significant actions the U.S. can do in support of a sustainable democratic transition?

Answer. Gambian democracy is still in its infancy and its steps forward are still unsteady. It will take the country significant time to put in place the institutions needed to create a vibrant democracy. The amended Constitution should be put to a referendum, the National Assembly needs to fulfill its legislative role, and the courts must address the backlog of cases which delays prisoners from getting a fair trial. If given the opportunity to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia, I will use my experience as a Mission Director and senior leadership positions at USAID headquarters to help Gambians build a truly democratic state and to advance country owned, led and sustained development that improves the lives and well-being of Gambians.

Question. What steps will you take, if confirmed, to support a lasting transition to democracy?

Answer. The courageous decision of Gambians to vote out of office the increasingly authoritarian and dictatorial former president was successful in large part due to an intervention led by the democracies of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Global democracy and governance indicators show that The Gambia is making modest progress but is still a fledgling democracy emerging from 22 years of under-investment in democratic governance and the rule of law. If confirmed, I will advocate for reforms to create a firm foundation for a transparent, democratic, and accountable system of governance. Presidential elections in December 2021 will be a critical benchmark for the democratic trajectory of the West Africa region.

The Gambia is on the Tier 2 Watch List according to the State Department's 2020 annual Trafficking in Person's Report. According to the report, "the government did not convict a trafficker for the third consecutive year, victim services remained inadequate overall, and some law enforcement officers allegedly requested bribes to register trafficking complaints."

Question. What programs and activities is the U.S. supporting to help the Gambia improve the conviction rate for traffickers and support trafficking victims?

Answer. The State Department continues to engage diplomatically and programmatically on combating human trafficking in The Gambia. In 2019, the TIP Office awarded \$750,000 to the International Organization of Migration (IOM) to work with three existing One Stop Centers for victims of gender-based violence and train staff to screen for and provide comprehensive services to victims of trafficking. The project also aims to strengthen the National Anti-Trafficking Task Force to coordinate the Government's anti-trafficking response. Additionally, IOM provides training to criminal justice practitioners on conducting proactive investigations and identifying trafficking. If confirmed, I will continue to support this important work.

Question. What U.S. assistance programs and activities help combat police corruption?

Answer. Corruption is a significant and growing problem in The Gambia. Police commonly proposition citizens for bribes at checkpoints. Unfortunately, the Department of State does not have any programming that directly addresses police corruption in The Gambia. However, the Department is aware of the harmful effect of corruption in the public sector, including in the criminal justice sector, and is considering opportunities to work with police, special investigators, and judicial actors to reduce corruption. If confirmed, I will increase engagement with my Gambian counterparts and anticorruption leaders to fight against corruption in all of its forms. I will also enlist the full resources of the Department of State's anticorruption teams and other USG resources to support these efforts.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. While I was USAID Mission Director in Tanzania in 2016, the Government raided the offices of a USAID implementing partner, broke into a USAID financed warehouse, confiscated commodities, arrested Implementing Partner employees who were providing HIV services, and demanded the confidential names of beneficiaries perceived to be homosexual. The beneficiaries feared for their lives and went into hiding, suspending provision of their life-saving HIV/AIDS care and treatment. We resolved the matter by addressing it as a public health and human rights issue. I deployed staff to meet secretly with beneficiaries to ensure their safety and collect evidence from their experiences to inform security and programmatic actions. I made the difficult decision to temporarily close outreach services for the safety of our implementing partners and beneficiaries. I engaged in quiet diplomacy with champions in the Ministry of Health who influenced decisions behind the scenes. Through these efforts, my USAID/Tanzania staff and I protected the safety of Tanzanians, reinstated needed HIV/AIDS services, and upheld American values.

As Mission Director in Ghana, I guided my democracy staff to make an award to a local partner to conduct a pre-election survey of Ghanaians' impressions of the upcoming December 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections. The survey showed that Ghanaians had considerable confidence in the upcoming election process and youth were positively engaged in the political process. The widely disseminated survey results were used to counter heated political rhetoric about the lack of confidence in elections and Ghana's security forces. In meetings arranged by the U.S. Ambassador with the top political party representatives, I advocated for party leaders to publicly commit to nonviolence by signing a Peace Accord brokered by civil society. The leading Presidential candidates agreed to do so, and the December 2020 elections were free and fair, and held peacefully.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Republic of the Gambia? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. The Gambia transitioned to democracy in 2017 after 22 years of dictatorship. As a fledgling democracy The Gambia faces challenges in implementing a democratic system, but global democracy and governance indicators show that The Gambia is making modest progress rather than backsliding. Presidential elections in December 2021 will be a critical benchmark. The Government is encouraging free, fair, and transparent election campaigns in what will be the first election without government interference and intimidation in a generation. Credible ballot counting will be essential. President Barrow has made troubling comments about closing down space for the opposition to operate. The Truth, Reconciliation, Reparations Commission (TRCC) has set the stage for accountability and transitional justice, but the Government must take the necessary action to implement those recommendations and hold accountable those most responsible for violations and abuses of human rights.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Republic of the Gambia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, advancing democratic governance and principles in The Gambia will be a key priority. I will call on political parties across the spectrum to respect the results of the presidential election. I will work to ensure that opposition activities are not unlawfully curtailed.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, supporting democracy and governance will be my top priority. USAID just launched a multi-year Promoting Rights and Justice initiative to support justice sector reform with a current value of over \$7 million, and the MCC Board just approved a Threshold Program valued at \$25 million. If confirmed, I will prioritize assistance for capacity building in the legislature and the justice sector and for electoral system reform.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Republic of the Gambia? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Throughout the course of my career, I have worked tirelessly to promote respect for human rights and achieved goals through partnership with civil society groups and NGOs. If confirmed, I will strengthen and build on our existing relationships and look to form new relationships with worthy organizations. I will engage closely with civil society organizations and NGOs to strengthen their capacity and will call on the Government to work together with these groups to build a better, fairer, and more just country.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to strengthening the relationships our mission has built with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. I will strive to support the efforts of these figures and parties to protect the inclusive political environment in The Gambia, including their efforts to advance electoral reform and put the draft constitution to a referendum. I will urge the Government to respect the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly of all political actors, even those who do not agree with the Government. Through public statements, small grants and other programming, and direct engagement, I will advocate for a political environment that is inclusive of women, youth, minorities, and those who might otherwise be marginalized.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Republic of the Gambia on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Republic of the Gambia?

Answer. The power of a free press to hold government to account, to expose corruption and malfeasance, and to investigate allegations of violations and abuses of human rights cannot be understated. Fortunately, the Government of The Gambia is not currently engaged in undermining the Gambian press, but we must remain vigilant. If confirmed, my Embassy team and I will meet regularly with independent, local press and engage with the Gambian Government on issues of press freedom.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. After 22 years of dictatorship, democracy and the democratic process are still developing in The Gambia and the country is particularly vulnerable to the destructive effects of disinformation and propaganda. If confirmed, I will continue current engagement and promote new engagement with government and opposition groups, the press, and civil society organizations to counter disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in The Gambia, including through public statements and Embassy social media platforms.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Republic of the Gambia on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Organized labor groups, including unions, are an important element of protecting and promoting the welfare of workers. If confirmed, I will commit to actively engage with the Government of The Gambia on the right of workers to exercise freedom of association, including to form and join independent trade unions, and speak out against incidents when this freedom is restricted.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Republic of the Gambia, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. Throughout my career, protection and promotion of respect for human rights has been one of my top priorities. If confirmed, I fully commit to using all available methods to promote and defend the human rights and dignity of all Gambians, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.?

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Republic of the Gambia?

Answer. A large majority of Gambian citizens view same-sex conduct as contradictory to their values. Faith organizations and media are unsupportive of members of the LGBTQI+ community and oppose any measure to recognize members of the LGBTQI+ community as legitimate or worthy of protection. Same-sex sexual conduct is criminalized in The Gambia. Both the Barrow administration and those campaigning for president have stated that “homosexuality is a non-issue in The Gambia” and decriminalization is neither needed nor a possibility. Due to the cultural and political environment, LGBTQI+ persons are significantly marginalized in The Gambia. The LGBTQI+ community has specifically requested that Western diplomatic missions not make their situation a highly visible aspect of our engagement specifically because it puts them at risk and undermines their own quiet efforts to change minds and attitudes among their fellow Gambians.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Republic of the Gambia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to lead the U.S. Government’s efforts to encourage change—especially decriminalization—while ensuring our efforts do not put at risk those we seek to help. I will ensure that members of the LGBTQI+ community are aware of our strong support for their dignity, for their human rights, and for their full inclusion in Gambian society and look for ways to support steps to realize this important goal.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to the Gambia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work together with the State Department’s Bureau of Legislative Affairs to respond promptly to all appropriate requests for information and briefings for members of Congress and their staff and to offer such briefings whenever I am in Washington or remotely from Post.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SHARON L. CROMER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Given recent challenges to democracy in West Africa, including 4 coups in the last year, what are the regional implications for The Gambia’s continued democratic development?

Answer. The courageous decision of Gambians to vote out of office the increasingly authoritarian and dictatorial former president was successful in large part due to an intervention led by the democracies of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Global democracy and governance indicators show that The Gambia is making modest progress but is still a fledgling democracy emerging from 22 years of under-investment in democratic governance and the rule of law. If confirmed, I will advocate for reforms to create a firm foundation for a transparent, democratic, and accountable system of governance. Presidential elections in December 2021 will be a critical benchmark for the democratic trajectory of the West Africa region.

Question. Do you believe it is the sign of a healthy democracy when a duly elected government, in consultation with its citizens, extends the term of office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power? If confirmed, how would you respond to the Gambia doing something like this?

Answer. While every country retains the right to make constitutional changes, the United States government has long opposed any constitutional changes designed to favor incumbent elected leaders or the extension of an incumbent’s term in office. I believe that regular, democratic, and peaceful transitions of power yield more accountability, help build and maintain stronger institutions, and engender less corruption. According to a recent Afrobarometer survey, an overwhelming majority of Gambian citizens strongly favor term limits on the office of the President. If confirmed, I will speak out publicly against any attempt to alter the constitution or extend term limits against the will of The Gambian people.

Question. From your perspective, what should be the top priorities for US policy toward The Gambia?

Answer. Beyond serving and protecting American citizens, our key policy priorities include strengthening The Gambia's democratic institutions, encouraging good governance including supporting The Gambia's own justice sector reform initiatives and efforts to hold accountable those most responsible for the widespread violations of human rights during the Jammeh era, strengthening the capacity of Civil Society and The Gambian legislature to constructively exercise their constitutional authorities, and encouraging economic growth. If confirmed, I will continue to promote inclusive country-led development and enhance U.S. influence in the face of strategic competition. Each of these priorities furthers U.S. interests by promoting regional stability, limiting our strategic competitors' expansion, and creating new markets for U.S. goods.

Question. In your opinion, is The Gambia a good target for increased U.S. investment? If yes, how will you support increased U.S. trade and investment with The Gambia as ambassador, if confirmed?

Answer. Investors in The Gambia face multiple challenges: a small market, weak institutions, poor infrastructure, inadequate electrical supply, high tax burden on formal enterprises, corruption, and bureaucratic hurdles. Despite these challenges, U.S. companies are market leaders in telecommunications, agriculture, and health care in The Gambia, and other opportunities exist. If confirmed, I will ensure the Mission maintains close contact with the small number of U.S. businesses in The Gambia, advises firms in the United States seeking to enter the Gambian market, and coordinates with the Foreign Commercial Service to publicize public tenders of interest to American companies.

Question. In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled "The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China." The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively. In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in the Gambia and counter the malign influence of China?

Answer. The Gambia's relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) is defined by transactional and opaque decision making, with The Gambia providing access to natural resources in exchange for Beijing's provision of infrastructure development. PRC companies and labor are generally utilized, undermining Gambian companies and the Gambian labor force. The country's interaction with most international partners is based on financial assistance: the government often acts in direct response to requirements set forth as conditions for continued or increased aid. The EU's regular infusion of millions of Euros in direct budgetary support gives it significant leverage in The Gambia. The recent signing of a Development Objective Agreement to expand USAID operations in country and the unanimous approval of a MCC Threshold Program can help to cement the United States as a partner of choice.

Question. How will you work to attract U.S. investment opportunities to the Gambia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will maintain close contact with the small number of U.S. businesses in The Gambia, regularly advise firms in the United States seeking to enter the Gambian market, work with the American Chamber of Commerce in The Gambia, and coordinate with the Foreign Commercial Service to publicize public tenders of interest to American companies.

Question. What particular insights and areas of expertise do you envision bringing to the role of US Ambassador to The Gambia given your significant experience with USAID, including having served as USAID Mission Director four times in Africa?

Answer. My experience working in fragile democracies, such as Indonesia after the downfall of President Suharto, leads me to believe that after 22 years of authoritarian rule which ended in January 2017, the Gambian government is still in its infancy and its steps toward democracy are unsteady. It will take the country significant time to put in place the infrastructure needed to create a vibrant democracy. The Constitution should be amended, the National Assembly needs to fulfill its legislative role, and the courts must address the backlog of cases which delays prisoners from getting a fair trial. If given the opportunity to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia, I will use my experience as a Mission Director and senior leadership positions at USAID headquarters to help Gambians build a truly democratic state, advance country owned, led and sustained development that improves the lives and well-being of Gambians, and promote an invest-

ment climate where both U.S. and Gambian enterprises thrive and two-way trade between our countries create good jobs and economic prosperity.

Question. How will you prioritize U.S. democracy and governance assistance to support the Gambia's ongoing democratic transition?

Answer. USAID just launched a multi-year Promoting Rights and Justice initiative to support justice sector reform with a current value of over \$7 million, and the MCC Board just approved a Threshold Program valued at \$25 million. If confirmed, I will prioritize assistance for capacity building in the legislature and the justice sector and for electoral system reform.

Question. What are the most urgent priorities for the Gambia in its effort to build a sustainable democracy?

Answer. While the Barrow government has shown admirable support for democratic norms leading to remarkable increases in rankings in press freedoms and human rights, essential reforms remain incomplete. Many core promises of Barrow's 2016 campaign remain unfulfilled. The statutory framework exploited by former president Jammeh remains in place, and The Gambian government must renew its focus on eliminating the mechanisms that supported his abuses. Key pieces of legislation, especially anticorruption measures and reforms of the criminal code, remain pending. Corruption is a particularly potent threat to democratic reform. Gambians perceive the Barrow government as increasingly plagued by both high-level and small-scale corruption, a problem that requires both urgent attention and a robust statutory framework. The Presidential election scheduled for December 2021 must be free and fair, electoral processes must be transparent, and all parties must abide by the results. If confirmed, I will advocate for a respect for human rights, the rule of law, accountability, access to justice, adherence to constitutionally-mandated term limits, and strong democratic institutions as fundamental to a country's peace and prosperity.

Question. How can the United States best use the tools it has to hold corrupt Gambian officials accountable for corrupt behavior? If confirmed, what would be your approach in using those tools?

Answer. There are no quick fixes to corruption in The Gambia, but passing comprehensive anti-corruption legislation is a necessary first step. Surveys of the Gambian public show their steadily worsening view of the government's handling of corruption, and urgent action is needed. Existing laws requiring government officials to disclose their assets are weak, unenforced, and insufficient. If confirmed, I will aggressively push the Gambian government to pass this legislation, work with civil society organizations shining a light the problem, and support the Gambians who are tirelessly working to root out corruption. I will also enlist the full resources of the Department of State's anticorruption teams and other U.S. government resources to supports these efforts.

Question. Can you provide your view on supporting U.S. funded, independent international election observation missions?

Answer. Independent monitoring efforts are essential to the U.S. objective of supporting free and fair elections, and transparent election processes in The Gambia. For the December 2021 presidential election, I understand the U.S. observation mission will work in concert with our like-minded partners to make clear to Gambian authorities that they are accountable to the public and that attempts to improperly alter the election's outcome will be detected and publicized.

Question. Would you support a U.S. funded, independent international election observation mission for Gambia's next general election?

Answer. If confirmed, I would carefully consider how U.S. support to observation efforts can contribute to free and fair electoral processes in The Gambia. For the December 2021 elections, U.S. diplomats will be on the ground to determine if the government follows through on their obligations to conduct a free and fair election that reflects the will of the people. In addition, recipients of U.S. grant funds will dispatch local observers to every polling place in the country to observe the voting process and provide regular reports. Taken together, the effort will give the United States a comprehensive view of this critical juncture in The Gambia's democratic development.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Embassy Banjul?

Answer. Respecting this nomination process, I have not engaged directly with Embassy/Banjul staff. However, I understand morale is high despite the enormous workload.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Embassy Banjul?

Answer. Embassy Banjul is a small mission. There are only 12 U.S. Direct Hires which often means that staff must assume multiple roles and cover for colleagues who are on leave or away from Post, or when there are staffing gaps due to the assignment process. I understand that staff members, American and Gambian alike, are knowledgeable, collegial, and enthusiastic about their work. If confirmed, I intend to nurture that enthusiasm by identifying the talent in each individual and growing that talent, ensuring the well-being of staff members and their families, and creating a work environment that promotes respect for everyone and celebrates our teamwork and achievements large and small.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Embassy Banjul?

Answer. If confirmed, I will create a unified “one team” approach in Embassy Banjul which draws on the expertise and talents of staff assigned to Embassy Banjul and also includes officers from USAID, Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture and other agencies who support Banjul from Embassies in Dakar and Accra, as well as Washington. Everyone who supports the mission’s integrated country strategy must feel welcomed and supported as vital member of Banjul’s team. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. As a senior leader, I have always believed that it is my duty and responsibility to mentor and sponsor staff to make sure they grow professionally, feel appreciated and supported, and are given opportunities to take on new responsibilities and contribute to U.S. goals. For the past eight years, I have devoted each Friday to mentoring staff. I mentor staff by delegating tasks, encouraging questions and brainstorming, providing guidance, as needed, and welcoming new ideas. I never assume that I have all the answers. I communicate regularly and consult broadly, seeking out different perspectives. I lead quarterly town halls and regularly communicate via email to the entire staff on current topics. When the time comes to make a decision, I don’t hesitate to do so. When problems arise, I expect to be notified promptly so we can resolve them together rather than let them fester. I place staff wellbeing and creating a respectful working environment above all else. To accomplish this, family must come first. It is important to me to pause, acknowledge and celebrate successes both big and small and reward exceptional performance.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates in public or private. Such action is not only unkind and disrespectful, but also abusive and ineffective.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with deputy chief of mission?

Answer. The relationship between the chief of mission (COM) and the deputy chief of mission (DCM) is extremely important. The DCM serves as a trusted advisor to the COM. In this respect, trust must be built and maintained between the two for the smooth operation of the mission and the well-being of the entire staff. I intend to include the DCM in all internal meetings and keep him/her abreast of all external affairs.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. The deputy chief of mission is the chief of staff, responsible for the day-to-day management of the mission. All State Department section heads will report to the DCM. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative.

Question. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. It is extremely important for managers to provide accurate and constructive performance feedback to employees on a regular basis. I check in with staff frequently and offer mentoring sessions if they have any concerns about their performance or careers. I conduct formal performance feedback with direct reports on a

quarterly basis. When performance appears to be lacking, I provide immediate feedback in private and work with the employee to find ways to improve their performance. I recognize accomplishments through awards and public recognition.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. I believe that it is the responsibility of leaders to create leaders, not followers. Nurturing leadership requires clear, accurate, and direct feedback tailored to the individual's needs. I am rewarded when staffs grow and take on new roles and responsibilities that advance their careers.

Question. In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the Gambia. To properly execute our jobs, we must travel beyond the boundaries of the capital and engage with stakeholders throughout the country. I understand the Embassy Banjul team leaves the building to meet with local contacts, develop connections in the community, and spread America's message. There is no substitute for in-person connections, and our team relies on those links to accomplish our mission goals. Face-to-face conversations not only supply the information key to the U.S. government's decision-making process, they also provide opportunities to inform and persuade the Gambians who make the country's most important decisions. Developing those relationships consistent with appropriate security measures is a core component of our work, and the reason diplomats are stationed abroad.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. The Gambia is a diverse democracy comprised of countless social, tribal, economic, and cultural groups. If confirmed, I endeavor to meet with representatives of all of them on a regular basis. I will target outreach efforts to broaden and strengthen the country's representative democracy while also developing links to marginalized communities. Public Diplomacy programs are an essential tool to expanding this outreach effort. Exchange programs give the Embassy an unparalleled tool to influence key members of diverse communities. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure that no group is overlooked, and that the rights of members of Gambian minority groups are respected. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

Question. What is the public diplomacy environment like in The Gambia?

Answer. In general, the Gambian people view the United States positively, based on connections with the Gambian diaspora in the United States; their appreciation for U.S. assistance, and U.S. popular culture; and a belief in our shared values of democracy, security, prosperity, and respect for human rights. If confirmed I will use public diplomacy resources to promote a favorable view of the United States and its foreign policy, advance democratic values, and encourage inclusive economic growth. I will focus the Public Affairs Section on youth and emerging voices, furnishing them with the tools needed to become entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, and advocates for democracy and good governance.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Payment for positive press is rampant in the Gambia, causing a reduced level of trust in the media. Capacity among journalists is low. If confirmed, I will support efforts to build a free, professional, and independent press.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. In my experience, Posts have latitude to tailor our public messaging to local issues and concerns. If confirmed, our message at Post will be the same as our messaging from Washington: that Americans and Gambians share the same ideals of democracy, religious and social tolerance, good governance, security, and economic prosperity. I will ensure that our public diplomacy posture continues to play a key role in promoting our many shared values and America's generous financial assistance and support across the range of issues.

Question. In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, The Gambia was identified again as Tier 2 Watch List due to lack of resources and ongoing failure to prosecute

traffickers. How will you work with the Gambian authorities to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Although The Gambia did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, it is making efforts to do so. Gambian courts have some recent success in convicting trafficking cases, but remain challenged by lack of resources, inadequate space for remanded prisoners, defendants absconding while on bail, and victims reluctant to testify or provide evidence due to a cultural emphasis on forgiveness or fear of retaliation. While the government is making progress towards identifying victims among vulnerable populations, such as through the adoption of a new national referral mechanism, additional improvements are needed. If confirmed, I will work with the Gambian government to address the prioritized recommendations in the 2021 TIP Report.

Question. In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, The Gambia was identified as generally tolerant of religious freedom. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is a key U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department continues to closely monitor the religious freedom situation in The Gambia. The Gambia is generally tolerant of religious freedom and members of the majority Muslim population are largely accepting of members of the Christian minority. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to emphasize the importance of continued religious tolerance and to address religious freedom concerns in The Gambia.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you advocate for former Gambian president Yahya Jammeh to personally face justice for the gross violations of human rights and corruption committed while president?

Answer. The Truth, Reconciliation, Reparations Commission (TRRC), established to investigate and publicize the wrongs committed during Jammeh's rule, has concluded and should issue its final report soon. A newly created National Human Rights Commission is operating with significant and notable independence. Yahya Jammeh should face justice for the crimes he allegedly committed. The United States can help through building capacity in the judiciary and publicly supporting the efforts of the TRRC, but it is up to the Gambian people and courts to decide the fate of the former dictator.

Question. How do you envision the United States supporting the implementation of Gambia's Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) report once it is released to the public? If confirmed as ambassador, how would you personally prioritize the report's implementation?

Answer. The TRRC is essential to The Gambia's national healing process after decades of nondemocratic rule characterized by allegations of human rights violations and abuses and lack of respect for human rights. The Commission has set the stage for accountability and transitional justice, but much hard work remains. The country has to make hard choices to hold former officials accountable and obtain justice for victims. If confirmed, I will press the government to hold accountable those responsible for the egregious crimes, violations and abuses of human rights, and affronts to dignity testified to at the Commission. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, The Gambia was identified as having some serious human rights concerns, like the use of forced disappearances, attacks on freedom of expression, and a climate of impunity.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. After the election of President Adama Barrow in 2016, the new government quickly recognized and moved to respect Gambians' human rights. This included an end to arbitrary detention, political persecution, and censorship. The Gambia is moving in the right direction, but there is still work to be done. If confirmed, I will press the Government of The Gambia to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses thoroughly and transparently, and to hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations and abuses.

Question. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Throughout the course of my career, I have worked tirelessly to promote respect for human rights and achieved goals through partnership with civil society groups and NGOs. If confirmed, I will strengthen and build on our existing relationships and look to form new relationships with worthy organizations. I will engage

closely with civil society organizations and NGOs to strengthen their capacity and will call on the Government to work together with these groups to build a better, fairer, and more just Gambia that respects the rights of all.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. VIRGINIA E. PALMER BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. According to the State Department 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices “Impunity remained a significant problem in the Ghana Police Service. Corruption, brutality, poor training, lack of oversight, and an overburdened judicial system contributed to impunity. Police often failed to respond to reports of abuses and, in many instances, did not act unless complainants paid for police transportation and other operating expenses.” What is your understanding of the level of police corruption in Ghana?

Answer. My understanding of the level of police corruption in Ghana is that it remains a significant problem and is fueled by impunity, poor training, lack of oversight, and an overburdened judicial system.

Question. Are there U.S. funded programs aimed at addressing police corruption?

Answer. The Department of State does not have any programming that directly addresses police corruption in Ghana. However, the Department is aware of the harmful effect of corruption in the public sector, including in the criminal justice sector, and is considering opportunities to work with police, special investigators, and judicial actors to reduce corruption.

Question. How, if confirmed, will you engage on the issue of police corruption?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize working with our like-minded partners and the Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics Law Enforcement to identify opportunities to create programming that can address police corruption while empowering Ghana’s professional police officers.

Question. The Committee to Protect Journalists has reported on a number of worrying cases of the detention, harassment and abuse of a number of journalists in 2021, and a call from a ruling party politician that a journalist to be targeted for attack. Are media freedoms in jeopardy in Ghana?

Answer. Ghana enjoys a vibrant and free media, with over 350 radio stations, more than 120 television operators on air, and approximately 250 newspaper and magazine publications, plus active and growing internet use and social media presence. Freedom of speech and expression are enshrined in Ghana’s constitution. There have been a few high-profile cases of violence and threats of violence against journalists. The Government often responds appropriately to protect freedom of the press, but some of these threats have come after stories alleging official corruption. Exchange and training programs for journalists, such as fact-checking, data journalism, and even journalism ethics, are welcomed and in demand across Ghana. If confirmed, I commit to doing all I can to ensure these freedoms are protected and enhanced in Ghana.

Question. Are attacks on the media indicative of broader threats to the right of individuals to criticize the Government?

Answer. Freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly, and other fundamental freedoms are enshrined in Ghana’s constitution. Although there are some reports of violence and threats of violence, or unjustified arrests or prosecution against journalists, they are generally free to be critical of the Government without fear of reprisal.

Question. What steps will you take, if confirmed, to support media freedoms in Ghana?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support media freedom by encouraging the Ghanaian Government to appropriately protect freedom of the press by thoroughly investigating cases of violence, threats of violence, unjustified arrests, and prosecution of journalists. I will also continue programs to enhance the professionalism and expertise of Ghana’s journalists.

Democracy & Human Rights

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I have had the honor to work on democracy and governance issues for much of my 35-year career. I served as the Labor Officer in the PRC immediately after the Tian An Men massacres in 1989, for example, and drafted the first reporting on exports made from Chinese prison labor. I was the first Western diplomat granted access to several Chinese prisons, providing important information for human rights reporting and U.S. customs actions to ensure U.S. workers were not disadvantaged. For this work, I received a Meritorious Honor Award and runner up for the Department's 1991 Labor Officer of the Year.

In Zimbabwe from 1993-1997, I ran the Democracy and Human Rights Fund that provided project financing to ZimRights and the Legal Resources Foundation and seed money to establish the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Southern African Human Rights Research, and Documentation Trust and other groups. These groups formed the core of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network which challenged Robert Mugabe's human rights and electoral abuses from 2000-2016. I established the first Human Rights Donor Coordination Group to leverage U.S. democracy and human rights resources and avoid duplication. To address rampant child abuse and rape, I brought together officials from the Zimbabwe police, Attorney General's office, and human rights organizations, which had not previously cooperated, to draft legislation and change arrest procedures to establish the first child-friendly courts, receiving Meritorious and Superior Honor Awards for this work.

In Hong Kong, I drafted Human Rights Reports for Hong Kong and Macau and helped acquire Public Interest Benefit Parole for Chinese Christians persecuted for their beliefs but unable to apply for refugee status because they could not leave the PRC. That work contributed to better U.S. understanding of the House Church movement in the PRC.

In Vietnam, I was the Front Office's principal interlocutor with the Ministry of Public Security on human rights issues and met regularly with dissidents under house arrest or in prison. After one such visit (and lots of work from Washington and Embassy teams) Tran Khai Thanh was released from prison and allowed to travel to the United States.

In Malawi, I represented the United States on the U.N.-led Election Support Network and oversaw U.S. Government support for national elections, including an NDI-run Parallel Voter Tabulation, support for Malawi police and military providing security for the election, and U.S. participation in international election monitoring efforts. I spoke out frequently on the need for Malawi to respect the human rights of all, including LGBTQ persons. I hosted multiple gatherings of faith leaders to promote religious tolerance and respect for the human rights of all, including women and girls and LGBTQ persons.

If confirmed, I pledge to continue work to advance democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights in Ghana.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Republic of Ghana? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Ghana is widely considered to be one of the leading democracies on the African continent and generally respects human rights. Continuing problems include reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings by the Government or its agents; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; violence and threats of violence, or unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists; serious acts of corruption; violence against women; and existence of the worst forms of child labor. Although the Ghanaian Government has taken steps to prosecute and punish officials who commit human rights violations or abuses, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the Government, impunity remains a problem.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Republic of Ghana? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. Our close partnership with Ghana spans more than 60 years and is rooted in our shared commitment to democracy and human rights for all, peace and security, and economic opportunity and prosperity. Ghana's long democratic tradition, robust media, religious tolerance, and strong civil society make it a leader in West Africa and a model for the continent. With democratic backsliding in the region, Ghana's example and leadership is ever more important.

Strengthening democracy and governance institutions are essential to regional stability and inclusive economic growth. Potential impediments include the culture

of corruption, slow bureaucratic processes, and a lack of resources. If confirmed, I will continue aggressive programs to strengthen Ghana's anti-corruption and electoral institutions and increase Ghanaian women's participation in political life.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, combatting corruption and addressing issues related to adherence to contractual commitments will be among my top priorities. Integration of U.S. Government programs, particularly those dealing with inclusive economic growth, accountability and proper delivery of government services to Ghanaian citizens, is key to success of these efforts. I will also aggressively pursue programs to end trafficking and child labor.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Republic of Ghana? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. I will. The promotion of respect for human rights is a central pillar of our relations with Ghana. If confirmed, I will strengthen relationships with civil society leaders and human rights advocates in Ghana, the United States and internationally. I will work, where possible in partnership with diplomatic counterparts, to proactively counter any efforts to close the space for NGOs and civil society to operate, including via legal or regulatory measures.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meeting with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties and to advocating for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties. To encourage genuine political competition, I will work to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones across the political spectrum.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Republic of Ghana on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Republic of Ghana?

Answer. Freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly, and other fundamental freedoms are enshrined in Ghana's constitution. Ghana has over 350 radio stations, more than 120 television operators on air, and approximately 250 newspaper and magazine publications. If confirmed, I will lead Embassy engagement to expand Ghana's vibrant and free media. I also commit to meeting regularly with independent and local press in Ghana.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the Embassy's ongoing engagements with civil society and government counterparts to promote the importance of countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Republic of Ghana on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to actively engage with Ghana on the right of workers to exercise freedom of association, including to form and join independent trade unions, and call out incidents when this right is restricted.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Republic of Ghana, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to using my position to defend human rights and the dignity of all Ghanaians, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Republic of Ghana?

Answer. In Ghana, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer face increasing anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric and actions that threaten the human rights of members of that community. Ghana's Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of assembly to all Ghanaians, not just to certain groups. These freedoms are foundational to our two democracies and must be vigorously defended. Failure to do so creates serious public order and public health problems.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Republic of Ghana?

Answer. I am deeply concerned about the evolving situation around the LGBTQI+ community in Ghana. In his video address to the AU, President Biden affirmed the United States policy to promote respect for the human rights of all individuals, including women and girls, LGBTQI+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and persons of every ethnic background, faith, and heritage.

If confirmed, I will urge national leaders in Ghana to uphold protections provide in Ghana's constitution for all individuals, consistent with its human rights obligations and commitments. I will work with diplomatic counterparts and allies in civil society and the LGBTQI+ community to address the uptick in hateful rhetoric and intimidation tactics.

Congressional Consultations

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Ghana?

Answer. Yes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. VIRGINIA E. PALMER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In your opinion, what are the most significant domestic and external threats Ghana faces?

Answer. Ghana and its neighbors confront significant threats from violent extremists from the north, and piracy and illegal fishing in the Gulf of Guinea. Domestically, the COVID pandemic, corruption, unemployment, burdensome fiscal deficits and debt, an uptick in hateful rhetoric and actions against members of the LGBTQI+ community pose threats to Ghana's development goals and role as democratic model.

Question. In your opinion, how should we strengthen our partnership with Ghana on counterterrorism operations in the region?

Answer. Ghana is well-respected for its proactive involvement and positive leadership on security issues throughout West Africa. If confirmed, I will support Ghana's regional leadership role and will strengthen our partnership with Ghana to counter violent extremism by continuing integrated U.S. programs on inclusive economic development, rule of law strengthening, and security and law enforcement cooperation.

Question. Where are the opportunities to do more with Ghana to counter threats in littoral West Africa?

Answer. Ghana is internationally recognized for its commitment to advancing peace on the continent, and around the world, through participation in U.N. and AU peacekeeping missions. Ghana ranks among the top ten countries worldwide for its contributions to peacekeeping operations. Currently, Ghana is supporting U.N. peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Lebanon, and Mali.

Opportunities to do more with Ghana to counter threats in littoral West Africa include encouraging Ghana to support additional U.N. missions in the region as those environments evolve, as well as fortifying the Department of State's security assistance provided to Ghana's military and police forces through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) accounts. The Accra Initiative provides an important opportunity for locally-developed regional cooperation to counter violent extremism and bolster regional security. Ghana also plays an important role, as a model of democratic practice and through its leadership of ECOWAS, to counter democratic backsliding in the region.

Question. If confirmed as ambassador, how can you, and the U.S. more broadly, continue to build Ghana's role as an active and constructive actor in West African regional affairs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Ghana as it chairs the Economic Community of West African States, serves on the U.N. Security Council, and hosts the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement—roles that build Ghana's profile as an active and constructive actor in West African regional affairs. In addition, I will prioritize programs like the International Police Peacekeeping Operations Support program, through which the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) provides training and assistance to the Ghana Police Service to improve the capacity of Formed Police Units and individual police officers deployed to U.N. peacekeeping missions.

Question. Do you believe the United States should support robust democracy and governance assistance programs in comparatively stronger African democracies like Ghana? If so, what should be the strategic focus for these efforts?

Answer. Yes. Ghana's long democratic tradition, robust media, religious tolerance, and strong civil society make it a leader in West Africa and a model for the continent. Supporting anti-corruption efforts, promoting respect for human rights and strengthening the rule of law are important to achieving all of our security and economic goals in Ghana. With democratic backsliding in the region, strategically supporting Ghana's leadership and example of robust democracy and governance is ever more important and, if I am confirmed, will remain the focus of assistance programming efforts.

Question. Do you believe it is the sign of a healthy democracy when a duly elected government, in consultation with its citizens, extends the term of office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power? If confirmed, how would you respond to Ghana doing something like this?

Answer. Every country has the right to make constitutional changes as long as they are made through a consultative and broad process that includes all stakeholders, including civil society and opposition parties. However, constitutional changes designed to favor incumbents or extend terms erode democratic principles. If confirmed, I will advocate for regular, democratic transitions of power, which yield more accountability, stronger institutions, and less corruption.

Question. Can you provide your view on supporting U.S. funded, independent international election observation missions?

Answer. Promoting democracy and human rights has long served as the basis of American foreign policy. Election observation can promote public participation, encourage transparency and public confidence in the electoral process, and mitigate the potential for electoral violence. Both U.S. Mission observers and independent observation missions help deter fraud at polling stations and facilitate the collection of critical information on conditions. To ensure real democratic gains, it is important that our elections work not focus solely on Election Day, but also address institutional or conduct problems in the lead up to elections.

Question. Would you support a U.S. funded, independent international election observation mission for Ghana's next general election?

Answer. If confirmed, I would carefully consider how U.S. support to observation efforts can contribute to free and fair elections, and transparent electoral processes in Ghana.

Question. Ghana made a modest improvement from previous years in Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index. How can the United States best support Ghana in its fight to curb corruption in government and the private sector?

Answer. Changing the culture of corruption in Ghana is essential for attracting more foreign investment, promoting sustainable, inclusive economic growth, and eliminate Ghana's dependence on foreign assistance. The United States can best support Ghana in its fight to curb corruption in government and the private sector by encouraging the Ghanaian Government to reinforce existing anti-corruption institutions like the Office of the Special Prosecutor, promote transparency, and enforce anti-corruption laws. If confirmed, I will utilize all available tools and programs, including visa restrictions, to support Ghanaian efforts to combat corruption.

Question. How can the United States best use the tools it has to hold Ghanaian officials accountable for corrupt behavior? If confirmed, what would be your approach in using those tools?

Answer. Driven by a combination of corrupt interest and political expediency, Ghana's adherence to contractual commitments has been inadequate and is concerning for U.S. and other foreign companies. If confirmed, I utilize all available tools and programs, including visa restrictions, to support Ghanaian efforts to combat corruption. I will work to strengthen Ghana's accountability institutions, including the Office of the Special Prosecutor.

Question. How can the United States best support Ghana in curbing the corrupt behavior of those companies and government officials of malign foreign actors like China that feed on corrupt governments and business environments?

Answer. Improving anti-corruption institutions, laws and regulations and their implementation is critical to improving Ghana's business environment, achieving Ghana's development goals and curbing the corrupt behavior of malign actors. If confirmed, I will push back on corrupt or coercive practices that damage our interests and those of our Ghanaian partners, including impingement on state sovereignty, economic coercion, and the abusive use of new security technologies.

Question. How is the United States working with Ghana's Government to curb efforts by malign foreign actors seeking to use their country as a hub for propagating disinformation campaigns in the U.S. and other countries? As Ambassador, how will you prioritize this issue with the Ghanaian Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize this issue with the Ghanaian Government by supporting a central part of this effort: exposing malign foreign actors' tactics so that partner and allied governments, civil society organizations, academia, the press, and the international public can conduct further analysis of their own and thereby increase collective resilience to disinformation and propaganda.

Question. How should the United States build on its existing defense and security cooperation with Ghana? Where are the opportunities and the risks?

Answer. The United States should build on its existing defense and security cooperation to help Ghana and its neighbors counter violent extremism, combat transnational crime and strengthen the rule of law. These efforts are most effect when our security and law enforcement cooperation, inclusive economic growth and the rule of law (including anti-corruption) efforts are integrated. Ghana's military is known for its professionalism and is critical to our ability to counter global threats in the sub-region. Fortifying this cooperation poses significant opportunities and few risks.

Question. The instability in the Sahel is now bleeding over into the Littoral states in the Gulf of Guinea. Because of this concern, these coastal countries, led by Ghana, have established the Accra Initiative to build capacity and support a more integrated approach to intelligence gathering and crisis response. Does the U.S. plan to support the Initiative with technical and material assistance. Is it considering bilateral assistance to Ghana to establish the Secretariat?

Answer. The United States has provided bilateral assistance to Ghana to support the Accra Initiative since September 2020 through Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Those efforts help prevent further spread of violence in West Africa. If confirmed, I will engage relevant stakeholders to explore ways the United States can support Ghana and the Accra Initiative address this threat.

Question. Would Ghana be a strong candidate for a bilateral free trade agreement with the United States? If not, why not? If so, why?

Answer. Yes. Bilateral trade exceeded \$1.5 billion in 2020 and with the U.S. recording a trade surplus of \$112 million.

In addition, Ghana hosts the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will modernize and streamline the continent's overall trade and economic systems and create a trading block of 1.3 billion people, creating opportunities for greater commercial ties between the United States and all of Africa.

Question. What is your view on the role of the U.S. Prosper Africa initiative in driving increased trade and investment between the U.S. and Ghana? Do you believe the U.S. should focus more of its efforts vis-a-vis Prosper Africa toward large African U.S. economic partners like Ghana?

Answer. The U.S. Prosper Africa Initiative drives increased trade and investment between the United States and Ghana by bringing together services and resources from across the U.S. Government to empower businesses with market insights, deal support, and solutions to strengthen business climates. Prosper Africa will advance opportunities to build new markets for American products, drive billions of dollars

of investment in Africa, and support thousands of new jobs for both African and American workers.

China and the Indo-Pacific

Question. China is keen to secure the affections of Africa’s next generation of leaders. The Chinese Government claimed in 2019 that Ghana had the highest number of African students studying in China. How do you view such educational exchanges and opportunities playing in projecting “soft power”?

Answer. African countries are our partners in pursuing our shared interests—from security, global health, climate change, democracy, and economic growth. African publics continue to prefer the United States to the PRC, and democratic values to authoritarianism. If confirmed, I will capitalize on this soft power—engaging with youth, promoting exchanges and study in the United States, and promoting American business.

Question. Do you agree or disagree that an increased proportion of Ghanaians attending U.S. colleges and universities would more closely tie the current and future relationship of the country to the U.S.?

Answer. I agree that an increased proportion of Ghanaians attending U.S. colleges and universities would more closely tie the current and future relationship of the country to the United States.

Question. If you agree, what can and should the U.S. do to boost opportunities for Ghanaians to study in the U.S.?

Answer. With a population of 1.3 billion people whose median age is 19 years old, African youth are one of the continent’s most important resources. Expanding existing links and promoting new partnerships at the university level will strengthen Ghana’s educational institutions as instruments of national development—enhancing regional prosperity, security, and stability. Such cooperation also promotes the U.S. value of academic freedom, which is under increasing threat across the world as global competitors expand their own educational programs targeting the continent’s scholars and students. If confirmed, I commit to promoting this important American export and to strengthening academic ties between the U.S and Ghana.

Question. China is one of, if not Ghana’s biggest, trading partner and foreign investment source. While the United States enjoys long-standing and consistently strong relations with Ghana, the country is a leading African buyer of U.S. goods, and there is typically a large U.S. trade surplus with Ghana. Despite this, the U.S. trade and investment relationship lags in comparison to the country’s bilateral trade and investment relationship with China. What should the United States prioritize to improve its bilateral trade and investment relationship generally with Ghana, and in what ways can the U.S. improve American businesses interest and competitiveness to drive greater U.S. investment in Ghana?

Answer. If confirmed, the Embassy team and I will meet the challenge the PRC presents by ensuring that American companies can compete on an even playing field, providing a meaningful alternative to the PRC’s economic approach, and promoting entrepreneurship, and fair practices. I will be a vigorous advocate for American companies and innovation and will ensure U.S. public and private investments continue to support pandemic recovery efforts and Ghana’s journey to self-reliance. If confirmed, I will continue to help Ghana create an enabling environment for inclusive private sector-led growth by facilitating regional trade, improving access to credit, improving agricultural production and market access, enhancing domestic resource mobilization, and improving health and education outcomes.

Question. In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled “The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China.” The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively. In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Ghana and counter the malign influence of China?

Answer. The United States should partner with likeminded countries to counter negative actions and influence of the PRC by calling out and confronting nondemocratic behavior and insisting that all economic actors on the continent adhere to the highest standards of transparency, anti-corruption, debt sustainability, environmental protection, and respect human rights, including labor rights. In addition, Ghana recently expressed an interest in establishing a partnership with NATO. If confirmed, I will encourage Ghana and our NATO allies to advance this partnership, which provides security benefits for NATO and Ghana.

State Department Management and Oversight

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Ghana?

Answer. My understanding is that morale throughout the Mission is strong, motivated by staff's commitment to the important mission of bolstering regional security and countering violent extremism, promoting inclusive economic growth and improving health outcomes. However, staff, particularly Locally Employed (LE) Staff whose families have not been vaccinated, remain very concerned about the risks associated with Ghana's very low vaccination rates and concerned about a full return to in-office work. COVID-19-related travel restrictions limiting opportunities for rest and recuperation and even regional change of scene also have a negative effect on morale.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Ghana?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Ghanaian Government to increase vaccination levels of the Ghanaian public. This will both help us achieve our broader public health goals and allow us to increase in person diplomacy since "diplomacy is a contact sport." I will work to fill vacancies in a timely manner, recruiting diverse staff and ensuring they enjoy opportunities to do fulfilling work and provide policy input. I will also work hard to ensure that Locally Employed Staff salaries (currently negatively affected by rising inflation) remain competitive.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Ghana?

Answer. In general, the best way to create a unified mission is to communicate broadly about what our goals are and successes and lessons learned as we work toward them. That is even more important with COVID-19-induced teleworking inhibiting in person meetings where brainstorming and spontaneous exchanges of information are more free flowing. If confirmed, I will also rely heavily on "thematic" working groups, such as the Law Enforcement Working Group and the Countering Violent Extremism Working Group. These working groups will include law enforcement and security agencies as well as USAID, DoD, and the Embassy Deal Teams, to create synergies and ensure all elements of U.S. national power are used to advance U.S. interests in Ghana and the region.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I am direct and decisive. I welcome collaboration and demand information sharing and respect for others. I am fast and not particularly linear. I believe diplomacy is personal and that my contacts need to believe that I am a credible interlocutor, honest, forthright, and, where possible, helpful.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

Question. What lessons have you learned from your tenure leading Embassy Lilongwe?

Answer. I came to have a stronger belief that our development assistance programs are more effective when they are integrated. For example, production enhancements have little effect if they are not accompanied by improved market access (i.e., it does not help me to produce more tomatoes if I cannot get them to market) and assistance aimed to improve the health and education outcomes of girls and young women pays huge dividends in achieving all our other development goals. I am pleased that Ghana's Integrated Country Development Strategy integrates the Mission's security, inclusive economic growth and rule of law programs.

When Malawi was slow to implement much needed reform of the agriculture sector despite looming famine, I learned that "we cannot want it (reform, good programs, etc.) more than they do;" policy change and development and other programs will be more effective when there is strong local/indigenous demand for them.

I learned very positive lessons about how good, bold ideas can come from unexpected agencies/personnel. For example, our \$90 million project to keep girls in school and break the cycle of HIV transmission from older men to younger girls to boys arose from Peace Corps at an Embassy Adolescent Girls and Young Women Task Force meeting.

Question. How will your management style and approach differ from Embassy Lilongwe?

Answer. With Ghana serving as host to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement Secretariat, Chair of ECOWAS, and member of the U.N. Security Council, if confirmed, I will focus more attention on regional and international issues than I did in Lilongwe.

I will continue to rely on interagency working groups for policy development and operational coordination. Embassy Accra's Country Team is larger and more senior than Lilongwe's. I hope that agency and section heads will have more experience establishing and maintaining accountability measures; I will nonetheless remain attentive to these issues.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with deputy chief of mission?

Answer. I have served twice as Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and know that there is no more important relationship in the Mission. If confirmed, my DCM will be my alter ego. Through regular meetings, scheduled and ad hoc, I will ensure that we are in sync and that the DCM has full input into policy formulation and decision making. Where possible we will divide responsibilities, ensuring that important conclusions or insights from meetings are always shared.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ask the DCM to chair the Emergency Action Committee, Law Enforcement Working Group, and other Interagency Working Groups as required, participating myself when requested/required. I will ensure that the entire Mission understands that the DCM enjoys my full faith and confidence and speaks for me, but that my door is always open if there are issues they do not feel comfortable raising with him/her.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I believe it is important to provide employees with timely, accurate, constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeed in their roles.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in to improve performance and reward high achievers.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Ghana. In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I agree that it is essential for diplomats to get outside of the Embassy to meet with host country officials, thought leaders and the public as well as diplomatic counterparts. This is an essential part of representing the United States and ensuring proper "branding" of our programs, initiatives, and companies. This is even more challenging with COVID-induced telework requirements, but in my experience, U.S. diplomats get outside of the embassy walls enough to fully accomplish their mission.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will utilize all available public diplomacy tools for in-person, virtual and media engagement. I will encourage in-country travel and representation outside of the capital. I would be remiss if I did not note the importance of local staff in shaping and articulating our mission and programs and their important role as interface between American diplomats and local communities.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Ghana?

Answer. Ghana enjoys a vibrant and free media, with over 350 radio stations, more than 120 television operators on air, and approximately 250 newspaper and

magazine publications, plus active and growing internet use and social media presence. Freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly and other fundamental freedoms are enshrined in Ghana's constitution. Although there are some reports of violence and threats of violence, or unjustified arrests or prosecution against journalists, they are generally free to be critical of the Government without fear of reprisal. Ghanaians generally have a positive impression of the United States.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. U.S. diplomats face limited public diplomacy challenges in Ghana. Public Diplomacy exchange programs, like the Mandela Washington Fellowship and Fulbright exchanges are enormously popular and help to create a robust alumni network across the country in various areas of interest.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Post has latitude to tailor our public messaging to local issues and concerns. If confirmed, I will ensure that our public diplomacy posture continues to play a key role in promoting our many shared values and America's generous financial assistance and support across the range of issues.

Human Rights

Question. In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Ghana was identified as Tier 2 due to lack of adequate resourcing for law enforcement as well as a lack of prosecutions of traffickers. How will you work with Ghana authorities to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Ghana has maintained a Tier 2 ranking in the Trafficking in Persons Report since in 2018, indicating significant efforts to combat trafficking. Trafficking within the country is more prevalent than transnational trafficking, and the majority of victims are children subjected to forced labor. Children can fall prey to economic hardships in Ghana, and some are subjected to forced child labor within Ghana in the fishing, cocoa, artisanal gold mining, and agriculture sectors as well as in domestic service, street hawking, begging, potting, and quarrying. Ghanaian girls, and to a lesser extent boys, are also subjected to sex trafficking within Ghana, including in the Central, Volta, and Greater Accra regions.

If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to increase its resources to better train and equip the police force to investigate trafficking cases. I will also encourage the Government to provide appropriate shelters for trafficking victims. I will encourage assistance be provided to organizations working on the front lines to combat human trafficking.

Question. In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Ghana is described as having religious freedom enshrined in the constitution but does lack general understanding of respective religions in civil society. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is a U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department continues to closely monitor the religious freedom situation in Ghana. Religious freedom and interfaith communication are among Ghana's greatest strengths. Muslim and Christian leaders emphasize the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and report communication and coordination among themselves as well as with those from smaller minority faiths on a wide array of matters. If confirmed, I commit to work with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to emphasize the importance of religious freedom, addressing any religious freedom concerns, and further strengthen tolerance and respect among and for religious communities in Ghana.

Question. In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Ghana was identified as having serious human rights concerns, including arbitrary or unlawful killings by the Government, cruel treatment or punishment by the Government, corruption, the worst forms of child labor, and more. If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. The Ghanaian Government generally respects human rights. Continuing problems include reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings by the Government or its agents; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; violence and threats of violence, or unjustified arrests or prosecutions, against journalists; serious acts of corruption; violence against women; and existence of the worst forms of child labor. Although the Ghanaian Government has taken steps to prosecute and punish officials who commit human rights violations or abuses, whether in the security forces or

elsewhere in the Government, impunity remains a problem. If confirmed, I will encourage the Ghanaian Government to address impunity and hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations and abuses.

Question. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Ghana's Constitution provides for freedom of speech and expression and freedom of assembly for all Ghanaians, not just to certain groups. These freedoms are foundational to our two democracies and must be vigorously defended. If confirmed, I will direct the Embassy team to work closely with our like-minded partners and allies in civil society to ensure these rights are respect for all Ghanaians; support PEPFAR's anti-stigma and anti-discrimination support to members of the LGBTQI+ community and people living with HIV; and stand up against injustice toward women and girls, LGBTQI+ individuals, members of religious minority groups, and people of all races and ethnicities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. VIRGINIA E. PALMER BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. Gaddafi was deposed in Libya in October 2011. Tens of thousands of Malians who had been working in Libya for a better living returned home. Many of these ethnic Tuaregs (TWAHH-regs) had even served in Gaddafi's military and returned to Mali with guns and artillery. Shortly thereafter, in January 2012, Tuareg rebels destabilized Mali, which paved the way for violent extremist groups to gain a foothold. Since then, the march of violent extremism has continued southward, destabilizing Burkina Faso and now threatening Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Benin. What effect, if any, did Libya's destabilization have on security in sub-Saharan Africa? Also, given this worrying trend, how can we strengthen our partnership with Ghana to counter violent extremism and terrorism in the region?

Answer. Smuggled arms looted from Gaddafi's armories have impacted security in sub-Saharan Africa. The region's porous borders and the vast ungoverned regions of the Sahel have always complicated monitoring the movement of people and goods, including armaments from Libya, that have constituted the economy of the Sahel for hundreds of years. Ghana is well-respected for its proactive involvement and positive leadership in security issues throughout West Africa. Ghana is also internationally recognized for its commitment to advancing peace on the continent, and around the world, through participation in U.N. and AU peacekeeping missions. Ghana ranks among the top dozen countries worldwide for its contributions to peacekeeping operations with missions in South Sudan, Lebanon, and Mali. If confirmed, I will support Ghana's regional leadership role and will strengthen our partnership with Ghana to counter violent extremism by continuing integrated U.S. programs on inclusive economic development, rule of law strengthening, and security and law enforcement cooperation.

Question. Many of Africa's biggest challenges—trade, migration, violent extremism—are transnational in nature. However, embassies are understandably focused on bilateral relations. Do you think a regional focus on Western Africa might be effective and what might you do as ambassador to develop a more regional view?

Answer. Yes. A too narrow focus on bilateral issues allows our adversaries to exploit seams in policy and along national boundaries. For example, if customs and border security are improved and anti-corruption measures enforced on one side of a border but not another, terrorists and criminals will still be able to take advantage of weak borders to move materiel and personnel. If confirmed, I will work to support the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership and the Accra Initiative, a Ghanaian-led effort to strengthen the capabilities of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo to combat violent extremism. These efforts will require close coordination with my fellow Ambassadors in the region, AFRICOM, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. agencies in Washington, and Congress. It is also important that these regional efforts integrate security sector support (maritime and border security, military, and law enforcement cooperation) and programs to strengthen the rule of law and combat corruption, improve cyber security, and spur inclusive economic growth.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HOWARD A. VAN VRANKEN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

Question. Despite Botswana's solid democratic reputation, some observers have suggested that press freedom has declined in recent years, pointing to the draconian media regulations, self-censorship by journalists, and the disturbing use of Cellebrite technology to unlock a journalist's phone to access their sources.

- Do you agree that Botswana has experienced a decline in freedom of the press? What will you do, if confirmed, to pressure the Government of Botswana to roll back its restrictions on press freedom?

Answer. Botswana's constitution and laws provide for freedom of expression. Media contacts reported 10 years of self-censorship and dwindling advertising revenues under former President Khama. Upon taking office in 2018, President Masisi initially demonstrated a welcoming approach to the media and press freedom. However, this has largely stalled and the promised Freedom of Information bill has not yet materialized. State-owned media generally feature uncritical reporting on the Government and are sometimes susceptible to political interference. Opposition political parties claim that state media coverage heavily favors the ruling party.

If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. Embassy work to support media professionalization through exchanges, trainings, and other initiatives, such as assisting the Office of the Presidency to set up a Presidential Press Office. Helping the Government of Botswana create a press office which is proactive, responsive, and a source for useful and credible information for the press and the public directly supports our Mission Goal 1: Botswana has institutions, policies, and practices which respond to the needs and improve equitably the lives of its inhabitants by addressing the need to strengthen institutions to promote accountable, transparent, and democratic governance.

Question. If confirmed as Ambassador to Botswana, you would also represent the United States at the Southern African Development Community. Southern Africa faces myriad challenges to the stability of the sub-region, including the insurgency in Mozambique.

- Do you believe that SADC is an effective organization to promote security, democracy, and prosperity in Southern Africa? Would deeper engagement with SADC advance U.S. interests?

Answer. SADC's goals of promoting regional cooperation and integration, economic growth, socio-economic development, and durable peace and security among its member states have never been more important. SADC has achieved notable successes promoting regional peace and security and economic development for the betterment of the SADC region's most important resource—its people. SADC's enduring support helped Lesotho negotiate vital government reforms and undertake a peaceful transition of political power, and in Mozambique the organization's deployment of a Standby Force is helping combat the ISIS-linked terrorist threat. SADC continues to promote regional peace and security as demonstrated by its positive role in helping Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo resolve a longstanding border disagreement. And through its Southern African Power Pool, SADC is mobilizing resources to address energy shortages that threaten regional development and economic integration.

If confirmed, I will seek to deepen our engagement with SADC, including by advocating for the organization to play a proactive role in promoting good governance, respect for human rights, and democratic values, and in holding its members accountable when they fall short. By insisting that all its members respect human rights and the rule of law, SADC can send a powerful message that it intends to be a force for positive change for all citizens across southern Africa.

Question. What are the major barriers to improving conditions and protections for women, sexual minorities, and indigenous people in Botswana? What will you do to promote equality for groups that face discrimination if confirmed?

Answer. Botswana generally has a good human rights record and laws have been enacted to protect vulnerable populations. However, some problems remain. I am concerned about societal problems that threaten respect for human rights including high rates of gender-based violence; discrimination against women and children, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons; and trafficking in persons.

There are also growing concerns among Botswana's public that COVID-19 related movement restrictions and the Government's stated need to take on extra-legislative responsibilities as a response could impinge on some of their human rights, such as the freedom of peaceful assembly. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely

with the Government of Botswana and civil society organizations to address these concerns and promote equality for all. If confirmed, I will encourage them to focus their attention on the most pressing human rights concerns in Botswana and will look for synergistic opportunities to cooperate with these groups to advocate for reform, accountability, and respect for human rights.

Democracy & Human Rights

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. While serving in Iraq in 2008-2009, I worked directly with local government leaders and NGOs to build democratic processes and to strengthen civil society organizations in support of representative and responsive local government. Working through implementing partners, we facilitated training for local leaders, established a free and independent radio station, and identified local youth leaders to participate in national training programs. Our goal, in part, was to decentralize decision-making and implementation authority from the central and provincial governments to empower and hold accountable leaders at the local government level for activities which directly impacted their constituents.

During my second tour in Iraq in 2011-2012, I spearheaded our efforts to resettle exiled Iranian nationals from Iraq to third countries. Those individuals, who were wanted by the Iranian Government, were under direct threat because of their perceived political affiliation. Together with others in the U.S. Government and UNHCR, we worked to safeguard the individuals' human rights and to promote the protection of refugees and the rule of law. In part as a result of my work, dozens of individuals were relocated legally to the safety of third countries.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Botswana? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Botswana has a long track record as one of Africa's enduring democracies. The people of Botswana are justifiably proud of this democratic track record. However, there remain issues to address. Concerns detailed in the 2020 Human Rights Report include undue restrictions on freedom of expression, the press, and the internet, including the existence of criminal slander and libel laws; interference with freedom of association; acts of corruption; and the existence of the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children and forced labor.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Botswana? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to partner with governmental and non-governmental organizations in Botswana, where we are involved in political party strengthening and a number of democracy building activities, including youth outreach, promoting women's participation in the political process, supporting the development of women candidates for public office, and advocacy for independent parliamentary debates. Botswana's Parliament has only seven women members; three were elected in 2019, and the remainder appointed to specially elected seats by President Masisi. Gender based violence (GBV) also remains a major problem. Government figures from 2018 indicate that 37 percent of women in Botswana experience some form of GBV during their lives. This trend was exacerbated by lengthy COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. The Government embarked on an anti-GBV campaign in late 2020, which included public awareness, dedicated GBV courts, and new operating procedures for police handling GBV cases and victims. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Government of Botswana and civil society to combat this serious social scourge.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. The U.S. Embassy has focused on improving the participation of women in politics and political life through public awareness campaigns, bilateral engagement with the political parties and government leadership, and a \$250,000 African Regional Democracy Fund grant to provide political training to women interest in

politics. We also supported women and youth through a series of COVID-19 relief grants offering youth training and entrepreneurial skills development through mask making clinics, and through a grant to a women's GBV clinic to create an automated 24-hour help hotline via WhatsApp.

USAID's Democracy and Governance programming strengthens the capacity of governmental institutions, civil society groups, and regional organizations to promote democratic practices. This work is accomplished by better linking political parties to their constituents and develop platforms based on citizen needs; fostering land rights for indigenous populations; and promoting gender-equality and human rights. USAID is also assisting workers and communities impacted by mining to understand and assert their rights. If confirmed, I will continue to support this important work through USAID and other U.S. Mission programs and initiatives.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Botswana? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. The promotion of respect for human rights is a central pillar in our relations with Botswana. If confirmed, I will continue and strengthen the relationships built by the U.S. Government and our partners with Botswana, U.S., and international civil society members working in this space. I will also engage with labor unions and workers. I will continue to advance opportunities to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and amplify their voices, encourage the Government to collaborate with these organizations for the betterment of Botswana, and ensure that we coordinate our efforts with diplomatic and international missions.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to continue to strengthen the relationships our U.S. Mission has built with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. I will strive to support the efforts of these figures and parties to develop a more inclusive political environment throughout Botswana. If confirmed, I will advocate for the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly for all political actors, even those who do not agree with the Government. If confirmed, I will advocate through public statements, targeted small grants and other programming, and direct engagement with a diverse spectrum of Botswana leaders and community members for a political environment that is inclusive of women, youth, minorities, and Botswana who might otherwise be marginalized.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Botswana on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Botswana?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with media practitioners, like-minded missions, civil society, government, and international partners to underscore the importance of an independent, professional, and open media to a free and democratic society. If confirmed, I will seek resources to continue support to both Botswana's private and state-run media, including professional exchanges, targeted training programs, and seminars to educate journalists and media stakeholders about their rights. Botswana journalists have consistently participated in U.S. Government-sponsored professional exchange programs on investigative reporting, safeguarding freedom of expression, and the media's role in strengthening democratic institutions, and I will continue to prioritize these exchanges and training opportunities.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and malign propaganda by foreign state and non-state actors. If confirmed, I also commit to working with like-minded partners in Botswana to counter disinformation and malign propaganda campaigns.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Botswana on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. The United States has a long and strong tradition of supporting the rights of workers to exercise freedom of association, including to form and join inde-

pendent trade unions. If confirmed, I will commit to engage with unions, relevant government offices, and the private sector to support labor rights. If confirmed, I will mobilize U.S. Government policies, programs and trade agreements to empower workers in all sectors to organize, successfully bargain with their employers, and improve working conditions.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Botswana, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. Protecting human rights and democracy is a priority for the U.S. Mission in Botswana. If confirmed, I will strive to defend the human rights and dignity of all persons in Botswana, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Botswana?

Answer. Botswana is a generally tolerant country, and there are no recent reports of attacks against the LGBTQI+ community by authorities. However, there were reported societal incidents of violence, societal harassment, and discrimination. Lingering societal problems can threaten respect for human rights, including the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and increase vulnerabilities faced by these populations. Botswana's legal statutes are mixed on the issue. The High Court struck down penal code section 164 criminalizing consensual same-sex activity in 2019; the Botswana Court of Appeal has set a date for the appeal on October 12, 2021. If confirmed, I will strive to defend the human rights and dignity of all persons in Botswana, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Botswana?

Answer. Protecting human rights and democracy is a priority for our mission in Botswana. The U.S. Mission has strong ties with LGBTQI+ civil society groups and relies on the 2019 landmark legal case to deepen social acceptance of LGBTQI+ persons in Botswana. If confirmed, I will continue these efforts with the goal that Botswana can become a model for other nations in Africa and show that decriminalization is possible.

Congressional Consultations

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Botswana?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit, in coordination with the State Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to respond promptly to all appropriate requests for briefings and for information by this committee.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HOWARD A. VAN VRANKEN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Botswana is one of four Sub-Saharan African countries identified as "free" in Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2021 report. The State Department characterizes Botswana as "an excellent democratic partner." Underlying a democratic system that has produced democratic elections, strong tolerance of the political opposition, and effective governance practices, is one that also often undermines democratic pluralism—one that ensures the ruling party remains firmly in power.

- What is your assessment of the resilience of Botswana's democracy?

Answer. Botswana has a long track record as one of Africa's most successful and enduring democracies. Botswana is a constitutional, multiparty, republican democracy. Its constitution provides for the indirect election of a president and the popular election of a National Assembly. If confirmed, I will promote democratic values and seek to strengthen democratic institutions.

Question. Are there any areas where you, as U.S. Ambassador if confirmed, will engage Botswana on issues related to freedom and democracy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely in partnership with government and non-governmental organizations in Botswana on U.S. Government initiatives. These include political party strengthening and a number of democracy building activities, including youth outreach, promoting women's participation in the po-

litical process, supporting the development of women candidates for public office, and advocacy for independent parliamentary debates.

Question. In Botswana's 2019 parliamentary elections, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) received 406,561 votes (52.65 percent of total votes). What role does Botswana's first-past-the-post electoral system play in limiting power sharing with a growing proportion of votes by the political opposition in the country? What reforms does Botswana's electoral system need to ensure greater equity among the country's main political parties and actors?

Answer. Botswana's Parliamentary system of elections is like those used in many countries across the world. However, critics in countries where first-past-the-post voting is applied, including in Botswana, argue that this system is unfair to smaller political parties and groups that are underrepresented in the political process, such as women and ethnic minorities. Opposition parties argue that this system gives the ruling party a voting majority in parliament which enables it to implement its own policy objectives even if they do not have popular support. Botswana plans a constitutional reform process in the near future. If confirmed, I would work with all stakeholders on ways to advocate this process encompasses a broad set of issues, including the electoral system.

Following the 2019 elections, international observer missions made several recommendations for improvement of electoral processes, including related to funding of political parties, representation of women and youth in political parties, standardization of polling station procedures, improving registration and voter education procedures, among other legal and procedures reforms. Enacting such reforms will ensure that elections in Botswana produce results that enjoy broad support, including through representation of opposition and equity among political parties. If confirmed, I will seek to engage the Government and political parties on these issues in advance of the next elections.

Question. What is your view on a democratic system like Botswana that has never undergone a partisan transition of power and has seen an unbroken parliamentary majority by the same ruling party and control over the executive since independence?

Answer. Botswana's electoral system provides opportunities for changes in political power. In recent elections, opposition parties have made inroads in increasing parliamentary representation, particularly in 2014. However, factors such as opposition party cohesiveness, political financing, and incumbency have all helped the Botswana Democratic Party maintain its majority. If confirmed, I would continue our work with all stakeholders in ensuring that Botswana's political system remains fair and transparent.

If confirmed, I will promote democratic values and seek to strengthen democratic institutions, including through electoral processes that have credibility and integrity in representing the will of the people of Botswana.

Question. Do you believe the United States should support robust democracy and governance assistance programs in comparatively stronger African democracies like Botswana? If so, what should be the strategic focus for these efforts?

Answer. Botswana has been a strong proponent of democracy and respect for human rights within Africa. If confirmed, I will earnestly work to continue U.S. Embassy programming that strengthens the capacity of governmental institutions, civil society groups, and regional organizations to promote democratic practices.

Question. Do you believe it is the sign of a healthy democracy when a duly elected government, in consultation with its citizens, extends the term of office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power? If confirmed, how would you respond to Botswana doing something like this?

Answer. Botswana's strong democratic tradition includes term-limits that are respected by presidents, the political parties, and the electorate. I expect this respect for constitutional limits will continue. If confirmed, I will promote democratic values and seek to strengthen democratic institutions.

Question. Can you provide your view on supporting U.S. funded, independent international election observation missions? Would you support such a mission for Botswana's next general election?

Answer. The U.S. Government supports efforts to ensure transparency in elections in all nations. Botswana's elections are regularly observed by external teams from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union. Botswana welcomes and supports these missions and would likely be amenable to additional electoral observation if the conditions warrant such a mission.

Question. In the area of conservation, Botswana is a critical partner. The Okavango River Delta in northwest Botswana is one of the world's largest inland river deltas, and serves as a critical source of biodiversity and home to Africa's largest remaining elephant population. However in Botswana, as in other countries across the continent, wildlife trafficking and human animal conflict are persistent challenges that have become more acute during the COVID pandemic.

- As U.S. Ambassador to Botswana, if confirmed, how will you engage with our Botswanan partners on issues related to conservation?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work earnestly to continue the U.S. Government engagement with the Government of Botswana and civil society to protect the country's valuable natural resources, including its wildlife and endangered ecosystems, such as the Okavango Delta, inscribed on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites (WHS) in 2014.

Question. How will you as U.S. Ambassador engage the Government of Botswana to ensure the country's elephant population is ethically controlled and the Government follows adequate measures to ensure long-term conservation of their native elephant population?

Answer. Sustainable management of Botswana's natural resources, including the Okavango Delta and the country's wildlife, is not only a critical conservation goal, but also vital for Botswana's long-term economic health. Tourism, primarily ecotourism, accounted for 10 percent of Botswana's GDP and 10 percent of its total employment pre-pandemic.

If confirmed, I will encourage community-based natural resource management efforts that can make an important contribution to conservation and growth of the tourism sector, as well as to rural development and poverty eradication. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. agencies to promote best practices on wildlife conservation and management, including for Botswana's elephant population.

Question. What more should the Government of Botswana do to curb poaching and wildlife trafficking? How can the United States build on existing efforts to support Botswana in its fight against both poaching and trafficking of wildlife? What more can the United States do to help enforce existing national and international anti-wildlife trafficking laws in Botswana?

Answer. Botswana is committed to wildlife protection, and we appreciate the Government of Botswana's ongoing efforts on this issue. If confirmed, I pledge to continue supporting important wildlife trafficking assistance to Botswana, including training and building capacity in law enforcement personnel, both in country and regionally.

Trends across the continent indicate better organized, more lethal, and sophisticated poaching and wildlife trafficking criminal organizations. Botswana considers these organizations a national security threat. If I am confirmed, I will commit to working with my government counterparts to deter and dismantle these criminal organizations in Botswana.

Question. What additional tools can the U.S. draw on to provide support to Botswana in both preserving biodiversity and improving livelihoods for the Botswanan people

Answer. Botswana has unique biodiversity and remains highly vulnerable to climate change, especially with regard to access to water for drinking, irrigation, and climate change's effects on complex biospheres such as the Okavango Delta. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with our partners including government, commercial, and civil society groups in support of the conservation goals of the DELTA Act.

Question. What opportunities exist for the United States to build on its defense cooperation with Botswana?

Answer. There are opportunities to strengthen our already robust defense partnerships through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and the National Guard State Partnership Program. There are opportunities for PEPFAR and the Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) to implement HIV prevention programs to combat HIV/AIDS within the defense forces. Botswana would also welcome participation in additional regional military exercises.

Question. In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Botswana was identified as Tier 2 due to a "lack of formal procedures to identify and refer victims to care and devoted substantially less funding for victim care than in the previous reporting period." How will you work with the Government or appropriate entities to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. The Government of Botswana does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making efforts to do so. Botswana remained a Tier 2 country in the 2021 TIP Report and has publicly reiterated its commitment to reaching Tier 1. In the 2021 reporting period, the Government of Botswana referred all identified victims to NGOs, funded and implemented the anti-trafficking national action plan, and provided additional services to victims who participated in trials against their traffickers. However, the Government did not convict any traffickers and identified significantly fewer victims than in the 2020 reporting period.

If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Botswana to create and institutionalize procedures to identify trafficking victims and train stakeholders on such procedures, increase funding for NGOs to which the Government refers trafficking victims for shelter and services, and significantly increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers through continued engagement with the Government, civil society, and international partners.

Question. In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Botswana was identified as tolerant of religious freedom. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to continue to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is a U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department continues to closely monitor religious freedom in Botswana. As noted, Botswana provides for freedom of thought and religion, with certain exceptions, protects against governmental discrimination, and has a high degree of religious tolerance and robust interfaith relations. If confirmed, I commit to work with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to emphasize the importance of religious freedom, addressing any religious freedom concerns, and further strengthening tolerance and respect among and for religious communities in Botswana.

Question. In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Botswana was identified as having serious human rights concerns, including infringement or suppression of freedom of expression, press, the internet, association, as well as corruption and child labor.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. Botswana generally has a good human rights record. However, some problems remain. These include occasional allegations of excessive use of force and abuse by security personnel, police corruption, and shortcomings in the judicial process, including lengthy delays and failure to inform defendants of their pretrial rights.

I am concerned about societal problems that threaten respect for human rights including high rates of gender-based violence; discrimination against women and children, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons; and trafficking in persons.

There are also growing concerns among Botswana's public that COVID-19 related movement restrictions and the Government's stated need to take on extra-legislative responsibility as a response could impinge on some of their human rights, such as their freedom of peaceful assembly. If confirmed, I will continue these efforts as I engage the Government of Botswana to address concerns detailed in the 2020 Human Rights Report.

Question. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. The U.S. Embassy maintains excellent relationships with all of Botswana's major civil society organizations. These organizations rely on us to act as a voice of conscience both in the public sphere and in our engagement with the Government. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with Botswana's community of civil society organizations and will encourage them to focus their attention on the most pressing human rights concerns in Botswana and will look for synergistic opportunities to cooperate with these groups to advocate for reform, accountability, and respect for human rights.

Question. Government resettlement schemes, policies that undermine aboriginal minorities' cultural practices and identities, and economic disenfranchisement are all areas where the Government has increasingly marginalized the aboriginal San and Basarwa people. In what ways should the United States work with the Government of Botswana to improve the rights and economic survival of these aboriginal people?

Answer. The U.S. Government continues to follow the situation of the San in Botswana, including the legal dispute between some San communities and the Botswana Government over their families' rights to reside within Botswana's Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). The Botswana Government has agreed to abide by all relevant court rulings regarding the San rights to live within the CKGR, but it has interpreted these rulings narrowly. If confirmed, I will continue to support the ongoing dialogue between the Botswana Government and San representatives regarding community welfare and living conditions.

Question. In March this year, Botswana became the 46th African country to sign on to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI cooperation agreement will undoubtedly boost relations between the two countries and focus on infrastructure construction and other projects traditionally supporting the BRI. How will you ensure the United States interests and relationship with Botswana is not undermined by these deepening ties with China?

Answer. The Government of Botswana sees China as an important partner and investor, but there has been unhappiness within Botswana about PRC business practices, after problems with several high-profile PRC construction projects. If confirmed, I will work to build upon our decades-long investment in African human capital (health and education) in order to strengthen our ties with Botswana, including through initiatives like the Power Africa Mega Solar program.

Question. In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee Majority Report entitled "The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China." The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively. In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Botswana and counter the malign influence of China?

Answer. The United States and our European partners share an interest in supporting Botswana's efforts for financial transparency, respect for human rights, respect for freedom of expression, and efforts to counter corruption. We are concerned about the PRC's influence on these areas in Botswana. If confirmed, I would continue to work with European nations and the Government of Botswana to strengthen Botswana's resilience to malign external influence. If confirmed, I will work with European and other likeminded partners to speak up against China's malign actions and attempts to undermine the international rules-based system, including through advancing U.S. economic interests, countering China's aggressive and coercive actions, sustaining our military engagement, and engaging on U.S. positions in the U.N. system.

Question. According to Reporters sans frontiers (RSF), press freedom declined significantly under President Ian Khama. While violations of press freedom have declined under President Masisi, there remain significant obstacles to freedom of the press in Botswana, including a legal framework that has no law on access to information and draconian laws such as the 2008 Media Practitioners Act. As U.S. Ambassador to Botswana, if confirmed, how will you engage the Botswanan Government on issues of freedom of information and freedom of the press?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. Embassy work to support media professionalization through exchanges, trainings, and other initiatives, such as assisting the Office of the Presidency to set up a Presidential Press Office. Helping the Government of Botswana create a press office which is proactive, responsive, and a source for useful and credible information for the press and the public directly supports our Mission Goal 1: Botswana has institutions, policies, and practices which respond to the needs and improve equitably the lives of its inhabitants by addressing the need to strengthen institutions to promote accountable, transparent, and democratic governance.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Botswana?

Answer. COVID-19 has exacted a heavy toll on U.S. Mission Botswana, as many members of our community have lost loved ones. While there is currently a downward trend in cases across the region, Botswana's COVID-19 case count remains the highest in the Southern African region.

COVID-19 exacerbated some of Botswana's infrastructural weaknesses like telecommunications, healthcare, and food availability. The Mission has adapted to this new environment, with staff building stronger ties with each other as they rely on one another more than they did prior to the pandemic. The U.S. Mission continues

to prioritize Embassy morale through tools such as regular town halls, which provide a platform for staff to connect with leadership and for speakers to discuss resilience and coping mechanisms.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Botswana?

Answer. If confirmed, the safety and security of the official community will be of primary importance. I will seek to support employees and their families to create an inclusive and welcoming culture where individuals are safe and can achieve professional and personal goals. As I expect one of my sons (who is 15 years old) and my wife, Rebecca, will accompany me (and my other children will spend significant time with me in Botswana), I will focus on schooling and educational needs for children and work with U.S. and Botswana officials to expand U.S.-accredited education where possible.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Botswana?

Answer. If confirmed, I will lead regular discussions with all agencies to establish and review goals and develop strategies and tactics to achieve common objectives. If confirmed, I will engage all employees and stakeholders to conceive and articulate clearly what we will do, and how we will do it. If confirmed, I will create a culture of inclusion in which all employees' contributions are valued.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.

- How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I aspire to create a leadership culture in which all are encouraged to contribute, create, and grow. My ideal is a workplace in which people achieve shared objectives while respecting and valuing everyone's contributions. This requires from leadership and employees a recognition of individuals' strengths and areas of development, and a respect for shared values, inclusion, and our institutions.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. There is no acceptable place for 'berating' subordinates, either in public or in private.

Question. What lessons have you learned from your tenure as the director of NEA-SCA/EX?

Answer. While Executive Director of NEA-SCA/EX, I learned quickly the limits of my own ability to achieve goals without delegating responsibility and authority when appropriate. My experience leading that organization affirmed to me that subordinates need space to learn and grow, and that results which fall short of full success represent valuable opportunities to adjust styles and inculcate a culture of continual learning and improvement. I refined the ability to delegate and build a spirit of inclusion during my time as Executive Director.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I expect to collaborate closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission to conceive goals, then implement and oversee tactics and activities to achieve those goals. If confirmed, I will work with the Deputy Chief of Mission to articulate and maintain high ethical standards and create a culture of inclusion and respect. If confirmed, I will lean on the Deputy Chief of Mission's deep area expertise and seek her counsel before developing or implementing policy. I believe Deputy Chiefs of Mission are most effective, productive, and valued when they are permitted to work with independence, while understanding that the Chief of Mission is ultimately responsible in all ways for the work of the Mission.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ask the Deputy Chief of Mission to lead our internal effort to address the COVID pandemic. I will also ask her to lead recruitment efforts for Foreign Service and other agencies' diplomatic personnel. If confirmed, I will collaborate with her closely on policy implementation, engagement with the Government of Botswana, and outreach to key groups—particularly youth—through traditional and social media.

In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

Question. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Botswana.

- In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. The most effective U.S. diplomats are those who actively engage broadly with people throughout all parts of society in the country to which they are assigned.

The safety and well-being of our U.S. Mission staff is paramount. Thus, during COVID-19, especially during the recent third wave, we have limited our external engagement and official travel to mission critical. However, during normal times our U.S. Mission community is actively involved in external engagement with our government, civil society, and media partners and members of the international community throughout the country. In the meantime, we have been actively involved in external engagement on virtual platforms and in small group settings to maximize safety.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, and as health and safety conditions permit, I will encourage U.S. diplomats to engage actively, broadly and in-person with local populations. Until then, we will maintain active engagement through virtual media. If confirmed, I intend to regularly visit people in each district of Botswana and use those visits to facilitate contacts for other U.S. diplomats.

COVID-19 limited physical interactions and poor telecommunications infrastructure made virtual interactions difficult. However, nearly all Mission personnel have been vaccinated and the number of vaccinated Batswana is also increasing. This should improve our ability to access more people locally as in-person interactions will remain the preferred form of engagement in Botswana.

Once the COVID-19 situation improves we intend to fully re-engage with all our stakeholders throughout the country in-person. I will prioritize our Embassy's travel and site visits to our partners and beneficiaries in the field, on priority issues including our HIV/AIDS response and wildlife trafficking, to improve our collective understanding of the myriad issues at stake, underscore U.S. leadership on these issues, and to monitor U.S. Government funds.

Once we achieve a healthy threshold of vaccinated people, we plan to return to hosting more representational events as they have historically been well received, especially our Fourth of July celebrations. A resumption in issuing tourist and business visas will also increase our interaction as it will raise interest in the United States.

Question. In recent years, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental standards-setting body on anti-money laundering matters (AML), of which the United States is a member, identified Botswana as strategically deficient on AML. How is the United States supporting AML compliance efforts in Botswana and what steps will you take as ambassador to ensure the country continues to make improvements in this area?

Answer. The United States supports Botswana's efforts to strengthen its compliance with international AML standards, including through U.S. Department of Treasury technical assistance. If confirmed, I will work diligently to ensure the U.S. Embassy continues to support Botswana's efforts to bolster its anti-money laundering capacity.

Question. Do you think the Department should require chiefs of mission have experience in the region to which they are nominated?

Answer. The Department of State looks for officers who exemplify the six Core Values (accountability, character, community, diversity, loyalty, service) and the Department's Leadership and Management Principles (model integrity, plan strategically, be decisive and take responsibility, communicate, learn and innovate con-

stantly, be self-aware, collaborate, value and develop people, manage conflict, and foster resilience) when selecting Chiefs of Mission. Candidates for COM positions must possess: outstanding interpersonal skills; deep regional and functional professional experience; demonstrated effectiveness in leading people, policies, and programs; proven skills in public diplomacy, navigating the interagency process, leading and motivating teams; talent for advocating U.S. foreign policy interests, including promoting democracy and good governance, rule of law, and economic interests; and the ability to operate at the senior U.S. national security policy level. The Department also seeks COM candidates who have championed diversity and will continue to foster diverse and inclusive teams and hold people accountable for performance and conduct. COM nominees are able to apply these values and principles in any geographic region to advance U.S. interests.

Question. With little experience in the sub-Saharan Africa, how are you approaching this assignment?

Answer. Mission Botswana has a strong team which I am looking forward to meeting and leading. I am confident that our respective experiences will complement each other.

I have engaged in an accelerated program to learn as much as possible as quickly as possible about the region through the Foreign Service Institute and consultations with regional experts. If confirmed, I will broaden that engagement to include regional experts throughout and outside the U.S. Government.

Question. Do you consider your lack of experience in the region a handicap in starting your position as COM?

Answer. I come to this assignment with a long history of success in leading people and managing programs and resources to achieve goals. Those experiences are directly applicable to this challenging assignment. I also approach this assignment cognizant that the region is richly complex, and I will need to seek advice, counsel, and recommendations from a range of experts from throughout and outside the U.S. Government in order to succeed.

The State Department prides itself in developing adaptable generalists who bring the breadth of their experience to every assignment. There are naturally strong arguments for having regional experts, but I am confident that I can bring new approaches to bear based on my experience at other posts. My work in the Department's Executive Secretariat also gave me a unique perspective on how Africa fits into our overall foreign policy, experience which I believe make me a strong advocate for the needs of Mission Botswana.

Question. If confirmed, would you consider your lack of experience in Africa in identifying a deputy chief of mission?

Answer. The Department of State provides a list of suitable Deputy Chief of Mission candidates for a Chief of Mission to select when those positions become open. If confirmed, I will select a DCM who compliments my skills, experience, and knowledge to ensure the U.S. Mission in Botswana is best placed to advance U.S. interests.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Botswana? What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The strong U.S.-Botswana bilateral relationship facilitates a positive public diplomacy environment. The Botswana public is generally receptive to U.S. Government programs and messaging on our policy priorities. The challenges that do exist include capacity issues like an organization's ability to maintain and implement grants on behalf of the U.S. Government; the lack of a flourishing civil society which limits our ability to offer diverse programming; and the poorly developed press corps. However, journalists are eager to gain additional training and experiences through USG media exchange programs. COVID-19 has severely impacted the Mission's ability to conduct in person exchanges and outreach, and poor internet connectivity and availability make virtual programming challenging.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. The Embassy's Public Affairs Office does a good job balancing these occasionally differing objectives. The Mission's strategic planning working group meets monthly to discuss important policy objectives and to decide how to best deliver messaging to the public. Due to our strong bilateral relationship, the Botswana public is largely receptive to our messaging. As a Mission, we focus most of our messaging on our priority policy goals and objectives including our health partnerships

under PEPFAR, women's empowerment, democracy and governance, environmental issues, regional security, and strengthening the economy. However, we also deliver messaging on Washington's policy priorities. The Botswana public is also receptive to these messages. Most public messaging is delivered via our influential social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter, but also via traditional media including radio, television, and newspaper interviews, which is dominated by state media.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HOWARD A. VAN VRANKEN BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. Botswana's HIV prevalence rate is improving but remains the fourth highest in the world, with 19.9 percent of adults HIV-positive in 2020. What is your assessment of the importance and effectiveness of U.S. support to combatting HIV/AIDs and other public health emergencies in Botswana, including the COVID pandemic?

Answer. U.S. support through PEPFAR has played and will need to continue to play an important role in supporting Botswana's HIV/AIDS response. While Botswana is a high HIV-burdened country, it has been making significant progress toward controlling its HIV epidemic and that control must be sustained. The health systems and capacities that have been strengthened for the HIV/AIDS response have also been instrumental in helping to respond to other health threats, including COVID-19. Botswana funds approximately 60 percent of its national response to HIV/AIDS and PEPFAR has strategically filled service delivery gaps and provided technical support to scale up and strengthen services.
