

**Opening Statement for Dean Thompson
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Nepal
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 13, 2022**

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished Members of this Committee; thank you for considering my nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. It is an honor to be nominated for this position.

I would like to start by thanking my family, my wife, Jane, and my three children Marshall, Kendall, and Grace. For more than 26 years in the Foreign Service they have served with me, enduring frequent moves, emergency evacuations, and periods of separation. They have also shared with me the privilege of serving our country, a privilege for which we are deeply grateful. I would also like to thank my parents, my mother is here with us today, for instilling in me a strong interest in service and international relations. My father was the Director of International Programs at the National 4-H Council in Washington for 20 years, and prior to that a member of Peace Corps staff, including director for West Africa at the outset of Peace Corps' mission.

From my time as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau, as a U.S. diplomat in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India, and a leader in the Department's crisis management apparatus, I feel well prepared to serve in this capacity if confirmed.

Serving the American people has been a privilege and, if confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to take on this important responsibility. If confirmed, I will embrace the opportunity to lead a topflight group of American and locally employed staff and I will strive to create an environment that emphasizes the American values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

We are at an important juncture in our relationship with Nepal. Nepal has been referred to as a "yam between two stones," those stones being China and India. While those countries do have important relationships with Nepal, we also share Nepal's interest in strengthening its sovereignty and its partnership with the United States.

If confirmed, facilitating Nepal's economic growth and strengthening the trade ties between our countries will be key priorities. The United States' relationship with Nepal has seen recent gains that cement our 75-year partnership. In February Nepal's parliament ratified the \$500 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact in the face of a torrid PRC disinformation campaign. This project will build electricity transmission lines to connect Nepal's clean, abundant hydropower with South Asia's energy grid. It will also build high-quality roads in Nepal. These projects will increase the prosperity of both of our countries.

USAID just signed a \$659 million agreement with Nepal to contribute to Nepal's development over the next five years. This is a new chapter in the United States Government's long-standing development relationship with Nepal and reflects the evolution of our partnership. Post-earthquake reconstruction is winding down, the transition to federalism is well underway, and through successful programming the United States has helped lay the foundations to support Nepal's goal of graduating to middle-income country status.

If, confirmed, I will also push for the rights of all Nepali citizens and residents. This includes the Dalits, marginalized communities, and refugee communities, including Tibetan refugees. I will encourage the Government of Nepal to implement policies that promote meaningful inclusion, economic opportunity, and humanitarian support.

Nepal's progress on the commitments it made during President Biden's Summit for Democracy demonstrates how important Nepal's young democracy is to its people, and the importance it places on its relationship to the United States. Nepal's support for Ukraine resolutions at the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council demonstrates its dedication to the international rules-based order and the premise of territorial integrity. Nepal is a committed bilateral partner and a committed partner on the world stage.

Finally, if confirmed, I will also work to help Nepal strengthen its democratic institutions. Nepal has come a long way since its civil war only sixteen years ago. Like other democracies, Nepal's politics can be contentious and messy at times, but supporting Nepal's democracy is in our interest and will remain a priority of mine if confirmed as Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by saying that we have an important opportunity to strengthen the U.S. relationship with Nepal. I look forward to working with Congress to build this relationship. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.