

Robert O. Blake
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Indonesia
Before the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to become the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia. I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for placing their confidence in me and for the incredible opportunity to serve the United States in this country of growing strategic importance to us.

I would also like to introduce my wife, Sofia, and our three daughters, Kalena, Zara, and Alexie. It is with their unconditional love and support that I have been able to serve our great nation for the last 28 years in ever more challenging assignments. I would also like to recognize my parents Robert and Sylvia Blake who are here today. My father had a distinguished career in the Foreign Service and instilled in me a respect for public service and an interest in foreign affairs. Whatever good habits I have acquired as a diplomat can largely be ascribed to his and my mother's good genes and example.

Mr. Chairman, Indonesia, an emerging power, is a strategic partner of the United States. It is the world's third largest democracy, the most populous Muslim-majority country, and an emerging economic leader, not only in Southeast Asia, but globally. Indonesia is a member of the G20, the 2013 host of APEC and the WTO Ministerial, and a major influence within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Our countries share common values, and, if confirmed, it will be one of my priorities to continue to elevate and deepen our bilateral relationship. Three years after President Obama and Indonesian President Yudhoyono signed the Comprehensive Partnership in 2010, we have arrived at an unprecedented level of interaction between our governments, and it is my intention to sustain and build on that. If confirmed, I will also seek to further the work of my predecessors to increase the people-to-people linkages among our citizens through educational and professional exchanges and public-private partnerships to create a long-term foundation for mutual understanding and collaboration.

Fifteen years ago, as Indonesia began its transition to democracy after decades of authoritarian rule, the prospects for Indonesia's future were very uncertain. It is a testament to the commitment of the Indonesian people that a retreat from democracy is unthinkable, and the work of institutionalizing open and inclusive

governance and increasing capacity continues. Mr. Chairman, you and others on this committee may recall that there was a time when the United States had limited engagement with Indonesia. That time has passed. Today, the United States looks to Indonesia as a responsible emerging leader in the region and a valued partner in areas such as counterterrorism, environmental conservation, peacekeeping operations, and the regional and global promotion of human rights and democratic governance. Indonesia is also an important partner in our Asia rebalance policy to promote regional prosperity, underpinned by regional security and stability.

The nature of our U.S. foreign assistance relationship is also transforming. There are significant sectors – higher education, health, and strengthening local governance – where the United States must continue to support Indonesia’s efforts to build capacity and improve outcomes. We also have a robust defense cooperation agreement that supports international military education and training programs, as well as foreign military sales. With this support, Indonesia is on a steady path to eventually assume its place as a middle income country and expand its ability to engage in bilateral and trilateral cooperation, including with the United States.

The United States has committed foreign assistance funds to support a \$600 million Millennium Challenge Corporation compact that focuses on development of clean and renewable energy, sustainable land and forest management, nutrition assistance, and procurement modernization. Indonesia is among the top emitters of greenhouse gas and is one of several target countries for the President’s Global Climate Change initiative. The United States has launched a number of significant climate change and environmental cooperation programs with Indonesia to help address deforestation and land use challenges and advance Indonesia’s efforts in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. These efforts include the Indonesia Forestry and Climate Support Program and the Sustainable Landscapes Initiative; collaboration on peatland science and mapping; support for systems for monitoring, reporting and verifying greenhouse gas emissions; and implementing low emissions development strategies.

There is more work for us to do, however. If confirmed, I will pursue increased trade and investment and opportunities for U.S. businesses, deepen our collaboration on innovations in science and technology, and share America’s story and values with the Indonesian people through Public Diplomacy programs. I will also continue to engage with Indonesia’s representatives and citizens to support Indonesia’s goals to strengthen its democratic institutions and rule of law. I will also seek continued progress on protection of members of religious minorities and

trafficking in persons.

Mr. Chairman, in my 28-year career in the Foreign Service I have been fortunate to serve the United States in both Washington and in diplomatic postings abroad in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, including as Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives and my current position as Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs at the Department of State. If confirmed, I will bring the variety of my experiences, including policy and management responsibilities, to lead our mission in Indonesia to tackle the challenges of the 21st century, including the oversight of security for our personnel in our Embassy and constituent posts. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with this Committee and engaging with each of you further, whether here in Washington or during your visits to the region, as we continue to carry out the President's priorities in Asia.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to take your questions.