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**Statement of William E. Todd
Nominee to be Ambassador to Pakistan
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 22, 2020**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, and Honorable Members of this Committee, I am humbled to appear before you today as the nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for the trust and confidence they have shown in me through this nomination.

While they cannot be here in-person, I would like to recognize my wonderful family, who are watching this hearing virtually. Words are insufficient to express my love, admiration, and appreciation for my wife Ann and my parents Jack and Marie Todd. I am also grateful for my four children, William, Chris, John, and Caitlyn. As a family, we have shared the excitement, joys, and sometimes the hardships associated with this career and lifestyle, and through it all, we have been richly blessed.

I come before you today as a career member of the Senior Executive Service. During my 37 years with the U.S. Government and across six Presidential Administrations, I have served in some of the most rewarding positions in government, including having been confirmed twice previously as U.S. Ambassador (Cambodia and Brunei). I served in an Ambassadorial rank position in Afghanistan as the Coordinating Director of Development and Economic Affairs, as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, and most recently as Deputy Under Secretary for Management.

Across all of these assignments, my highest priority has always been the safety and security of our team domestically and abroad. At no other time in our nation's recent history has the safety and security of our personnel and American citizens faced such an unprecedented challenge as we have with the COVID-19 pandemic. Since early January of this year, I had the distinct honor to spend most of my time leading and operationalizing much of the Department of State's preparedness, mitigation, and response efforts for the COVID-19 crisis.

It has been an honor and a privilege to be part of the team that facilitated the repatriation of 100,000 American citizens who were overseas when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. We repatriated American citizens from 135 countries, on over 950 flights. To protect our Foreign Service team serving abroad, we approved the State Department's first ever Global Authorized Departure, bringing home over 4,000 U.S. Embassy American staff and over 6,000 family members from conditions that could have threatened their well-being. We put in place global medevac capabilities and assets to reach any location in the world within 24 hours.

This global COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact in Pakistan, as it has around the world. The U.S.-Pakistan health partnership helped contribute to better-than-expected COVID-19 outcomes in Pakistan, from training health workers to upgrading emergency operations centers and delivering ventilators, a personal promise by President Trump. Nonetheless, the health impacts are real and the economic fallout for Pakistan is likely to be serious.

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Beyond the immediate COVID-19 crisis, this is an important time in the broader U.S.-Pakistan relationship. As you know very well, this is a longstanding and important, but always complicated and sometimes contentious relationship. We certainly have our differences, but Pakistan is an essential regional partner, and this is an opportune moment in our relationship to work together on shared goals. Peace in Afghanistan is in both our countries' best interests, and effective U.S.-Pakistani cooperation is essential to achieve that objective.

As Secretary Pompeo said when he visited Islamabad in 2018, we have an "opportunity to reset the relationship between our two countries across a broad spectrum - economic, business, commercial - the work that we all know that we need to do to try to develop a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan that benefits certainly Afghanistan, but also the United States and Pakistan." Today, our countries recognize that we share a common interest in a durable peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan played a critical role in creating the conditions that brought Afghan leaders and the Taliban to the historic start of Afghan Peace Negotiations. They have an even more important role to play in supporting efforts toward a negotiated political settlement that ends 40 years of war. This is a moment of opportunity for Pakistan to continue to forge a new and better role in the region and if confirmed will be one of my highest priorities.

In terms of regional dynamics, although we have a strong relationship with India, that does not need to come at the expense of Pakistan. I believe that under the right conditions, we can have a strong relationship with both countries. Our hope is that both countries will take the necessary steps to reduce tensions, and as President Trump has offered, we are prepared to facilitate dialogue if both sides request it.

To truly reduce regional tensions, and rebuild a strong relationship with the United States, Pakistan must take sustained and irreversible action against terrorism. Pakistan has suffered terribly itself at the hands of terrorists and has committed publicly to ensure terrorists cannot use Pakistani territory to operate. Pakistan has taken important steps toward fulfilling that commitment but needs to continue that work. If confirmed, I will work with Pakistan to advance our shared interest in eliminating terrorism from its territory and advancing security in the region.

If confirmed, I will actively engage Pakistan on these issues, as well as strategic stability and non-proliferation, carrying a clear message on the threat that nuclear weapons pose to the United States, the region, and our allies and partners. Pakistan needs to demonstrate it is prepared to live up to international commitments on weapons of mass destruction.

Lastly, there are three other key priorities that I will focus on if confirmed. My first goal will be advancing human rights, particularly freedom of religion and expression. I was shocked and heartbroken that U.S. citizen Tahir Naseem was killed in a Pakistani courtroom in which he was facing an accusation of blasphemy. I grieve with the family of Mr. Naseem, and if confirmed, will engage Pakistani authorities on full accountability for the perpetrators. I am also concerned about increasing restrictions on civil society, including the growing harassment and disappearances of journalists without accountability, which undermines the exercise of the right of peaceful assembly and freedoms of expression and association.

Second, given Pakistan has the fifth largest population in the world, we need increased bilateral trade and investment. The President sees this potential and has personally called for a substantial expansion of our trade and investment relationship, which benefits both countries.

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Third, with over 64 percent of Pakistanis being 30 years old or younger, we should expand youth engagement.

Making progress on youth engagement, trade and investment, and human rights will be challenging, but necessary for a better future for Pakistan, and a stronger U.S.-Pakistan relationship. As the President has said repeatedly, “There is tremendous potential between our country and Pakistan.” The choices that are made now will build a legacy for generations to come.

In closing Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you, this Committee, and the entire U.S. Congress. If confirmed, I will dedicate all of my energy and experience to advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives in Pakistan, and to strengthening the relationship between our two countries. Thank you very much for considering my nomination. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

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