

Statement of W. Patrick Murphy
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
December 4, 2018

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee for considering my nomination to be the next United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia. I am grateful to our President and Secretary of State for their confidence. I have deep appreciation for the support of my family, part and parcel of my career, including my wife Kathleen and daughter Gillian with me here today; my son Seamus in Richmond, Virginia; and my daughter Meghan watching from Morocco. I am thankful to colleagues in the Foreign and Civil Services; local employees overseas; and counterparts across our interagency and armed services for their collegiality over my three decades of public service.

If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Cambodia, promoting democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms; building on the strong support the United States enjoys among the Cambodian public; and strengthening cooperation on our vision for the Indo-Pacific.

Representing my country, as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa and for 26 years as a diplomat, has been an honor. I benefitted from my upbringing in Vermont, where I was exposed to the value of public service. I have spent much of my career on Southeast Asia and, if confirmed, look forward to further contributions in this critical part of the world.

Cambodia is the product of an impressive ancient civilization, admired throughout the world. The tumultuous 20th century, however, proved challenging. I started my diplomatic career in 1992, a point of inflection for Cambodia when the UN Transitional Authority arrived to administer elections, made possible by the Paris Peace Accords, through which Cambodians, the United States, and others negotiated the end to a long and devastating conflict.

I am proud of our work in Cambodia, including partnerships with civil society. Today, over 85 percent of Cambodia's people are above the poverty line and enjoy a growing economy. With help through USAID and other U.S. programs, Cambodia has achieved nearly universal primary education, decreased maternal mortality, and served as a model for tackling HIV/AIDS. The United States has been a leading donor in helping Cambodians address painful legacies via efforts aimed at demining and achieving justice

and accountability. If confirmed, I will continue these, and strengthen our work with partners to end trafficking in persons.

In recent years, regrettably, there has been backsliding in governance, rule of law, and corruption. The Administration has been clear in our concern that recent national elections fell short, in part because of the dissolution of the main opposition party; jailing of its leader, Kem Sokha; and banning of others. If confirmed, I will advocate for reconciliation, adherence to the principles enshrined in Cambodia's constitution, and efforts to protect the country's sovereignty.

Our Cambodian-American community has contributed to the home states of the distinguished Senators, as well as to the bilateral relationship. I would like to grow connections between Pueblo and Phnom Penh, and Boston and Battambang by increasing International Visitor Leadership Program and other exchanges, and sustaining a Peace Corps program through which hundreds of Americans have contributed to Cambodia's development and mutual understanding.

If confirmed, I would seek to balance and increase our 3.5 billion dollars in annual two-way trade by promoting U.S. business interests, Cambodian adherence to international labor standards, and leveling the field for U.S. investors and workers.

I also commit to working steadfastly for the fullest possible accounting of U.S. personnel missing from the Indochina conflict period. This is our solemn obligation, a foundational area of cooperation, and an issue close to my heart. My family, like many, lost a loved one in service during the Vietnam War and I understand the profound need to account for our personnel. If confirmed, I will work closely with our Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and American families to keep this humanitarian issue at the forefront of our Cambodia policy.

Our U.S. Mission agencies and staff in Phnom Penh are world class, and if confirmed I will count myself truly fortunate to lead them. I will make their security, and that of their families and all Americans in Cambodia, a top priority and dedicate myself to facilitate our collective efforts to advance U.S. interests.

Thank you, Members of the Committee, for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.