

Jerry P. Lanier

Ambassador-Designate to Uganda

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

July 21, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to President Obama and to Secretary of State Clinton for the trust and confidence they have placed in me with this nomination to be Ambassador to the United Republic of Uganda. Also Mr. Chairman, I would like to express my appreciation to you for the interest in Africa you have shown over many years, and especially for your interest in Uganda. I assure you that, if confirmed, I will do everything I can to promote the interests of the United States and to assist that country in moving further down the path toward a lasting peace throughout the country, and even greater prosperity and democracy.

As a veteran of 26 years in the Foreign Service, with the majority of that time spent working on African issues, I very much look forward to working in Uganda. My experience as a boy in rural North Carolina, as well as my State Department career, have been excellent preparation for the assignment. In the former I learned courtesy, respect and appreciation for hard work, while the latter has broadened my perspective immensely.

I had my first opportunity to visit Uganda while working for the Africa Command. Uganda has clearly had a turbulent post-independence history in a region of Africa which has often seen political and ethnic dispute, violence, and governmental instability. Sharing borders with Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya, Uganda is deeply and necessarily involved with many of the issues affecting those nations. And Uganda, of course, is now playing a key role in Somalia, with approximately 2600 Ugandan troops forming the backbone and most of the flesh of the African Union Mission in

Somalia (AMISOM). For more than twenty years Uganda has also been afflicted with its own violent terrorist group, the Lord's Resistance Army. The LRA has been a menace to the people of Uganda, but has also murdered, raped, and abducted thousands of victims in other countries in the region. Uganda is literally at the center of some of Africa's most deadly, long-standing and intractable conflicts.

Yet, even within this volatile region and with its own unsettled history, Uganda can count some genuinely amazing achievements during the same period. Under the leadership of President Museveni, Uganda fought a highly successful campaign against HIV/AIDS during the 1990's, reducing its prevalence from 18% in 1992 to under 6% today. The number of children receiving primary education increased from 2.6 million in 1995 to 7.2 million in 2007. Wise economic policies and the hard work of the Ugandan people have also yielded a remarkable 5-6% annual growth in GDP for nearly two decades. Through all of this, Uganda has remained a close partner of the United States and a valuable ally in the region. Today Uganda enjoys religious freedom and toleration, a vibrant and open civil society, and one writer has commented on Kampala's overall quality of life by calling it "one of the most pleasant and safest capitals in Africa."

Many Ugandans, however, have not benefited from these impressive accomplishments and numerous problems remain to be addressed. The conflict in the North persists, although it appears much progress has been made; Uganda also has possibly the youngest population of any country in the world, with approximately half the population under 15 years of age, so education and job creation are serious issues and high priorities; healthcare is also an issue as the health indicators in Uganda remain very low; and the full promise of an inclusive, transparent democracy is still a work in progress.

I believe the immediate challenge for Uganda, and for the US-Uganda partnership, is to maintain the positive momentum in those areas where progress has been good, and to expand that success into other areas where progress has lagged. If confirmed as Ambassador to Uganda, I will work to achieve lasting peace and stability in the North, to highlight the educational and health needs of

Ugandan citizens and support improvements in those areas, and to promote good governance and democracy so there is political space for all responsible points of view, constructive dialogue on the many issues of concern to the Ugandan people, and free and fair elections that reflect the will of Uganda's electorate. I will work with the Ugandans, US government development agencies, multilateral development institutions, and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate. With the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps, USAID, the US Africa Development Foundation, and others working in Uganda, I will seek to maximize efficiency, so these programs are broad based and sustainable.

If confirmed, I will continue to seek cooperation on security issues for the mutual benefit of both countries, as I believe the US-Ugandan partnership is vital if we are to build greater stability in East and Central Africa and to provide a future in which Ugandans are safe from terrorism of any kind.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I welcome any questions the Committee may have.