

**Statement of Heather Higginbottom  
Nominee to be Deputy Secretary of State  
for Management & Resources  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
November 7, 2013**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, and distinguished Members of this Committee.

It is a great privilege to appear before you as the nominee for Deputy Secretary of State for Management & Resources. I am humbled by the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me, and I'm honored to be nominated to follow Jack Lew and Tom Nides, two extraordinary public servants, and to have the opportunity to serve alongside one of our finest diplomats, Deputy Secretary Bill Burns.

I would like to introduce my family members, who are here today: My parents, George and Anne Higginbottom, who inspired me to pursue a career in public service; my brother, Eric Higginbottom; and my husband, Danny Sepulveda, who has steadfastly supported me every step of the way.

We wanted our one-year old daughter, Gisele, to be here as well, but decided it was in the interest of the Committee's regular order to let her watch from home.

As someone who began her career working for then-Senator Kerry, I start out with a deep respect for this institution and its prerogatives. I recognize and welcome the Congress' shared responsibility for American foreign policy and, if confirmed, I pledge to work with you to help make both our diplomacy and development more effective, more modern, and more agile.

The only professional path I've ever known has been public service – from my time in the Senate, to my service as Deputy Director of both the White House Office of Management and Budget and the Domestic Policy Council, to my most recent appointment as the Counselor of the Department of State.

Over the course of my career, I have learned how to get results in government. I've seen that it takes a determined effort to seek out and reward innovation; the willingness to make tough budgetary tradeoffs; the drive to build

and inspire a strong, diverse workforce; and open, honest outreach across the interagency and across the aisle. I have a track record of finding innovative, data-driven, and cost-effective ways of wisely managing public dollars to achieve a greater good.

Those are all skills and experiences that the President and Secretary Kerry thought were essential in a Deputy Secretary of State for Management & Resources. If confirmed, I will share in the global responsibilities for U.S. foreign policy, and have broad management and programmatic oversight responsibilities for both State and USAID. Partnering with you, I will work to position State and USAID for success in the decades to come.

I welcome especially the insight and input of this Committee. I would like to share five areas where I plan to focus, if confirmed.

**First, my top priority will be ensuring that our people and posts are safe and secure.** President Obama has made it clear that we need our diplomats fully engaged wherever our vital national interests are at stake – from Colombia to Indonesia, and Kenya to Yemen.

That is why, if confirmed, I will work to make certain that our processes, organization, and culture keep pace with the rapidly evolving threats facing our diplomats and development professionals.

State Department and USAID personnel are on the front lines of U.S. national security endeavors and there is constant and inherent risk in what they do every day. We owe it to these public servants to do everything we can to protect them as they promote U.S. interests and values in some of the world's most challenging places. To get this job done, we must complete implementation of the Benghazi Accountability Review Board recommendations; regularly review our presence and posture at all high threat posts; and annually review the status of any outstanding recommendations made by any Accountability Review Board -- not just the one convened for Benghazi. We must also ensure that the State Department works more closely with the Intelligence Community to understand the threats to our personnel and with the Defense Department to ensure that we are coordinating efforts to provide our diplomats overseas with the best protection possible. And, if confirmed, I will work with Congress on embassy security legislation and funding to ensure that we have the authorities and resources needed to keep our people safe.

I know Congress shares this commitment to security and I look forward to working with you to make sure we have the resources and tools to deliver on it.

**Second, if confirmed, I will work to better prioritize the resources and programs of State and USAID.** I will see to it that our limited resources are going where we need them most and being used responsibly and effectively.

This is especially important as we continue our efforts to right-size our presence and engagement in key places like Afghanistan and Iraq. In particular, I will work to align resources with policy as we carry out the planned transition in Afghanistan.

We have made substantial progress in building an international coalition committed to supporting a stable and sovereign Afghanistan – that will never again be a safe haven for terrorists. Working closely with the Afghan government and people, we intend to ensure that these gains are maintained. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Ambassador Jim Dobbins and with Congress on this issue.

As the transition progresses, the military continues to draw down, and the Afghan government takes on full responsibility for providing security for its people, we are pursuing a framework to carry out our basic missions beyond the 2014 security transition: training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces, and continued limited counterterrorism efforts against al Qaida and its affiliates, as well as continuing our diplomatic and consular efforts there. Our diplomatic and development efforts are also lined up with this security mission. Supporting preparations for Afghanistan's 2014 presidential election is a key priority. A peaceful transfer of power following a credible election will bolster the legitimacy of the government, in addition to sending a message to all parties their interests can be better advanced through political participation than violence. And making sure Afghanistan has the resources and revenue to sustain the gains we have made this past decade will be critical for promoting regional stability.

**My third area of focus will be management, reform, and innovation.** We must do a better job of aligning our planning, budget, and management functions with our foreign policy and national security priorities.

I will also work to ensure that the remarkable men and women at State and USAID have the training, tools and skills they need to succeed.

If confirmed, I will oversee the second Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, which will identify important policy shifts, areas for innovation, and management reforms required to address the challenges that we face today and in the future.

Of course, Secretary Kerry is personally determined to affect lasting change, so I look forward to partnering with this Committee on authorizing legislation for the Department and USAID.

If confirmed, I will also bring new focus to innovation at the State Department and USAID. Innovation in what we do, as well as the way we work, is critical to deliver on our foreign policy and development priorities. There are tremendous opportunities to improve how we operate and to better use technology – information-sharing and relationship management systems could dramatically increase the productivity of our staff; video-teleconferencing and other technologies could reduce travel costs and improve collaboration. I will also champion the use of technology to improve program transparency, and our monitoring and program evaluation. Data driven decision-making, increasing transparency of how we invest resources and ensuring timely, usable data on performance and results will be central elements of this reform agenda. Foreignassistance.gov is an important start, but we can and must do more.

**My fourth area of focus will be better targeting and coordinating our development efforts.** These investments aren't just the right thing to do – they are also the smart thing to do, because helping to promote stability and creating opportunities for future trade and shared growth is in America's interest.

I will make certain that our key development initiatives like global health and food security deliver results and are sustainable. We must align our business model and investments to have maximum impact. This means investing in economic growth, aligning our workforce with changing needs, and working more closely with a local governments and civil society. We must also ensure that our development agencies are coordinated across government and do a better job of working in partnership with the private sector.

**Finally, if confirmed, I will build on the great work that has been done to strengthen the State Department's economic impact.** At his own confirmation hearing earlier this year, Secretary Kerry said that today "foreign policy is economic policy." More than ever, our prosperity at home depends on our engagement abroad – opening markets, expanding exports, and attracting

foreign investment. If confirmed, I will work to help our embassies and consulates abroad do even more to fight for American companies and promote foreign investment that leads to jobs and opportunity here at home.

Throughout my twenty-year career in public service, I have had one overarching objective: to ensure that our government delivers and that we make it work for the American people.

Our foreign policy investment – at about 1 percent of the federal budget – as others have said is really “national security insurance.” It’s one of the very best investments we can make for our country’s future. But, I believe we can – and we must –do everything possible to increase the return on that investment.

If confirmed, I will work each day to make good on that promise, and partner with all of you to make sure our diplomacy and development help contribute to the kind of world we all want to see, one that really is more peaceful and more prosperous.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.