

**Opening Statement of Kamala Shirin Lakhdhir  
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
January 25, 2024**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to be here today as President Biden's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for placing their confidence in me, and if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to advance U.S. interests and strengthen our increasingly important partnership with Indonesia.

With the Chairman's permission, I would like to remember my parents, who were the initial inspiration for my Foreign Service career. My mother, Ann Hallan Lakhdhir, from Brooklyn and Connecticut, wished to serve in the Foreign Service, at a time when that was impossible for a married woman. She urged me to have the career that was not possible for her. My father, Noor Lakhdhir, was born in Mumbai, India, and against all odds was able to come to the United States for higher education. My parents provided my first education in appreciating and respecting different cultures and countries. I would also like to thank all my colleagues and mentors, who have played and continue to play a vital role in supporting me throughout my career.

I have dedicated many of my nearly 33 years as a career Foreign Service Officer to advancing U.S. relations with the dynamic and vitally important countries of Southeast Asia. I was honored to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I look forward to leading the dedicated Mission team of Americans and Indonesians who work tirelessly to advance the U.S.-Indonesia relationship. I pledge to be a responsible steward of resources provided by Congress, both for diplomatic operations and foreign assistance.

Indonesia has come an incredibly long way since my first assignment in Jakarta from 1994-1996. The country now symbolizes the growing prosperity and stability at the heart of the Indo-Pacific. It is the world's third largest democracy, a G20 member, and a leader in ASEAN and APEC.

On February 14, Indonesia's citizens head to the polls to select a new president and national and regional legislatures. In one day, 204 million registered Indonesian voters will elect approximately 20,000 legislators. It is my hope that Indonesia will successfully carry out free and fair elections and continue to consolidate democratic institutions.

This year, we celebrate the 75th anniversary of U.S.-Indonesia relations, and our progress is truly remarkable. In November, President Biden welcomed President Joko Widodo to Washington, where the leaders upgraded our ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership – the highest in Indonesia's foreign relations.

The announcement is backed by numerous new bilateral initiatives, including enhanced cooperation on climate change, maritime security, health, semiconductors, and billions in private sector investments. Secretary of Defense Austin has signed a new Defense Cooperation Arrangement with his Indonesian counterpart, expanding our role as Indonesia's largest defense engagement partner. If confirmed, I will mobilize our personnel and resources to deliver on these initiatives and improve Indonesia's defense capabilities.

I look forward to working closely with U.S. companies in Indonesia as they pursue high-quality investment opportunities and seek to expand trade. Indonesia's participation as a founding partner in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity, or IPEF, is an important step toward boosting our economic relations. Indonesia is home to a rapidly growing digital economy, and if confirmed, I will work to build a stronger platform for U.S.-Indonesia cyber and digital cooperation.

Indonesia also boasts a large, vibrant youth population, offering immense opportunities to further our cooperation on education, exchanges, and tourism. Indonesia is a crucial partner in tackling the climate crisis and if confirmed, I will work to deepen cooperation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and preserve Indonesia's rich biodiversity. Together with other partners and stakeholders, we are working to implement the \$21 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership to transform Indonesia's power sector by investing in clean and renewable energy.

We are proud to be a key partner for Indonesia in capacity building across a range of sectors, especially good governance and rule of law. If confirmed, I will work to

enhance our long-standing counterterrorism, anti-corruption, and trafficking in persons cooperation. I will also support Indonesian efforts to reinforce interfaith harmony and to advance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As 2023 ASEAN Chair, Indonesia played a constructive role in working to address the Burma crisis, among other issues. If confirmed, I will work with my friend and colleague Ambassador Yohannes Abraham to urge Indonesia's continued engagement on Burma within ASEAN.

As two of the world's largest democracies, the United States and Indonesia have a strong interest in cooperating to tackle the most complex regional and global challenges.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome your questions.