

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR-NOMINEE
JEAN E. MANES
BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2015**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of El Salvador.

I'm humbled by the trust and confidence President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry have shown by sending my name to the Senate for consideration at this pivotal moment in the bilateral relationship. I'm also grateful for the support of my family, including members here today, my husband Hector Cerpa, and one of our two daughters, Candela. Our other daughter, Connie, wishes she could be here but is in the midst of preparing for end of year exams at college. I also want to thank my parents, Roger and Betty Manes, who instilled in me the values of hard work, dedication and integrity, as I watched them build our family business.

Today is even more special because it was 25 years ago that I started my foreign policy career in this very place as an intern with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by Claiborne Pell.

I also want to recognize the current U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, Mari Carmen Aponte. Under her leadership of the Embassy, the people of the United States have been well represented over the last five years.

Throughout my career at the State Department, I have led complex organizations and negotiated large-scale initiatives. This includes my present position serving as Principal Deputy Coordinator for the 400-person International Information Programs Bureau, which provides the State Department's worldwide outreach platform for public diplomacy. It also includes my previous position as the Director of Resources, overseeing \$1.2 billion for public diplomacy domestic and worldwide operations. I have taken the business lessons I learned from my parents to ensure we are making the right investments on behalf of the American people and accounting for results. These have been hallmarks of my career.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and others in Congress as I use these skills to continue to enhance the bilateral relationship between the United States and El Salvador, as well as to increase regional integration with other Central American countries. This will include significant focus on three areas: stabilizing the security environment, improving the business investment climate and promoting inclusive economic growth; and strengthening government institutions.

El Salvador is one of our closest partners in the Western Hemisphere. The people of El Salvador have demonstrated their commitment to democracy through peaceful transfer of power since the 1992 Peace Accords ended the Civil War, however today El Salvador is facing the highest homicide rates since the war, and projections are that the daily rate will reach more than 100 homicides per 100,000 people by the end of this year. While El Salvador continues to face political, economic, and social challenges as well, a stable and economically viable future is possible, and the United States is committed to supporting the people and government of El Salvador toward realizing this goal.

The commitment of President Sánchez Cerén and those of other leaders across the Northern Triangle in developing and leading the comprehensive “Alliance for Prosperity” plan represents an unprecedented opportunity to solidify the gains of the past and build for the future. The plan reflects a multidisciplinary and collective approach to addressing fundamental issues preventing long-term growth and stability in the region.

The United States is and must continue to be a central player in advancing these efforts. The U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, combined with initiatives under the Partnership for Growth and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, serves as the foundation for U.S. engagement with El Salvador. We are at a crossroads in Central America. Down one road lies the prospect of a prosperous Central America that provides a home and future for its citizens. Down the other lies disorder and increased migration. We have committed partners including the host government, leaders in the business community, civil society, international organizations, and the people of El Salvador. Now is the moment for American leadership and investments to help lead the region to a better future.

Fundamentally, the biggest asset for both the United States and El Salvador is the people who support this effort. While there are 6 million people in El

Salvador, there are over 2 million people of Salvadoran descent who live in the United States. These include many community leaders across California, Texas, New York, Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen these bonds between our two countries as we work in partnership to support implementation of the Strategy.

As outlined in the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, one country cannot succeed alone. Regional integration is a core component of the strategy. If confirmed, my team and I will enhance the collaboration at all levels in the region, with specific focus on Honduras and Guatemala. You have my guarantee that I will use the important role of the U.S. Ambassador to bring all parties together; to serve as the convener and facilitator of ideas; and to make the best investments for a stable and growing El Salvador that remains a strong partner with the United States.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to be here and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.