

STATEMENT OF ISOBEL COLEMAN  
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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
FOR U.N. MANAGEMENT AND REFORM  
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
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Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members, I am truly honored to come before you as the President's nominee to be the U.S. Representative to the United Nations for Management and Reform. I am grateful to President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Ambassador Power for their confidence. I would like briefly to acknowledge my family members – my father and stepmother, my husband Struan, niece Chloe who lives with us, and my five children – who are here today for this hearing. My family is a source of tremendous pride and joy for me and I so appreciate their support.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to advance America's interests at the United Nations. At its best, the UN can be a powerful partner of the United States, promoting our values, and advancing global peace and security at far less cost to American taxpayers than if we act alone. Today, under enormously difficult conditions, UN peacekeepers are bolstering fragile states in places such as Liberia, Mali and Haiti; UN experts are on the frontlines of the Ebola crisis, working to halt its spread; and in Iraq, UN agencies are making their biggest push in a decade to provide emergency shelter and essential vaccinations to the nearly 2 million Iraqis displaced by the current violence in advance of winter. Each of these critical activities, and many others conducted daily by various UN agencies around the world, are tackling global challenges and humanitarian crises that no one nation can, or should have to, address on its own. When the UN works effectively, Americans are safer, our interests are promoted and burdens are fairly shared across member states.

But as we all know, the UN can be more effective. As President Obama has said, the UN is "indispensable" but also "imperfect." Too often, there is a significant gap between the promise of the organization, and the reality of its shortcomings, such as incidents of sexual exploitation by individual peacekeepers or politically motivated resolutions. As the largest contributor to the United Nations, we have a

significant stake in holding wrongdoers accountable and demanding transparency and effectiveness across the entire organization. In recent years, U.S.-led reform efforts have achieved some meaningful results, such as creating a new inspector general for peacekeeping missions and streamlined logistics through the Global Field Support Strategy. Much-needed rationalization, for example, has led to the elimination of nearly 220 redundant positions and the freezing of salary and benefits for UN staff while the UN undergoes a comprehensive review of its compensation practices. The result has been the slowing of the long-term growth trend of the regular budget.

But let's not lose sight of the fact that the UN's regular budget doubled in size over ten years. There is clearly room for greater budget discipline. If confirmed I will work to ensure that the UN is deploying its resources in the most efficient and effective way, that it is conducting its business in a consistently ethical and transparent fashion, and that it is meeting the highest standards of conduct and integrity. American taxpayers deserve no less.

To ensure that U.S. funds are spent responsibly, improvements are still needed in audit transparency, whistleblower protections, and oversight. With over seventy percent of the UN's regular budget going to personnel costs, the UN must have an effective human resources system that delivers the most capable and dynamic workforce, ensures accountability for performance and results, and also controls growth in compensation costs. Procurement and business processes must also meet international best practices.

I have spent much of my professional life bringing reform and accountability to a variety of organizations. For nearly a decade, I was a management consultant at McKinsey, helping some of the biggest multinational corporations streamline complicated business operations; implement world-class human resource solutions; improve risk management and cut costs. I also worked in a pro bono capacity with public institutions such as the New York City Department of Education on multi-year efforts to enhance accountability and improve performance. In many of my client situations, I had to work with managers determined to maintain the status quo; legacy systems resistant to modernization; and organizations skeptical of

change. Achieving success in these efforts depended on my listening to good ideas from all quarters and finding ways to bring the naysayers on board.

As a small business founder and CEO, I developed a deep intolerance for seeing scarce resources wasted or misused through a ‘business-as-usual’ mindset. Having to make payroll every week instilled in me an even stronger appreciation for the value of each and every dollar.

For the past twelve years at the Council on Foreign Relations, I have focused my energies on bringing attention to the possibilities of reform in a global context: including economic reform, gender equality, educational reform, and political reform. The constant thread connecting all my work has been a relentless focus on improving outcomes. The opportunity to represent American interests in management and reform efforts at the United Nations in many ways uniquely marries my operational and management experience with my deep engagement on global issues.

If confirmed, I would be honored to join Ambassador Power in her determined efforts to make the UN more effective, efficient, and accountable. Working with others in the administration, in Congress, and especially in this Committee, I would do my utmost to help the UN live up both to its ideals and its potential. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.