

**Statement of Victoria Reggie Kennedy
Nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Austria
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
October 5, 2021**

Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Johnson and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I'm honored to appear before you as the nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Austria. I am grateful and humbled by President Biden's confidence in me.

I thank Senator Markey for his generous introduction. My son Curran is with me today. My daughter Caroline and her husband Alex are watching from Germany and my mother and other family members are viewing from various parts of the country. I'm thinking today, in a special way, of my late husband, who revered this place, and of my late father, the first diplomat in our family, appointed by President Kennedy as Special Envoy to the Middle East in 1961.

One of the countries my father visited as Envoy was Lebanon, the land his parents left in 1920, in their early 20s, to come to America. Forty-one years later, their youngest son landed in Beirut to find his parents' entire village at the airport to

greet him. His grandmother was in that crowd, and he met her for the first time, as the representative of the President of the United States. What a moving testament to the American dream.

I have five siblings, and all our lives were shaped by that sense of infinite possibility. I grew up in a small town, Crowley, Louisiana. I attended Catholic schools and then Newcomb College, followed by Tulane Law School. I clerked for a federal appellate judge and then began private law practice.

I first traveled to Europe, with my brother, when we were college students, faithfully following a guidebook entitled “Europe on \$5 to \$10 a day.” (That gives you an idea of how long ago it was.) But when we arrived in Vienna, we were overjoyed to find a letter from our parents with a little something extra and a note that read: “So you can enjoy the music.” How glorious it was to attend the opera in Vienna and hear a concert in Salzburg. From that time on, Austria was special to me. Of course, I couldn’t have imagined then that I would be sitting here today.

But I feel my background has prepared me well. As a lawyer in a global law firm, I have led diverse teams to resolve complex problems, working collaboratively toward a common goal. I’m a Trustee of the Kennedy Center, where I’ve chaired

the Education Committee for more than a decade. I'm President of the Board of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, which focuses on the vital role of the Senate in our governance, fosters civil dialogue and seeks to inspire new generations to engage in civic life. And I've been an active member of the business community in New England, serving on the Boards of our regional business council as well as the chamber of commerce.

U.S.-Austrian relations are strong, based on our mutual interests and shared ideals. We've been friends for a long time, first establishing formal diplomatic ties in 1838. And we've just marked the 74th anniversary of the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild Europe after World War II. Austria, in partnership with the United States, turned this investment into an economic success story that continues to pay dividends for both countries.

Our bilateral economic ties are strong and growing. The United States is the second largest market for Austrian exports, and bilateral trade is projected to be greater this year than last. Austria recorded the second fastest rate of growth in foreign direct investment in the United States in 2020. Their direct investments overall have resulted in the creation of tens of thousands of U.S. jobs. If

confirmed, I am eager to strengthen our trade and investment relationship even further.

The United States and Austria share many common values and perspectives, including a support for human rights and the rule of law. Austria is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and has contributed peacekeepers and trainers around the world. Austria is also a valued partner in the Western Balkans, where it contributes nearly 350 troops to NATO's KFOR mission for peace and stability in Kosovo, and nearly 300 troops to the EU's stabilization mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to advance America's interests and values and strengthen and deepen our already strong relationship with Austria across the full range of political, security, economic and social issues that bind our nations together.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.