

Statement of Yuri Kim
Ambassadorial Nominee to the Republic of Albania
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
October 29, 2019

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee:

It is a distinct honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be our next ambassador to Albania. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Pompeo for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I would be the first Korean-American woman to represent our great nation as an ambassador. I would also be our first ambassador from the U.S. Territory of Guam. In fact, I am joined today by a small cheering section from home, including my brothers Yeong-Sae and Air Force Lt. Minwoo Kim – one fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley, the other keeping our nation safe as a munitions officer at Minot Air Force Base. My parents and other family members are also no doubt watching from Guam or wherever else they might be.

For more than two decades, I have had the privilege of serving our country as a Foreign Service Officer. From Beijing to Baghdad, and points in between, I have sought to ensure that the United States remains strong, safe, and secure; that our people and our businesses thrive; and that we continue to shape the rules and lead the institutions that have undergirded America's peace and prosperity over the last century.

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing those efforts by further strengthening our already robust and productive relationship with Albania.

Few friends have embraced America more warmly – poll after poll shows Albanian support for the United States remains among the highest in the world. Few Allies have been more loyal – Albanian troops have been at our side in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, and NATO's Eastern Flank. And few partners are as ready and willing to do more with the United States. We have a strong and loyal friend in Albania, and it is imperative that we hold friends like Albania close to us, especially in the face of strategic challenges to our shared interests, values, and institutions.

If confirmed, I would advance three priorities:

First, I would encourage Albania to maintain its steady course to reach the two percent Wales defense investment pledge by 2024 so that Albania is an even stronger and more capable Ally. Since Albania joined NATO in 2009, Albanian soldiers have fought side by side with American troops. In Afghanistan, the Albanians have been with us advising and training Afghan forces. Albania has also been a reliable partner in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Albania's actions demonstrate that it not only appreciates the benefits of NATO, but embraces the responsibilities of membership.

Second, I would continue to promote Albania's democratic development. In the immediate term, I would press Albania's leaders to resolve the current political impasse in a way that reinforces Albania's EU accession bid and best positions Albania to succeed during its term as OSCE Chair-in-Office in 2020. Albania's EU aspirations – and the reforms they entail – will lead to more prosperity and stability for the country and for the region. It will also make Albania a stronger, more capable Ally of the United States.

More fundamentally, I would reinforce U.S. diplomatic and foreign assistance support for strengthening the rule of law and combatting corruption and organized crime. The United States should continue to encourage Albania to fully implement judicial reforms, continue the vetting of judges and prosecutors, and establish an independent Special Structure Against Corruption and a National Bureau of Investigation. I would also redouble U.S. engagement and technical assistance in the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of corruption and transnational organized crime.

Third, I would work to promote U.S. exports and U.S. investment in Albania so as to provide opportunities for both U.S. and Albanian citizens and generate jobs in both countries. U.S. investment requires a welcoming business climate and a level playing field for our companies and investors. In this respect, I would underscore that confidence in the rule of law and transparency are essential.

As we pursue our priorities, I would do my utmost to manage and safeguard our resources abroad, especially our most important resource: the dedicated employees of our Embassy. Their hard work and dedication are essential to achieving the goals of the United States and the American people. We owe it to ourselves to take care of our people, to make sure they're safe, and to provide the support and the resources they need to succeed on behalf of our nation.

If confirmed, I look forward to advancing the interests of the United States by working together with Congress and this Committee to continue strengthening our strong bonds with the government and people of Albania.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I would be pleased to take your questions.