

**Written Statement of Richard Stengel**  
**Under Secretary-Designate for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
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Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, all the Members of this Committee, I want to thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I am honored to be here today and humbled by the trust placed in me by President Obama and Secretary Kerry. I am very glad to have this opportunity to talk to you about the importance of public diplomacy.

My wife, Mary Pfaff Stengel, is here with me today—she is a South African by birth and became an American citizen almost a decade ago when I was CEO of the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. And I am very proud to have my two sons, Gabriel and Anton, here today as well.

There is one person whose absence today I deeply regret. My father, who passed away earlier this summer, was an immigrant's son from Brooklyn who became an American patriot through his service in the Air Force during World War II. His fondest wish was that I would go into public service. He did not think there was a nobler occupation.

If confirmed, while I will be new to government, I have engaged in a form of public diplomacy for much of my career. As the editor of TIME for the past seven years, it was my job to help explain America to the world—and the world to America. And it was not a romanticized America, but the real America, a nation with outsized virtues and challenges. We did that to an audience of more than 50 million on an array of platforms – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google Plus, Tumblr, even paper. When I was there we grew our digital footprint from under a million to more than 30 million unique users online and 12 million followers on social media.

Before that, as the head of the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, it was my job to reaffirm the centrality and the importance of the Constitution to all Americans and to visitors from around the world.

And a decade before that, I had the great privilege to work with Nelson Mandela during a fraught period in South African history. A new constitution was being haggled over, and Mr. Mandela was presiding over the negotiations. One morning when we were out walking, he asked me to define federalism. Here was one of the great men of the 20<sup>th</sup> century creating a constitution that would bring freedom to his people, asking about a principle designed by American revolutionaries over 200 years before on a different continent. That Constitution is the greatest operating system for democracy that the world has ever known. It is also—in a thousand different ways—our greatest export.

I believe that it is our very openness as a country—openness guaranteed by the First Amendment—that wins over people around the world. We are a nation founded not on a common religion or a common blood or ethnicity, but on an uncommon set of ideas: that all people are created equal and that we all have certain unalienable rights. But we cannot simply cherish those rights, we must promote them. That's where public diplomacy comes in. Public diplomacy is in our DNA as a nation. In the Declaration of Independence, the men who risked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor said they were doing so with “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind.” Thus was born American public diplomacy.

Every day all over the world, there is a great global debate going on. It is about the nature of freedom and fairness, democracy and justice. It is happening in all the traditional ways, in coffee shops and on street corners, but it is also taking place on the new platforms of social media. As a result,

the reach, the scale, the speed of that debate are like nothing before in history. I have been in that debate all of my life. America has to be in that debate. We need to guide it, steer it. We need to lead it. And we cannot rest on our laurels.

Every minute, there are attacks and misstatements about America and American foreign policy that cannot be left to stand. Social media is a tool that can be used for good or ill. It is a powerful medium for truth, but it is an equally powerful medium for falsehood. My Senator from long ago, the great Pat Moynihan, used to say, “You’re entitled to your own opinions, not your own facts.” Well, today, more and more, people feel entitled to their own facts. They choose the facts that conform with their point of view. Even though it is easier than anytime in human history to find information to rebut lies, less of that seems to be happening. But we cannot resign ourselves to this; we need to fight it. That is public diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

And while the means have changed, the rationale for public diplomacy has not. Old style modern communication was a one-way street — newspapers, radio, television. Because of new technology, this narrative is now a two-way street. It is a dialogue not a monologue. It is no longer governments talking to governments. Everyone with a smart phone has a voice and a vote in this global marketplace. Social media is allowing us to build relationships with people around the world, even in the most remote corners. We can and must continue to reach individuals one by one through person-to-person engagement—nothing equals that—but we can reach exponentially more through the new techniques of social media.

That is why I would argue that much of diplomacy today is public diplomacy. For reasons both good and bad, the private salons of diplomacy are less central now than in the past. So much is already public—and what is

not, surely will be. If our policies and ideas are to succeed, we need the support of the public both at home and abroad.

It was Henry Luce, the founder of TIME, who called the 20<sup>th</sup> century the American century. The 21<sup>st</sup> century should also be an American Century, but not necessarily in the same way as the 20<sup>th</sup>. The rise of new powers, the youth bulge, the ubiquity of technology that makes the world even smaller and flatter, all point to a different but no less important American role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our values do not change, but how we project those values needs to adapt to a new and different era.

If I am confirmed, I will focus on a number of issues that I think are vital to America's future and our national interests.

- Sixty percent of the world's population is under the age of 30. The number is even higher in the developing world. Strengthening relationships with emerging leaders and ensuring young people have the skills needed to become productive are of vital interest to the United States. If confirmed, I will advance public diplomacy's focus on youth, especially youth in underserved communities and girls. We must build and deepen relationships with new generations so they see our nation and people as allies and models.
- The media landscape is more crowded and competitive than ever before. No one has to explain that to me. Digital is becoming dominant. Yes, print and radio are still the media of choice in many parts of the world, but we must align our resources toward new platforms that our target audience is using. Social media is a transformational tool that has changed the nature of communication. Working with my colleagues at the State Department, if confirmed, I will identify and implement best uses and best practices of social

media and mobile technology. A young girl in sub Saharan Africa holding a smart phone, for example, can have whole libraries at her fingertips; shouldn't she get a text from us helping to teach her how to start a business? We should also be reaching out to the young man in Sao Paulo who wishes to build a new future through educational opportunity online. We can transform lives by leveraging social media and technological tools.

- We are the entrepreneurial nation. Our entrepreneurial expertise is one of our most valuable exports. If confirmed, I intend to scale up programs that support innovation and connect successful American business leaders with aspiring entrepreneurs in other countries. We should support the efforts of a small businesswoman in Jakarta to attain the language and skills to help her succeed in a global business environment. This not only promotes economic opportunity and highlights the American model of doing business, but also strengthens the rights of disadvantaged groups.
- If confirmed, I will be a champion of educational diplomacy. Education is one of our great strategic assets. The hunger for an American degree is vast. More than 700,000 foreign students study in America, contributing more than \$22 billion annually to our economy. Our educational institutions are the laboratories of democracy for students from around the world. In many ways, English is the language of democracy and English skills are critical to success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If confirmed, I will strengthen our support for English training around the world. America is also the leader in technologies that are revolutionizing the way people learn. I intend to employ these strategic assets—English language instruction, our higher education

system and innovative education technology—to tailor educational exchanges to the 21st century.

- One of my goals, if confirmed, will be to expand public diplomacy's worldwide efforts to combat violent extremism. It is vital to our national security that we provide people, particularly young people in at-risk environments, with alternatives to the misguided ideological justifications for using violence. One successful example of this is the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), which actively refutes terrorist messages across cyberspace. Innovative public diplomacy programs designed to counter violent extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan have been credited with saving American lives. We must confront distortion with reality; we must rebut lies with truth. As the CSCC says, we must contest the space. We must continue to support and advance this vital public diplomacy work.

Finally, I want to salute the men and women working in public diplomacy and public affairs around the world who are advancing our national interests. That includes our exceptional American and local employees working to engage foreign publics overseas, often at great personal risk, as well as our Washington-based staff. They are the inheritors of more than two centuries of American public diplomacy. It is my great honor and privilege to offer my experience and leadership to support and advance the tremendous work of so many dedicated people in service to the United States and the American people.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.