

**Statement by Margaret Uyehara
Ambassador-Designate to Montenegro
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 17, 2014**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

It is a great honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Montenegro. I deeply appreciate the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have shown in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this Committee and Congress to protect and promote U.S. interests in Montenegro.

My husband and best friend, also a career Foreign Service Officer, is not able to be here today but he is no doubt watching from Belgrade, where he just began a new assignment. But I am delighted to have my daughter, Malia, an undergrad at UVA, with me. My other four children could not be present, but they are here in spirit. My sons Andrew, and Ryan, a Captain in the U.S. Army, is returning today from Kuwait where he has just finished a tour of duty with a Patriot missile unit, defending our freedom. Leilani is teaching English in Japan, and Christopher is earning his PhD. I could not be prouder of all five of them and grateful for their love and support. Lastly,

I am touched by the presence of a great number of my other family here today: my Foreign Service family of colleagues.

Today's hearing marks a pivotal moment in my thirty-two year Foreign Service career, twelve years of which I have spent either in Europe or working directly on European issues. In my current position as Executive Director for European and Eurasian Affairs and International Organizations, I lead a team responsible for the management and support of 79 overseas posts, which translates to a team of over 26,000 people worldwide, through an annual operating budget of \$700 million. This team is the operational backbone of our foreign policy in Europe and Eurasia and our representation at the world's key international organizations. Over the years, I have worked to increase efficiency and contain administrative costs overseas, all the while ensuring that our diplomats have all the resources necessary to effectively represent our interests abroad. And serving in positions around the world, from Tokyo to Kyiv, I have witnessed first-hand the important role the United States plays in working with countries as they strengthen their security, grow their economies, and fortify their democratic institutions. I believe that my decades of experience will enable me to be an innovative and effective leader of our mission to Montenegro and partner to

the Montenegrin government and its people as they progress on their path toward Euro-Atlantic integration.

If confirmed, my top priority will be ensuring that Montenegro attains full partnership in the Euro-Atlantic community. A democratic and prosperous Montenegro that meets the requirements for NATO and EU membership will be a stronger, more capable partner for the U.S.

Montenegro has been steadfast in its commitment to becoming a NATO Ally, and has already shown that it is a dedicated security partner by deploying forces in support of NATO, U.N., and EU missions from Africa to Afghanistan. Montenegro is currently providing force protection in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force. And it enjoys an enduring partnership with the Maine National Guard through our State Partnership Program. Importantly, in the wake of the current crisis in Ukraine, Montenegro sent a powerful signal by voting with the United States and the overwhelming majority of the international community on the UN resolution condemning Russia's actions in Crimea, and publicly supporting EU sanctions against Russia.

Recognizing this commitment to Euro-Atlantic values, NATO Foreign Ministers agreed this past June to begin an intensified and focused dialogue with Montenegro to assess its readiness for NATO accession, and promised

to review Montenegro's progress no later than the end of 2015. This decision is a recognition of the great strides Montenegro has already made and of how close they are to the finish line. If confirmed, I will work closely with Montenegro as it focuses on the areas that are instrumental to eventual NATO membership.

Our shared interests extend beyond security. Montenegro's continued economic growth and prosperity yield direct benefits for U.S. investment, exports and U.S. jobs. Major U.S. companies are doing business in Montenegro with several important projects involving U.S. companies on the horizon. But there is room for even greater growth. In particular, Montenegro's energy sector presents opportunities for hydroelectric power expansion and off-shore oil and gas exploration. If confirmed, I will work with Montenegro's already active business community, including the American Chamber of Commerce and U.S.-Montenegro Business Council, to strongly advocate for U.S. business in Montenegro. Together I am confident that we can further enhance the economic ties that bind our two nations and help to create new jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

A key element in the U.S.-Montenegrin economic and security relationship is the guarantee of clean, transparent accountable public institutions steeped in the rule of law. The fight against corruption must be

at the frontlines of this effort. Montenegro has worked to root out corruption. It is forming a fully independent Special Prosecutor's Office to fight organized crime and corruption and has established a new preventive anti-corruption agency. But more must be done.

The United States is a partner in these efforts. We are providing law enforcement and prosecutorial training to the Government of Montenegro to help in this critical work. And next week, in fact, Montenegro's top jurist – the President of the Supreme Court of Montenegro – will be here for meetings at the U.S. Supreme Court. If confirmed, I will continue our collaboration aimed at bolstering rule of law and fighting corruption. I will work with my team to advance the goal of a Montenegro that is a democratic source of stability in the Balkans.

Finally, if I am confirmed for this position, I pledge to place the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Montenegro and our Mission above all else, and to provide excellent service to all U.S. citizens in Montenegro.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, our relationship with Montenegro is an important one— built on our shared commitment to security, prosperity and democracy for all Americans and Montenegrins. If confirmed, I pledge to work with this committee to further advance these values in the service of our common strategic goal: a Europe whole, free and

at peace. Thank you very much for this opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.