

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA
UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO BANGLADESH
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 21, 2011

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear today as President Obama's nominee as United States Ambassador to Bangladesh. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Clinton for their confidence in me. I am grateful also to the Senate for confirming me four years ago as Ambassador to Angola, and for allowing me to present myself today.

With your permission, Madam Chairman, I wish to introduce my wife of 40 years, Grace. She and I have traveled together on a journey that has taken us far from our roots in rural Dubuque County, Iowa, where I was raised on a 120 acre dairy farm and where we both attended one-room country schools.

Thirty-seven years ago, we began our public service as Peace Corps Volunteers in Zaire, where we helped villagers raise chickens. That grassroots experience taught us that the rarefied air of diplomacy is far removed from the life of ordinary folks. During my overseas postings I traveled widely, taking America

to the people. If confirmed, I propose to do the same in Bangladesh by visiting all 64 districts.

Having served in Dhaka from 1998-2001, I know that America has profound interests in Bangladesh, the world's seventh most populous country and fourth largest Muslim population. Bangladesh offers a moderate, secular, democratic alternative to violent extremism. Through improved relations with India, Bangladesh has deepened counterterrorism cooperation with its biggest neighbor, thus fostering stability in a troubled region. Bangladesh bolsters global stability as the world's largest contributor to international peacekeeping. The country is critical to global food security; although its population of 160 million lives in an area the size of my home state of Iowa, Bangladesh could feed itself. Other U.S. interests include promoting democracy and respect for human rights, bolstering U.S. trade and investment, and advancing humanitarian interests, especially disaster preparedness.

I believe that we can best advance U.S. interests by promoting a Bangladesh that is democratic, peaceful, secure, prosperous, and healthy.

In some respects, Bangladesh is "The Little Engine that Could." The people are resilient and entrepreneurial; the economy has grown annually at about 6 percent, reducing the poverty rate from 40 percent to 31.5 percent over the past

five years, thus lifting millions out of poverty and creating opportunities for American exports; the country is reining in its population growth rate and achieving Millennium Development Goals, especially maternal and child health; civil society is dynamic, witness Grameen Bank and BRAC, which are translating grassroots democracy into development; women are more empowered; the press is vociferous; and Bangladesh actively combats terrorism. The nation pulses with optimism.

Nonetheless, Bangladesh's challenges are daunting. Its democratic institutions are weak; relations between the leading political parties are deeply polarized; corruption is a serious challenge; government's intentions toward civil society are unclear; and the nation is threatened by natural disasters and rising seas caused by climate change.

America is a strong partner of Bangladesh. We can be proud of helping Bangladesh confront its challenges, especially in health and disaster preparedness. Given Bangladesh's strategic importance and its prospects for a better future, Bangladesh is the beneficiary of the President's three major development initiatives: Feed the Future, the Global Health Initiative, and Global Climate Change. Bangladesh is an important partner as we build on President Obama's commitment to forge new relations with the Muslim world. If confirmed, I will advance America's interests by implementing these initiatives, while helping

Bangladesh confront serious governance, human rights, and poverty concerns. I will also partner with the Bangladeshi-American community to achieve these shared objectives.

I believe Bangladesh is a good partner for the United States in building a better world. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to build on the success of my predecessors to strengthen this partnership.

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.