

**Statement by Beatrice Welters
Ambassador-Designate to Trinidad and Tobago
before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
February 2, 10:30 a.m.**

Thank you, Congressman Towns, for your kind introduction.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

It is an honor to appear before you today. I want to express my gratitude to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the trust and confidence they have placed in me with this nomination to represent our country as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce my husband, Anthony Welters.

I would also like to acknowledge with pride, my two sons, Andrew and Bryant, who couldn't be here. They are both in college at Notre Dame.

I have spent nearly thirty years involved in civic organizations aimed at expanding educational, career and cultural opportunities for people around the world, with a particular focus on youth.

I have also worked to enhance the cultural experience of Washington, D.C. for members of the international diplomatic corps.

I have served as a Board Member to several prestigious institutes. These experiences have taught me valuable leadership and management skills. I have a proven track record as a leader and a philanthropist. For this work, in 2008, I received the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service from the Smithsonian Institution's Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

And now, I hope to be granted the privilege to use my experience on behalf of our country as Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain.

The island nation of Trinidad and Tobago is an important Caribbean partner of the United States. The relationship between our countries rests on strong foundations. We share a common language and a firm commitment to democratic principles, the rule of law, and a free market system.

Trinidad and Tobago is our largest trading partner in the Caribbean, and currently the largest supplier of liquefied natural gas to the United States. It plays an important role in Caribbean energy security and cooperation.

As you know, the United States, in consultation with its Caribbean partners, has developed the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, a multi-year and multi-faceted citizen security initiative for the Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago will be a key player as we work with Caribbean countries to address the challenges the region faces. Our goal with CBSI is to create a seamless security architecture throughout the entire Caribbean basin, effectively linking our other hemispheric security partnerships.

Trinidad and Tobago chairs the Caribbean Community's security committee and is a driving force behind efforts to increase regional security coordination. The United States works closely with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as other CARICOM members, to support their regional efforts to counter illicit trafficking, transnational crime, and promote social justice throughout the region.

As host of the successful Summit of the Americas this past April and of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in November, Trinidad and Tobago clearly made its mark on the hemispheric and world stage.

I feel especially honored to be nominated to serve our country in the Caribbean, because of my personal background and interests. My paternal grandmother was born in Barbados and my maternal grandmother was born in Jamaica. They immigrated to the United States in the 1920's. These marvelous women filled me with an appreciation of the culture and history of the Caribbean.

As a trustee of the Brookings Institution and a member of the Executive Committee, my interest in the issues confronting this region has deepened. And if confirmed, I plan to continue strengthening the excellent partnership we currently enjoy with the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I believe that my experience and leadership skills in business, civic communities and philanthropy will serve me well to foster and advance America's interests in the Caribbean.

In these efforts, I pledge to work closely with this committee and your colleagues in Congress.

If confirmed, I look forward to representing the United States as Chief of Mission in Trinidad and Tobago, and sharing America's history, and the principles upon which our great country was built.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee. I would be delighted to answer your questions.