

**Opening Statement for Manuel Micaller  
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
November 29, 2022**

Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished Members of this Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan.

I am grateful to be joined today by my mother, Monina Micaller, and I want to acknowledge my brother, Jose Micaller, who is watching from home in San Francisco. Both have supported me throughout my Foreign Service career. And I would like to take this opportunity before the Senate to recognize and honor my late father, Manuel Micaller, Sr., who inspired and encouraged me to embark on this journey of service to our great country.

If confirmed, I will return to Central Asia, where I began my career in 1996 as Vice Consul at the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan and later served as Political-Economic Chief in Tajikistan. I was drawn to this region having studied the former Soviet Union in college, and I keep returning because of the critical importance it plays in our national security and the opportunity to use my experience in a challenging environment to advance our shared interests.

Tajikistan is a fascinating country, rich in history and culture. It has long been at the crossroads of history, and so it is again with the significant global shifts of recent years. With an 843-mile border with Afghanistan, a 280-mile border with China, and exposure to Russian influence, Tajikistan is seeking to diversify its foreign partners beyond its immediate neighbors. Despite the unique challenges presented by Tajikistan's neighborhood and our geographic distance, the United States has proven itself as a reliable partner over the course of our 30-year diplomatic relationship. Today we have an opportunity to strengthen this relationship by easing economic and food insecurity caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and by helping Tajikistan's economy to diversify away from PRC investments.

The only Central Asian country to experience a civil war after the fall of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan is confronting generational dynamics as it balances between a cautious generation that experienced the brutal 1992-1997 civil war and a younger generation that is keen to advocate for itself and address upcoming challenges. We can seize this critical time in generational discussions by using our public diplomacy work to build people-to-people connections that will benefit individuals and civil society for decades to come. Tajikistan has become an increasingly important strategic security partner and has long been a key partner in supporting Afghanistan's stability. We welcome the growing relationship on counterterrorism and border security efforts and continue to carefully consider how to partner with Tajikistan to implement programs and train security and law enforcement officers in accordance with international human rights standards. If confirmed, I will prioritize bilateral and regional security cooperation.

As a previous Political Chief in Dushanbe, I understand how delicate discussions about human rights can be with the Government of Tajikistan. I will not hesitate to urge the government to strengthen the rule of law, institute fair legal processes and institutions, demonstrate

accountability in governance, protect the freedom of expression – including for the press – and uphold the rights of minority and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, women, and religious and ethnic minorities. I will stress how addressing human rights can benefit Tajikistan's most pressing economic and security goals by attracting foreign direct investment and preventing the radicalization of potential terrorists.

If confirmed, I will work to expand and deepen our economic efforts with the government of Tajikistan by supporting the already significant initiatives that develop accountable business practices and transparent institutions, strengthen Tajikistan's banking system, improve the investment climate, reduce corruption, and create an equitable business environment. Tajikistan is eager to become a regional leader on addressing water-related environmental challenges. In both economic and environmental areas of cooperation, there are tremendous opportunities for enhanced partnership that can ultimately lead to a more prosperous Tajikistan.

Protecting Americans abroad is the State Department's most important responsibility. If confirmed, I will endeavor to ensure the safety and health of my embassy team, as well as all American citizens in Tajikistan.

None of this critical work can be accomplished without our dedicated Locally Engaged Staff, Eligible Family Members, and Foreign Service Officers. The diversity of our staff is our greatest strength. I remain committed to an inclusive work environment, consistent with the Biden Administration's and this Committee's vision of a State Department workforce culture that values collegiality, teamwork, and respect.

In closing, Madam Chair, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee, I understand our goal is a stable and prosperous Tajikistan that is free to pursue political, economic, and security interests on its own terms. If confirmed, I will seek to strengthen our bilateral security, reinforce people-to-people and economic ties, and promote the democratic values we share.

I pledge to work closely with you to strengthen the United States' strategic partnership with Tajikistan. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome your questions.