

Statement of Jeremey Neitzke
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Lesotho
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 19, 2024

Thank you, Chairwoman Duckworth, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members of this committee.

I am deeply honored to be considered for the position of U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Lesotho. I am grateful for the confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have shown in me by this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and the Congress in advancing U.S. interests and supporting Lesotho in its efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, end the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and achieve sustainable, broad-based economic growth.

At the outset, I want to recognize and thank my wife Tania and our children, Michael and Mariana. They are the bedrock on which our foreign service journey is built. Without their love and support, I would not be here today.

I joined the Foreign Service more than twenty years ago, but my career more truly began when the United States Peace Corps sent me to Kenya – an experience that altered the course of my life. An experience that taught me lessons in humility, adaptability, and the impact that the United States can have on the world when it leads with its values. Since that time, my service in Africa has led me to South Africa, Malawi, and Mozambique. I am humbled by the opportunity to continue my service to the United States on the continent where I have served the majority of my career. If confirmed, I will draw on my experience to advance U.S. interests in Lesotho. I have led interagency teams to implement

PEPFAR programs, MCC compacts, and the Global Fragility Act. I have supported efforts to bolster democratic, accountable governance. And I have had the honor and privilege of supervising and serving alongside hundreds of dedicated U.S. and Foreign Service Nationals whose dedication to our shared values makes us stronger and more effective. Those experiences will enhance my effectiveness in working with the Government and people of Lesotho to shape what is in our mutual interests: a country that is stable, resilient, and prosperous.

A democratic Lesotho is consistent with American interests and contributes to regional stability. The United States remains a strong supporter of Lesotho's efforts to consolidate the gains achieved since the country's embrace of democratic governance in the 1990s. If confirmed, I will work in partnership with the Government of Lesotho to support their democratic institutions and civil society so that the people of Lesotho continue to be represented by responsive governance and combat corruption that erodes its progress.

One of Lesotho's greatest challenges is an HIV/AIDS adult prevalence of 22.7 percent, one of the world's highest, devastating the country's social and economic fabric. The United States commitment to ending HIV/AIDS through the PEPFAR program has transformed millions of lives around the world. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has been a steadfast partner in this fight, and I look forward to working with them and colleagues in the U.S. government to continue our strides forward. If confirmed, I will focus on promoting sustainability and long-term planning with the Ministry of Health and National AIDS Commission to take on greater responsibilities and plan for the future.

As the largest bilateral donor to Lesotho, the United States plays a pivotal role in helping promote economic development in a country whose government is

strongly committed to improving the lives of its citizens. Earlier this year, the Lesotho five-year Millennium Challenge Compact, which will lead to improvements to water and sanitation systems, healthcare infrastructure, and investment climate, entered into force. The legislative reforms the Government of Lesotho enacted earlier this year demonstrate a commitment to our shared vision of growing the Lesotho economy with a healthy workforce and sustainable jobs. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Lesotho to ensure that MCC investments are sustained and benefit as many Basotho as possible.

Lesotho is a shining example of how AGOA stimulates economic growth. AGOA has spurred a vibrant textile and apparel industry that is the nation's largest private sector employer and sub-Saharan Africa's largest exporter of garments to the United States. The country continues to face substantial economic challenges, however. The Government of Lesotho has an ambitious plan to become the world's first sustainable "digital hydro nation" and generate clean energy for domestic use and export to neighboring countries. If confirmed, I will work to encourage the Government of Lesotho to continue policy and legislative reforms necessary to promote sustainable economic growth, empower Basotho entrepreneurs, and attract foreign investment, particularly in the energy sector where U.S. innovation and leadership can be transformative.

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions.