

**Statement of Nina Maria Fite
Nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Angola
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
October 3, 2017**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Booker, and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Angola. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Tillerson for the confidence and trust they have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I will devote myself to advancing U.S. interests and values, as I have throughout my 27-year career in the Foreign Service. I will work closely with this Committee and other Members of Congress on our shared interests in strengthening the partnership between the United States and Angola.

I would also like to introduce my sister, Tereza, and her husband, Peter who have traveled here from California; and acknowledge my brother Richard and his wife Ruth who were unable to be here today. For nearly 30 years, my path of service has meant I have not been able to see them as much as I would have liked, but their support has sustained me every step of the way, as it does today. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge my deceased parents, who instilled in me a dedication to public service and a love of international affairs.

Angola is the United States' third-largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa, and the second-largest oil producer in that region. Diplomatically, the United States has benefited from a strong and productive partnership with Angola. The Angolan government has been an effective voice for peace in the region and has proven an excellent partner in our efforts in other African countries facing crisis, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. We have a shared interest in seeing a peaceful, prosperous, and stable African continent.

Fifteen years ago, a resource-rich Angola emerged from its civil war as a major economic power in the region. Some U.S. businesses have thrived in Angola for decades, with many commercial relationships that predate the bilateral diplomatic relationship. While there are significant opportunities for U.S. companies, the commercial landscape remains challenging. Corruption remains widespread throughout society, and the country's economy requires diversification

so that its security and prosperity are not dependent on oil prices. The United States supports Angola's goal of broadening its economy and creating a business climate that is more attractive and transparent for international partners. If confirmed, I will work closely with U.S. companies and the Government of Angola to advance U.S. commercial interests to create the best climate possible for American businesses. An improved business environment in Angola will also bring benefits and jobs to the United States and our economy.

When I served in Angola a decade ago, the United States was instrumental in helping the Angolan people prepare for national elections, in which many voted for the first time in their lives. Two months ago, Angola marked a milestone in its democratic progression and elected its first new president in 38 years. As President Lourenço articulates his vision for Angola, I believe it is an opportune time to deepen our relationship. We must build on our burgeoning defense cooperation and strong economic ties, while working to expand the space for democratic debate, to empower Angolan civil society, and to reinforce Angola's foundations for democracy. If confirmed, I will focus my efforts on strengthening our dialogue on these important issues.

Angola has the economic means to achieve substantial improvements in health outcomes for its people, including infant mortality, a measure by which Angola has historically fallen tragically short of its potential. The United States has supported Angola with targeted technical assistance in the health arena, fighting malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV. We also support Angola in its goal to make the country landmine free by 2025, an achievement that would help end one of the most painful reminders of its devastating civil war. Some of this newly cleared land has returned to agricultural use, while other parcels have been used for new schools, allowing more Angolan children to receive a formal education. If confirmed, I will focus on helping new models of assistance evolve as African nations like Angola mature economically and socially.

Since I was last there, Angola has continued to move forward from the effects of its long civil war. But now, as then, there is more work to be done. Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will bring the experiences of my State Department career, including tours in Afghanistan and Pakistan, to advance U.S. interests in Angola. A prerequisite to advancing any of our goals is ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all Americans, whether members of the Embassy team or private citizens working, living, or doing business in Angola.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the Committee, I thank you again for your enduring interest and support for our engagement in sub-Saharan Africa and for this opportunity today. I look forward to your questions.