

## NOMINATIONS

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THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2024

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin presiding.

Present: Senators Cardin [presiding], Shaheen, Kaine, Schatz, Van Hollen, Ricketts, Young, and Barrasso.

Also present: Senator Reed.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Our hearing today is to hear from five of President Biden's nominees in dealing with career positions and ambassadorships.

And it is wonderful to have you all here, and we thank you all for being here.

Thank you to Senator Ricketts for being here to lead the Republican side of this hearing. It is not always easy to find members that are willing to adjust their schedules in order to accommodate these hearings. And I thank Senator Ricketts for always being available to this committee to carry out our important work.

I am going to have some opening comments. Senator Ricketts is going to have some opening comments. But first, I want to recognize Senator Reed and allow him to make an introduction, and thank him for being here in the committee. We sometimes have a friendly rivalry between Armed Services and Foreign Relations, but since the National Defense Authorization Bills will be up soon, and I am going to need his help, he goes first.

[Laughter.]

### **STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND**

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Chairman Cardin, Senator Ricketts, Senator Kaine.

It is my pleasure to introduce Kristen J. Sarri, the President's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

Anyone who has had the pleasure of working with Kris knows a couple of things. Number one, she is only partisan about one issue, University of Michigan football.

[Laughter.]

Senator REED. Number two, if you want to get something done, then you want to work with Kris. Time and again, over her career, Kris has worked across the partisan divide to reach consensus on difficult issues. She is smart, she does the hard work to be well informed, and she does the harder work to understand the views and goals of other people.

She also has the integrity to follow through on her commitments. As a Senate staffer and as a senior advisor at the Department of Commerce, and the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Interior, Kris has earned a reputation as a problem solver and a coalition builder. Among other things, her work to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund laid the foundation for the Great American Outdoors Act.

Most recently, Kris served as the president and CEO of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, where she transformed the organization into a leading voice for conserving and restoring U.S. waters, primarily by engaging local communities and businesses in stewardship.

If confirmed as Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans, Kris will bring her knowledge, her experience, her commitment, and her skills in coalition building to advance global cooperation in science and the environment.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, it is vitally important to have the best talent to effectively move our nation's interests forward. In my view, there is no one more prepared and well qualified for this post than Kris Sarri. I urge the committee's support for her nomination. And for Kris, I would say Go Wolverines. For me, I would say Go Army. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

Ms. SARRI. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Once again, we have a little bit of controversy. It is Go Navy, and it is Go Maryland, but other than that, you were fine. Thank you, Senator Reed. You are certainly excused. We appreciate your input, and thank you very much for being with us.

I am going to shortly introduce the other four nominees, but before I do that, let me just welcome our nominees and their families, and thank you all for your willingness to serve in these public positions. These are extremely challenging times to be in any position of Foreign Service. So, we thank you for your willingness to come forward. And we also thank your families because we know you cannot do this without a supportive family.

So, strengthening global health security by applying the lessons learned from the Covid pandemic and implementing science based approach in reducing spread of infectious diseases. That is very much on our agenda today.

Advocating for international human rights standards, accountability for past atrocities, and good governance in Sri Lanka as we support its economic recovery and stabilization of its financial system. Very much on our minds.

Building consensus to protect marine environments from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, deep seabed mining, and trafficking of endangered species, or banned toxic substances, on our minds. A lot of issues we want to talk about.

Protecting Moldova from Russia's aggression as it strengthens its democracy, implements anti-corruption reforms, and negotiates secessions with the European Union, very much on the agenda today. Staffing the reopening of the U.S. Embassy in Seychelles with a full time diplomatic presence to promote maritime security, combat drug trafficking, and protect the environment.

For each of these missions, and including the mission in regards to the Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs, I am particularly interested in that because Maryland has one of the most recent new marine sanctuaries at Malloys Bay.

So, it is wonderful to welcome you all here. The subject matters that you are going to be responsible for are ones that are critically important to our country.

And let me yield to Senator Ricketts for his opening comments and before I introduce our nominees.

**STATEMENT OF HON. PETE RICKETTS,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEBRASKA**

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Chairman. And I would add my thanks to all of you for your willingness to serve our country, and for your families, for the sacrifices you go through. As Governor, I did numerous trade missions around the world, and I really appreciate all the Foreign Service people who helped us on those, and the sacrifices you make to be able to represent our country. So, thank you very much.

As the Chairman said, you know, these are not easy jobs, especially as we think about the time that is so critical for the United States to advance our interests and the security of the American people around the globe. Today, we are considering nominees for five important positions, all of which require you to contend with some of the greatest challenges facing the U.S. in foreign policy and national security than we have seen maybe in our history.

Ms. Adams-Smith, this is a critical year for Moldova. This fall, Moldova will hold both a presidential election and a referendum on EU aspirations. Moldova continues to face Russian hybrid warfare as Putin stops at nothing to replace the pro-western leadership with new government bought and paid for by the Kremlin. We cannot let Putin play puppeteer with the future of Moldova, and we must do all we can to support western nations.

However, Moldova's future is also dependent on the success of Ukraine on the battlefield. The only thing standing between Moldova and the Russian attack is the Ukraine army, which again, one of the reasons why it is important we continue to support Ukraine.

Ambassador Fitrell, while the Seychelles might be Africa's smallest country in terms of population, our 27-year absence in Victoria has created a vacuum the PRC has been more than happy to fill, and so the Seychelles has a significant geopolitical significance.

If confirmed, you will face a difficult task of reestablishing an embassy basically from scratch. That is not going to be easy. We cannot waste any more time. But appreciate your willingness to do this. This is vital that we get it done right, and your efforts will send a clear signal to the Seychelles that we are back and here to stay.

Ms. Horst, for you, Sri Lanka has been a poster child for the dangers of the debt trap diplomacy of the PRC. Nothing illustrates us more than the Port of Hambantota—did I get that pronounced right? Good enough, which was eventually forfeited to the PRC under that 99-year lease. Reckless spending fueled by loans from the PRC and others has created an economic crisis in Sri Lanka, and it is struggling to dig itself out of that.

What happens in Sri Lanka illustrates why the United States must provide viable alternatives to the PRC, and I am encouraged by DFC's recent efforts to finance a shipping container terminal in the Port of Colombo. It is these types of strategic investments that were envisioned when the DFC was set up as a way to effectively push back on the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative.

Ms. Sarri, OES has a broad portfolio, so I will not have enough time to cover everything you would oversee. However, one area I did want to touch upon is the science and technology agreements, and in particular, our science and technology agreement with the PRC.

For years, we have seen the PRC exploit research cooperation with the United States to steal technology and support its domestic civil-military fusion objectives. The Biden administration is currently renegotiating SDA with the PRC. Simply put, I, and of course, others, have significant concerns. That is why I have introduced common sense legislation that would ensure Congress is able to provide necessary oversight over any deal that is reached.

I hope you would agree with me that when it comes time for something that is important, the Administration should show its work force. This legislation passed unanimously out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Mr. Chairman, I hope the committee will do the same.

And then Dr. Nkengasong—OK, how close was I on that? The position you were nominated for was created with the intent to help us get ahead of the next pandemic. I would note that when Covid first began to spread from the PRC, it was high income countries that were hit first and hardest. It is in these countries we need to lead with diplomatic engagement, not development assistance.

And in the PRC at the WHO, we need strong diplomats capable of negotiating access for investigators. If confirmed, I hope that you can apply lessons learned and much needed diplomatic leadership so that we can properly prepare for whenever the next pandemic virus occurs.

And again, thank you all very much for your willingness to serve. I look forward to hearing your testimony and the questions.

And Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Ricketts.

There is a common theme among all five of you; you all have an incredible experience on foreign policy, and your commitment to foreign policy. Three of you are career. The other two have extensive experience in the foreign policy agenda. So, you all have made a career out of foreign policy, and we thank you for that commitment.

I will introduce you in the order in which you will be speaking. Dr. John Nkengasong, who was confirmed by U.S. Senate as the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator on May 5, 2022. He also leads the

State Department's Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy. That bureau serves as the department's coordinating body for work when strengthening global health security to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases, including HIV AIDS, as well as elevates and integrates global health security as a core component of the U.S. national security and foreign policy.

Elizabeth Horst is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Pakistan. She came from the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, where she was a Minister-Counselor for Public Diplomacy for Mission Germany. She is a member of the Senior Foreign Service. Previously, she served as SCA's Director of Security, Transnational Affairs and Assistance Office. As Charge d'Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission of U.S. Embassy in Estonia, she focused on transatlantic security on NATO's Eastern Flank.

Next, we have Troy Fitrell, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor. Most recently, held the position of Director of the Office of West African Affairs at the Department of State. He serves as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, as Deputy Director of the department's Office of Southern African Affairs, and Deputy Director of the Office of International Security Cooperation in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs.

He was senior advisor to the United States Special Envoy for the Great Lakes of Africa, coordinating U.S. policy on the cross-border security, political, and economic issues in the Great Lakes region.

Welcome.

Kelly Ann-Smith is the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Mission to the European Union. She arrived in Brussels in July 2021. Ms. Adams-Smith is a career diplomat in the U.S. Senior Foreign Service with the rank of minister-counselor. Before arriving at Brussels, Ms. Adams-Smith served as Senior Coordinator for National Security Affairs in the office of Vice President Kamala Harris. Previously she served as Charge d'Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Prague.

Welcome.

And Sarri, you already have been introduced by Senator Reed, but we welcome you here, and we thank you very much for your willingness to serve.

So, with that, let us start with Dr. Nkengasong. Your testimonies will be made part of our record. You may proceed as you wish. We ask that you try to summarize your comments, and it is to leave time for us to be able to ask you questions.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN N. NKENGASONG, OF GEORGIA,  
NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR GLOBAL  
HEALTH SECURITY AND DIPLOMACY**

Mr. NKENGASONG. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, I come before you today at a pivotal time as one of the greatest threats to our national security is the potential for a next pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that we are more connected and vulnerable than we ever thought. More than 1 million Americans lost their lives, and the U.S. economy suffered over \$14 tril-

lion in damage. Climate crisis, rapid movement of people, misinformation, disinformation, are all making our jobs harder. U.S. leadership matters now more than ever.

Last year, Secretary Blinken, in close collaboration with Congress, established the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy. This bureau is organized around four core missions. One, to lead diplomatic engagement on global health security. Two, to leverage and help to coordinate U.S. foreign assistance while promoting international cooperation for health threats. Three, to elevate global health security as a top national security and foreign policy priority for our country.

We have already made tremendous progress. Let me highlight three examples. First, we continue to make progress in the fight against HIV AIDS. Congress's bipartisan support for PEPFAR has enabled us to save over 25 million lives.

The Bureau has demonstrated success in leveraging the PEPFAR platform to address health security threats such as Ebola, Marburg, and mpox. I look forward to working with this committee in a bipartisan fashion to pass a clean 5 years PEPFAR reauthorization in 2025.

Second, I recently chaired the Pandemic Fund Strategic Committee, which will launch the 5-year strategy later this month. And last, the bureau launched the Foreign Ministry Channel for Global Health Security in March, which will work to coordinate corporate, collaborate, and communicate effectively with other like-minded countries to fight infectious disease threats.

It is not a question of if a new health threat will emerge. It is a matter of when. The Bureau stands by to lead diplomatic efforts to support these goals.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nkengasong follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN N. NKENGASONG

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Ricketts, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to be with you today as the first nominee to serve as Ambassador-At-Large for Global Health Security and Diplomacy at the Department of State.

I come before you today at a pivotal time in our country's and the world's security. As we navigate the current crises in Ukraine, the Middle East, and the ever-evolving challenges with China, one of the greatest threats to our national and global security is the next potential global pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that we are more connected and more vulnerable than we ever thought. In fact, within just a few weeks, the COVID-19 virus had spread to 165 countries. More than 1 million Americans have tragically lost their lives, and the U.S. economy has suffered over 14 trillion dollars in damages from COVID-19 alone, which is more than twice the amount of our annual Federal budget.

We also know that health threats are becoming more frequent and more severe. The number of disease outbreaks from zoonotic spillover—that means animal to human disease transmission like Ebola, mpox, and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza—is increasing roughly 5 percent every year. One million people are estimated to have died due to anti-microbial resistance in 2019, and these deaths are predicted to overtake the deaths due to cancer globally by 2050.

The growing climate crisis, ongoing rapid movement of people, and increasing risks of misinformation and disinformation are all creating the conditions for a more challenging response to future disease threats at home and abroad.

U.S. leadership matters now more than ever. Our ability to collaborate, coordinate, cooperate, and communicate with other countries, including those with whom we often disagree, will be what protects us when the next global health security threat emerges.

And as the world's leading global health donor through our annual investment of more than 10 billion dollars per year in lifesaving programs, including the PEPFAR program, we have a unique role in using a combination of our diplomacy and foreign assistance to ensure the world is better prepared to respond to health threats.

Two decades ago, under President Bush and with the support of Congress, the State Department assumed leadership of PEPFAR to address the HIV AIDS pandemic. In August 2023, Secretary Blinken, in close collaboration with Congress, established the Bureau for Global Health Security and Diplomacy.

This Bureau brings together our collective global health security assets across the State Department organized around the core mission of:

- (1) One, leading diplomatic engagement on global health security,
- (2) Two, leveraging and helping to coordinate U.S. foreign assistance while promoting international cooperation on health threats, and
- (3) Three, elevating global health security as a top national security and foreign policy priority across our missions in 195 countries around the world.

Since the Bureau's August 2023 launch, we have already made tremendous progress. We continue to sustain the progress in the fight against HIV AIDS and accelerate the response to one of the world's most significant health security threats across 55 countries. Congress's bipartisan reauthorization of PEPFAR has enabled us to save up to 25 million lives and reaching a record 20.47 million people on life-saving HIV treatment, with a plan to reach 23 million by the end of 2025.

The Bureau has demonstrated success in leveraging the PEPFAR platform to address other health security threats including outbreaks of Ebola, Marburg, and the ongoing mpox outbreak in Central Africa.

The Bureau is also able to tap into the full power of our diplomatic teams across the State Department to elevate HIV AIDS as a political priority and sustain our gains—I look forward to working with this committee—in continued strong bipartisan fashion—to pass a clean 5-year PEPFAR reauthorization in 2025.

As part of our diplomatic leadership on global health security issues, last year I assumed the role as primary U.S. representative to the Pandemic Fund designed to strengthen pandemic preparedness capacities of the most vulnerable countries around the world. I recently chaired the Pandemic Fund's strategy committee, and the strategy will be launched later this month, aimed at addressing critical gaps in pandemic preparedness capacity globally.

To embed health security in our foreign policy, the Bureau launched the Foreign Ministry Channel for Global Health Security in March. This group of 18 countries has committed to working together on establishing strong early warning systems, countering mis- and disinformation, and enabling access to critical medical countermeasures during health emergencies.

I conclude by reminding this committee of one central truth: It is not a question of "if" a new health threat will emerge—it is a matter of "when." U.S. leadership is critical, and the Bureau stands ready to lead diplomatic efforts in support of these goals. Thank you, Chairman Cardin, and Ranking Member Ricketts, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much for your comments.  
Ms. Horst.

**STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH K. HORST, OF MINNESOTA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA**

Ms. HORST. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ricketts, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing. I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka.

I started my diplomatic career in South Asia more than 20 years ago and have long championed fundamental U.S. principles, including respect for human rights and economic freedoms. If confirmed,

I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interest in Sri Lanka.

I would like to thank a few special people, most importantly, my husband, Colonel J. P. Gresh. He is my anchor and my joy, and we have built our lives around a shared love for public service and adventure. Five countries, four dogs, 15 years and counting. We are joined by my sister Sarah Horst and my nieces Bailey Evans and Kate Evans. And I hope that being in the Senate today inspires them on their own path of public service.

I also want to thank my parents, my father, Dr. Jim Horst, who taught me empathy. And my mother, Reverend Dr. Judith Stone, who taught me generosity, qualities that have served me as a diplomat and a leader.

Sri Lanka has been a vital partner to the United States in the Indo-Pacific region for over 76 years, and if confirmed, I would focus on three main pillars of U.S. interests: Broadening economic cooperation, bolstering security interests, and deepening ties with people across the entire country.

Sri Lanka has shown resilience and continues to make steady progress on economic growth. As the country regains its economic footing, we will continue to support Sri Lanka's people. Sri Lanka's strategic significance in the Indian Ocean calls for cooperation to address security challenges and competitors. If confirmed, I will reiterate our shared commitment to a stable, free, and open Indo-Pacific region, and the rules based international order.

Sri Lanka has a vibrant civil society, and I look forward to expanding our people to people ties, including with the dynamic Sri Lankan American community. I will support members of marginalized populations, accountability, truth and reconciliation, and transparency and justice.

Let me close by noting a fourth pillar, the true source of diplomatic success: The people at U.S. Embassy in Colombo. If confirmed, I will empower our inter-agency team and local staff to make a difference in our bilateral relationship and practice a foreign policy that benefits the American people.

I look forward to working with Congress on these priorities.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Horst follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH K. HORST

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ricketts, and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing. I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka. I am grateful to be considered for this trusted and special responsibility. Senators, thank you for considering my nomination.

I started my diplomatic career in South Asia more than 20 years ago and have long been a champion of fundamental U.S. principles, including respect for human rights and economic freedom. Our American ability to prosper and grow while still protecting the democratic values enshrined in our Constitution is what sets us apart and makes us an example to follow. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to support and advance U.S. interests.

Before I get into more detail about our relationship with Sri Lanka, I'd like to acknowledge and thank a few of the people who helped me reach this hearing today. Most importantly, my husband Army COL JP Gresh. He is my anchor and my joy. Our home embodies civ-mil cooperation, and together, we've built our lives around a shared love for public service and adventure: five countries, four dogs, fifteen years and counting.

We are joined today by my sister, Sarah Horst, who never fails to make me laugh or provide the honest, incisive, feedback that only a sister can give. My two nieces,



Bailey Evans and Kate Evans, are here as well, and I hope that being in the Senate today inspires them on their own path of public service. I also want to thank my parents: my father, Dr. Jim Horst, who taught me empathy, and my mother Reverend Dr. Judith Stone, who taught me generosity. These qualities have served me well as a diplomat and leader in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Sri Lanka is a vital partner to the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, and it has been for over 76 years. If confirmed, I would focus on three main pillars of the U.S.-Sri Lanka relationship: broadening our economic cooperation, bolstering our security interests, and deepening our ties with Sri Lanka's diverse and vibrant population.

Sri Lanka's economy has great potential. Strengthening trade relations, encouraging private sector-led growth, and promoting inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship are key aspects of my vision for enhancing our economic ties.

Sri Lanka is a resilient country. While still healing from a civil war that ended in 2009 and from the political and economic crises of 2022, Sri Lanka continues to make steady progress in the face of remarkable internal and external challenges. During the crisis of 2022, the United States provided immediate food aid and chemical fertilizers to check hunger and ensure a good harvest. Today, the United States continues to provide food for school children across the country. As Sri Lanka regains its economic footing and confidence, we will continue to be a strong partner to support the Sri Lankan people.

Sri Lanka's strategic significance in the Indian Ocean and proximity to global maritime lanes calls for close collaboration in promoting a secure Indo-Pacific region. Our partnership is critical to addressing new security challenges and competitors, including countering transnational crime, enhancing maritime security, and responding to natural disasters. If confirmed, I will reiterate our shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region, collaborative maritime security, the rules-based international order, and stability throughout the Indian Ocean.

Sri Lanka has a vibrant civil society, and if confirmed, I look forward to expanding our people-to-people ties, including with the dynamic Sri Lankan American community. I will support members of marginalized populations, accountability, truth and reconciliation, and transparency and justice in Sri Lanka.

Let me close by noting a fourth pillar, the true source of diplomatic success: the people at U.S. Embassy Colombo. If confirmed, I look forward to leading, developing, and empowering our interagency team and local staff to make a difference in our bilateral relationship, and practice a foreign policy that benefits the American people. I look forward to working with Congress to build our important relations with Sri Lanka. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

We will next hear from Mr. Fitrell.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TROY FITRELL, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE SEYCHELLES**

Mr. FITRELL. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ricketts, members of the committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they placed in me as their nominee. I am proud to have my family here today with my wife Catherine, a fellow Foreign Service officer, and my children, Madeline and Sam, who have spent their lives immersed in the Foreign Service as well, including visits to the Seychelles. Sam graduates from Virginia Commonwealth University tomorrow morning. So, this is a pretty special week for us.

We recently reopened an embassy in the Seychelles after shuttering it in 1996. If confirmed, I would be the first Ambassador in residence in Victoria in 28 years. The role having been performed since then by the person credentialed to Mauritius. I previously had the honor to be that person in Mauritius.

And while we had significant success in our bilateral relationship, both sides were keenly aware that the absence of a resident Ambassador was an opportunity cost. If confirmed, it would be the honor of my career to reestablish that position.

Seychelles holds an important place in the Indian Ocean. It strides some of the world's busiest shipping lanes, and the bilateral relationship between our two nations is built on a foundation of shared values and mutual respect.

If confirmed, my top priority would be the safety and security of American citizens that make their way to the Seychelles. But I would also act energetically to promote our other national interests. I would support the democratic process and our partnership in international fora. I would promote economic development, including advocacy for U.S. exports, and further develop our robust security partnership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ricketts, and members of the committee for the opportunity to be here. My wife and I are both former Hill staffers, and so I would also like to thank your staffs. I know how hard they work for you and your constituents, and how well they represent you every day.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and representing the interests of the American people in the Seychelles, and I hope very much to welcome you there on a visit someday soon. I would be happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fitrell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TROY FITRELL

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Seychelles. I am proud to have my family here today, with my wife Kathryn, a fellow Foreign Service Officer, and my children Madeleine and Sam, who have spent their lives immersed in the Foreign Service as well, including visits to the Seychelles.

In June of last year, 2023, we reopened an embassy in Seychelles after shuttering it in 1996. If confirmed, I would be the first Ambassador-in-residence in Victoria in 28 years, the role having been performed in the interim by the person credentialed to and residing in Mauritius. I previously had the honor to be that person in Mauritius. While we had significant successes in our bilateral relationship at that time, both sides were keenly aware that the absence of a resident Ambassador in the Seychelles was an opportunity cost for what we could achieve together. If confirmed, it would be the honor of my career to reestablish the position.

Seychelles holds an important place in the Indian Ocean, astride some of the world's busiest shipping lanes, and the bilateral relationship between our two nations is built on a foundation of shared values, mutual respect, and a commitment to fostering peace, stability, and prosperity. If confirmed, my top priority would be the safety and security of the American citizens that make their way to the Seychelles, but I would also act energetically to promote our other national interests.

In 2020, Seychelles held free and fair elections and power peacefully transitioned to an opposition party for the first time since independence 46 years ago. This showed the world that the Seychellois are fiercely committed to democracy, and if confirmed, I would work tirelessly with them to solidify their democratic institutions.

The United States and the Seychelles have a longstanding and significant security relationship. Whether countering piracy off the Horn of Africa or fighting the scourge of illicit narcotics trafficking that plagues the region, Seychelles understands the stakes and has joined its resources and efforts to ours. By continuing to work together with the international community, we are actively contributing to the stability and security of the Indian Ocean region.

I would also work to enhance economic ties between our nations, exploring opportunities for trade and investment that will benefit both Seychelles and the United States. During my previous experience accredited to the Seychelles, I recognized that we had no formal bilateral links in the economic sphere, so I negotiated, and on behalf of the United States, signed an Investment Incentive Agreement between our countries. This remains the guiding document for our economic and commercial engagement, and I look forward to using it to encourage American private sector activity in the Indian Ocean. Despite its relatively high per capita income, Seychelles needs support to strengthen its financial system, both to foster reliable economic growth and to push back on those that might wish to exploit the system for illegal purposes. The United States is well-placed to help in these areas, to our mutual benefit.

I would prioritize cooperation on environmental issues, particularly in the areas of marine conservation and the sustainable development of Seychelles' blue economy. Seychelles has been a leader among small island states in sounding the existential threat posed by rising sea levels and an increased frequency of extreme weather events. Our joint efforts can serve as a model for global cooperation in addressing these pressing challenges.

If confirmed as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Seychelles, I will support and encourage the democratic process and our partnership in international political and security fora. I would promote economic development, including advocacy for U.S. exports, support for U.S. investors, and diversification of the Seychellois economy. And I would facilitate educational and cultural interactions between our nations, fostering greater understanding and appreciation for our respective histories, traditions, and values.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to address you today. My wife and I are both former Hill staffers, and so I would also like to thank your staffs for all they do to support you and your constituents every day. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in representing the interests of the American people in the Seychelles, and I hope very much to welcome you there on a visit 1 day soon. I am happy to answer any questions.

The CHAIRMAN. I know the staff, though this committee, appreciates that reference to staff, so there is a future after being a staff person here.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I know they appreciate that.

Ms. Adams-Smith.

**STATEMENT OF KELLY ADAMS-SMITH, OF NEW JERSEY, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ricketts, and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for putting their trust in me, and if confirmed, I pledge to work with this committee to advance the U.S. interests in Moldova.

I would like to thank my husband, Steve, a career Foreign Service officer, and our children, Sophie and Ben, for their support and dedication to public service. I am also grateful to my parents, Ed and Carol, my late mother, Anna, my brother Ed, and my sister, Deborah, who is here today.

Finally, I want to recognize my in-laws, Ginny, and Terry Purvis-Smith. Terry joined the Foreign Service after a full career as a Presbyterian minister. He passed away earlier this week, but I know he would have been so proud if he were here today.

I have dedicated the last 29 years to advancing U.S. interest in Europe with a focus on central and eastern Europe. Support for the western integration of countries in this region is fundamental to U.S. security. This is especially true for Moldova, which faces a moment in history that is filled with great opportunity and tremendous risk. If confirmed, I will be a responsible steward of U.S. resources and will prioritize the security of U.S. citizens in Moldova.

The government of Moldova faces a window of opportunity to secure the country's western orientation. Russia's aggression in Ukraine has forced Moldova to confront significant security, humanitarian, and energy impacts. With U.S. and European assistance, Moldova has managed these threats and embarked on an ambitious reform agenda. Its success has made it even more of a target for Russian malign influence.

If confirmed, I will mobilize our personnel and resources to support Moldova's efforts to protect its democracy and enhance its security. I will also support U.S. efforts to strengthen the capacity of Moldovan institutions to combat corruption, and I will use the knowledge, experience, and contacts gained from five tours in EU member states to ensure our actions and assistance support Moldova's accession path, making it a stronger partner for the United States.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Adams-Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KELLY ADAMS-SMITH

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ricketts, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova. I am immensely grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for putting their trust in me at this critical time. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this Committee to advance U.S. interests and strengthen our strategic partnership with Moldova.

I would not be here today without the love and support of my family, friends, and colleagues. In particular, I would like to thank my husband Steve, who is also a career Foreign Service Officer, and our two children, Sophie and Ben. Their dedication to public service and the support they have given me through multiple Foreign Service tours has been inspirational. I am also grateful to my parents Edward and Carol Adams, my sister and brother Debra and Ed, and my late mother Anna Cramer. They always championed my education and career in service and never stopped believing in the American dream that allowed this Jersey girl with working class origins to represent the United States abroad. Finally, I also want to recognize my mother-in-law Ginny Purvis-Smith and my late father-in-law Terry Purvis-Smith, who passed away this week. Terry also served in the Foreign Service and would have loved to attend today.

I have dedicated 29 years in government service to advancing and protecting U.S. interests in Europe, with a focus on Central and Eastern Europe. I am convinced that support for the freedom, independence, and western integration of countries in this region is fundamental to U.S. security. This is especially true for a country like Moldova, which faces a moment in history that is filled with great opportunity and tremendous risk. If confirmed, I look forward to leading the talented team at Embassy Chisinau, who work tirelessly to advance the U.S.-Moldova relationship. I pledge to be a responsible steward of U.S. resources, and I will prioritize the safety and security of those in Embassy Chisinau and of U.S. citizens in Moldova.

The Government of Moldova faces a historic geopolitical window of opportunity to secure the country's democracy, security, and western orientation. Russia's war of aggression in Moldova's neighbor, Ukraine, has forced Moldova to confront significant security, humanitarian, and energy impacts. With U.S. and European assistance, Moldova has managed these threats and welcomed refugees while pushing forward on an ambitious reform agenda designed to lead to western integration. At the

same time, Moldova's success in the face of these challenges has made it even more of a target for Russian malign influence.

Since Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, the United States has significantly expanded its support for Moldova's resilience. I want to thank the Committee for its strong bipartisan leadership and support for this essential assistance. If confirmed, I will mobilize our personnel, resources, and partnerships to continue to support Moldova's efforts to protect its democracy, increase its prosperity, and enhance its security in the face of Russian destabilization attempts.

The western-oriented, democratic future Moldova seeks will not be possible without continued, significant progress in advancing rule of law and countering corruption. Understanding that corruption within Moldova's institutions has undermined political stability and economic growth in the past, the current government has made justice sector reform a top priority. If I am confirmed, I will support U.S. efforts to strengthen the capacity of Moldovan government institutions to investigate and prosecute crimes of corruption.

Moldova has made more progress on its EU accession path in the past 2 years than it has in all its post-Soviet history. Having served in five EU member states and from my current assignment as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Mission to the European Union, I am convinced that there is no more efficient way for a country like Moldova to achieve the future it seeks than to go through the rigorous process of EU accession. If I am confirmed, I will use my EU knowledge, experience, and contacts to ensure our actions and assistance support Moldova's accession path, making it a stronger partner for the United States. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. And thank you for your comments.  
Ms. Sarri.

**STATEMENT OF KRISTEN SARRI, OF MARYLAND, NOMINATED  
TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR OCEANS AND  
INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS**

Ms. SARRI. Thank you, Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Ricketts, Senator Kaine for welcoming me today. And Senator Cardin, thank you so much for your leadership on Mallows Bay.

It is a privilege to be considered as the President's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. I want to thank my family and Senator Reed for their continued support of me and my career, and members of the committee and their staff for taking time to meet with me.

Many of the environmental challenges we face are global, and they require strong partnerships and alliances to address. If confirmed, my focus will be on working on issues where OES leadership can have a strong impact for the American people, our allies and partners, and the planet.

I would like to address three priority areas. First, pollution of all types harms human health, the environment, and economic growth. One pressing global issue is plastics pollution. If confirmed, I would work with Federal agencies, Congress, stakeholders, and other countries on a strong, legally binding agreement to address the global plastic threat, and to work to strengthen implementation of existing agreements and partnerships to address plastic and other types of pollution.

Second, nature provides critical resources that nourish us and improve our quality of life. Loss of marine and terrestrial habitat and species increase the risk of conflict and instability. If confirmed, I will prioritize working with the committee, Congress, and other Federal agencies to advance policies that address nature

crimes, protect environmental defenders, and help protect and restore natural ecosystems.

Third, space activities are essential to our way of life, from enhancing economic opportunity, to helping us find our way home. If confirmed, I would like to work to promote peaceful cooperation in space and its sustainable use in the future.

OES's work is integral in achieving the U.S. environmental, economic, and national security objectives. If confirmed, I commit to maintaining strong lines of communications and cooperation between OES, this committee, and Congress.

Thank you for considering my nomination, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sarri follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KRISTEN SARRI

Thank you, Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Ricketts, and Members of the Committee for welcoming me today. It is a privilege to be considered by this Committee as the President's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, or OES for short.

I am grateful to President Biden for nominating me, and for the trust he and Secretary Blinken place in me. And I am thrilled to have the chance to serve my country, if confirmed.

I want to thank Senator Reed for his support of my nomination and his encouragement throughout my career. His dedication to service, his commitment to improving the lives of others, and his work ethic serve as the model for me.

I am grateful to my family—Drew, Cathy, Antulio, Gabriela, and Alex—who are a constant source of support and inspiration for me. And to my mom and dad who instilled in me the value of public service and ignited my interest in protecting the environment, for both people and nature.

Finally, I want to thank Members of the Committee and their staffs for taking the time to meet with me. If I am confirmed, I look forward to continuing our conversations and strengthening the vital relationship between OES and this Committee.

Throughout my professional life, I have sought opportunities to promote community development, environmental stewardship, and job creation by building partnerships and working to strengthen the effectiveness of government. In each of my professional roles, I was fortunate to work with Members of Congress, their staffs, and public officials who focused on how government should work best to serve the American people and support our economy and environment. I learned from them the value of strong bipartisan cooperation, developing practical solutions to problems, and gaining other perspectives when working to shape policy. It is these lessons and experiences that I carry with me and that shape my work.

Now is a critical time for international cooperation on environmental and scientific issues. Many of the challenges we face are global and require strong partnerships and alliances to address. If confirmed, my focus will be working on issues where OES leadership can have a strong impact for the American people, our allies and partners, and the planet. I would like to address three priority areas.

Pollution, of all types, harms human health, the environment, and economic growth. OES plays a vital role in developing foreign policy to protect our air, water, and land from pollution. One pressing global issue is plastics. The international community is coming together to negotiate a new global agreement on combating plastic pollution. If confirmed, I would work with our Federal domestic agencies, private and non-profit stakeholders, and other countries on a strong agreement to address the global threat of plastic pollution to people and the environment, and work to strengthen implementation of existing agreements and partnerships to prevent this and other types of pollution.

Nature provides critical resources that nourish us, improve our quality of life, and fuel community development. One million species could disappear in the next decade unless we act to conserve, protect, and restore ecosystems critical to human well-being. It is in our own interests, and OES has a huge role to play.

Further, the ties between conservation and security are become increasingly clear. Loss of habitats and species increase the risk of conflict and instability. Nature crimes, such as illegal logging, mining, and wildlife trade, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, undermine the rule of law, and hinder our efforts to con-

serve species and their habitats and to protect human rights and public health. If confirmed, I will prioritize working with this Committee, Congress, and other Federal agencies to advance policies that address nature crimes, protect environmental defenders, and help protect and restore natural ecosystems.

OES's work extends into the Earth's atmosphere and beyond. Space activities are essential to our way of life—from enhancing economic opportunity to helping us find our way home. Last year, Secretary Blinken released the first-ever Strategic Framework for Space Diplomacy to advance space cooperation. If confirmed, I would work to strengthen U.S. leadership in space to promote peaceful cooperation and its sustainable use in the future.

OES's strength is its people. They are experts in their fields and leaders on international efforts to conserve and restore the environment, build resilience to global challenges, and advance cooperation in science and space. The bureau's work is integral in achieving the United States' environmental, economic, and national security objectives. If confirmed, I would work with staff to continue this strong tradition, and I commit to maintaining strong lines of communication and cooperation between the OES, this Committee, and Congress.

Again, thank you for considering my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me thank all five of you for your appearance here today and your comments.

I have standard questions that are asked to all nominees for positions. We would appreciate going down the line, answering it either yes or no.

The first question is, do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Yes.

Ms. HORST. Yes.

Mr. FITRELL. Yes.

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Yes.

Ms. SARRI. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Yes.

Ms. HORST. Yes.

Mr. FITRELL. Yes.

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Yes.

Ms. SARRI. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Yes.

Ms. HORST. Yes.

Mr. FITRELL. Yes.

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Yes.

Ms. SARRI. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Yes.

Ms. HORST. Yes.

Mr. FITRELL. Yes.

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Yes.

Ms. SARRI. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. You are all off to a really good start.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I will recognize Senator Kaine for questioning.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to all the nominees.

And Mr. Fitrell, VCU is my hometown school, and I congratulate you on your son's graduation tomorrow.

Just sticking with you for a second. You know, it is interesting, the history of the U.S. not having an embassy in the Seychelles. It was a cost savings move. Seychelles is a pretty important country. They are classified as free in the Freedom in the World 2023 index of governance conditions.

Seychelles has enjoyed significant economic success. It has long had the highest per capita GDP in Africa, classed by the World Bank as a high income country. I sometimes think in the U.S., we tend to focus a lot of attention on problems without rewarding success. And that we might be better at magnifying success if we work with the successful, and shine a spotlight on their success, and then use that to create a desire in the region to be as successful as this country.

And so, the fact that the Seychelles's embassy was closed in the 1990s just as a cost savings move, and then served from Mauritius, is kind of a bit of evidence that, I think, fits into a pattern that we have of not paying attention to successful countries.

I am so glad that the Biden administration decided that this was a relationship that was worthy of the U.S. reestablishing and having managed the responsibility from Mauritius earlier in your career. I mean, you are the perfect person to have the opportunity to reopen this, and I understand that this has also been very well received by the Seychelles, that the U.S. is upgrading the relationship in this way. Am I correct about that?

Mr. FITRELL. Yes. Thank you for the question, Senator. I could not agree more.

Yes, the host government is extremely pleased that we have finally returned to the Seychelles. When I was credentialed there and representing the United States on my visits, I never had a meeting when it was not mentioned, "Why do you not have an embassy here?"

I have spent a good part of the last 15 years advocating for this. And understand, that that predates the return to a true constitutional democracy with the change of power between parties. But it just simply became even more important since then, as you said, to recognize success, to be part of that, to encourage it, and yes, to find ways to reward that. We have national interests there, and it is important to be there in order to exercise those interests.

Senator KAINE. I generally think that we do much better in trying to encourage success if we are not lecturing others on how to be successful if there are examples in their region of success that they can look at and draw lessons from. And I am excited that you will be in this position with this upgraded responsibility.

Ms. Sarri, I want to come to you now in your position on an oceans question. I am the chair of the Americas Subcommittee here on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And I am really worried about the illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, primarily by China, primarily in the Pacific.



Talk a little bit about from the State Department perspective, what you might do to prioritize dealing with that challenge.

Ms. SARRI. Senator, thank you very much for that question.

As you pointed out, IUU fishing impacts ocean health. It is one of the largest causes of overfishing. And so, it means it is a food security threat to a number of countries. It is an economic threat to our fishermen, and it is a national security and human rights threat because of forced labor and human rights abuses that take place.

And first of all, I want to say thank you to Congress for the Maritime SAFE Act. We need a whole of government approach, and that starts from when the fish gets on a boat all the way to when it ends up on a consumer's plate here in the U.S.

And so, there is a lot of work to do through the interagency process to elevate illegal, or IUU fishing. It would be a priority of mine. I would look forward to working with this committee and Congress to see if there are even more tools that we could use to address IUU.

Senator KAINE. We would love to work with you on that.

One last question that I was not intending to ask, but you mentioned space in your opening testimony. And obviously, a concern about international cooperation and space is with more and more satellites, more and more platforms up in space, the risks of collisions that would damage investments, but also create debris that could cause all kinds of other challenges. It is the classic kind of a problem for which there has to be some global norms, and rules, and solutions to keep everybody's investments safe.

Other parts of the U.S. Government are involved in this, but what role would your office have in trying to find the right rules of the road for space?

Ms. SARRI. OES works with the Department of Defense, NASA, FCC, on issues around potential marine debris. OES's specific role is around the peaceful use of space. It is about trying to do best practices in order to avoid collisions. If orbital debris does take place, you know, working with the country if it is our debris, or if it is their debris as well. So, it is really around space diplomacy efforts.

Senator KAINE. OK. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Nkengasong, the University of Nebraska Medical Center has one of three biocontainment facilities in the country and the only federally funded quarantine space. If this is not a commitment I am asking you to make, I am just saying that if you are confirmed, I would recommend visiting.

They were instrumental in taking some of Ebola patients from Africa, Americans who have been infected with Ebola and treating them here in the United States, as well as some of the first Covid patients as well. So, certainly, worth your time, if you are confirmed, to make a visit. Not asking you to make a commitment, but keep in mind.

Ms. Sarri, so within OES, the Office of Science and Technology Cooperation overseas, our STAs, as I was talking about before, the U.S. has 60 of these with countries like Canada and Japan. However, I am sure you agree that the STA with the People's Republic of China is different. And in my opinion, frankly, China's been playing us for a fool for three decades now.

It is an adversary. They practice civil-military fusion to leverage their civilian and commercial resource for military and defense purposes. And the evidence suggests they are going to continue to look for opportunities to exploit partnerships organized under the STA to advance their military objectives.

In February, the Biden administration and Beijing agreed to extend their STA for another 6 months to continue negotiations. So, I want to ask you a few simple questions that I hope we can agree on. Do you believe that Congress should be able to provide the necessary oversight on an STA with the PRC?

Ms. SARRI. Senator, thank you very much for your questions and expressing the concerns you have with STA with PRC. I appreciate that. I am aware that there is a notification requirement in the Appropriations Bill, and yes, I do think that Congress should be consulted as we look through a new renewal of the STA with PRC.

Senator RICKETTS. Right. If the Administration were to finalize negotiations on a new STA with the PRC, do you believe Congress should receive detailed justification on what was agreed to and why it is in our national security interest before the agreement goes into effect?

Ms. SARRI. Senator, if confirmed, I would be happy to make sure that we are fully briefing your staff and other interested staff in the STA.

Senator RICKETTS. Great, thank you.

Do you believe that any specific text of any negotiated agreement should have clear, defined guardrails on what are permissible research areas for collaboration and what are not, and would you agree that we want to make clear that areas of dual use concerns should be made off limits?

Ms. SARRI. Senator, if confirmed, I would want to talk to the State Department and their lawyers about what can go into an STA. I do not know if there are restrictions like that. I am used to it, kind of, putting guardrails on how China and the U.S. would work together versus specifically saying what each could or could not do. So, if confirmed, I would be happy to get back to you specifically on an STA, including types of research that could or could not take place.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you.

I am going to switch gears on you just a little bit here. The U.S. Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs is responsible for formulating and implementing U.S. policy on international issues concerning the ocean, the Arctic, and the Antarctic.

As you know, prior to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. collaborated with Russia on Arctic climate research. However, soon after the invasion, that collaboration, rightfully, stopped. Since that time, Putin's war has continued to rage on. Tens of thousands of innocent Ukrainians have been killed. Thousands of Ukrainian children have been abducted. Millions of Ukrainians

have become refugees, and countless Ukrainians have endured brutal human rights abuses.

Do you believe that it should remain our policy that the United States will not collaborate with Russia on any research in the Arctic until Putin ends his war in Ukraine?

Ms. SARRI. Senator, I agree with that. Yes.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you.

Russia, obviously, is not the only adversary we have to worry about in the Arctic. The PRC has a self-proclaimed near Arctic state—this is crazy. It has expanded its presence there as well.

For decades, Russia has actively excluded the PRC in other non-Arctic countries from playing a role in its backyard. However, since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and Putin's "no limits partnership" with Xi, Russia has been forced to embrace and increase PRC role in the Arctic.

Last year, we saw the PRC begin to send personnel to research stations located in a Norway svalbard and in Iceland, after a lengthy hiatus we saw Russian Coast Guard sign an Arctic cooperation agreement with the China Coast Guard, and we saw the PRCS Polar Research Institute make startling announcement that it plans to deploy listening devices on a large scale in the Arctic Ocean.

In your view, how should the United States respond to the PRCS growing research and other activities in the Arctic? And how should U.S. policy on this question take into account increased cooperation between Russia and the People's Republic of China?

Ms. SARRI. Senator, thanks for that question. I appreciate it.

First of all, about the near Arctic nation, I agree with you. I do not know what a near-Arctic nation is. The government—

Senator RICKETTS. They made that term up, did not they?

Ms. SARRI. Yes. I believe that is the case. You know, Arctic governance should be with the Arctic nations. The U.S. is a very important Arctic nation. There is the Arctic Council which has been the preeminent area for looking at how we manage the Arctic. With Russia's illegal invasion of the Ukraine, the U.S. and other countries paused participation. There are efforts now to continue to do work and not engage in anything that the Russians are taking part in.

I think one of the very significant things that the U.S. recently did was extend its continental shelf. That gave us much more territory actually in the Arctic, which means we have much more control over who can do scientific research, what can actually take place in that.

I think through the Arctic Council and other work with Arctic states that do not include Russia, we have to have a unified front about how we are going to approach the research that is taking place and the threats that it poses to the other Arctic nations.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much, Ms. Sarri.

Ms. SARRI. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Nkengasong, first thank you for mentioning the need for the 5-year reauthorization of the PEPFAR Program. That is something that this committee is very much interested in pursuing. We are

disappointed we have a short term extension. We do believe we need the 5 years, so I am glad to hear you mention that.

The position that you have been nominated to, the Ambassador At Large For Global Health Security and Diplomacy, there will be an interesting relationship that I would like to get your views on. There is a turf issue between the State Department and USAID on health issues. Your responsibility is to the State Department directly. We had the USAID that is engaged also in healthcare issues, and there have been some concern about the mission creep between the two divisions, the full division and USAID.

Can you just tell me how you plan to work with USAID so that the turf differences do not at all impact on our ability to be effective in dealing with global health issues?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

I want to assure you that it is very clear once the bureau was launched that what our role will be—we will be leading in three key areas. First of all, is to, as I said earlier, lead with diplomatic engagement with all global health security related issues. Second, to elevate global health security as part of our foreign policy. And last, to coordinate our foreign assistance so that it can help advance our international health cooperation and global health security.

If you look at the recently launched global health security strategy that the White House just released, on page 32 of that document, it clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of silver agencies. A beautiful document, great strategy, and in there outlines 13 functions of what the State Department should be doing in the overall space of global health security.

So, it is very clear that through the interagency collaboration, constantly engaging with USAID, CDC, HHS, and NIH, we will be able to leverage more effectively and coordinate our global health security functions.

The CHAIRMAN. Of course, one of the areas that will help is burden sharing, to have our allies step up and do more than they currently are doing in this global area. The United States is by far the leader on resources. Senator Coons, who chairs the subcommittee on Appropriations to deal with foreign aid will tell you that he does not have enough money. So, if we only have limited dollars available, the competition between money that is going into direct programs at USAID, are going into your agency, are going to be in discussion. How do you assure us that that discussion will be positive and that it will not deter from the working relationship between you and USAID?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Absolutely. Within the new bureau, the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy, there is a program side of it, which is the PEPFAR, which you alluded to, and that has existed for the past 21 years with clarity of roles and responsibilities.

The global health security side of that, the new bureau, is mainly around policy coordination and leading with diplomacy. I will give you a good example to substantiate that. Last year in February, if you recall, there was a Marburg outbreak in Equatorial Guinea in Central Africa. None of our agencies were present in that country. The only presence we had was our Ambassador, and he played a

critical role of engaging with the political leadership of that country to enable us to deploy assets to respond to that threat, which includes CDC deployment, USAID deployment, and WHO.

When discussions were tense, where the government of that country said, we do not want any further cooperation, our mission and Ambassador was the only person in country that brokered the relationship. So that is the kind of coordination and leveraging that we hope the new bureau will enable us be more effective in our global health security response.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Horst, since the Civil War in 2009 in Sri Lanka, there is still been an issue of reconciliation and accountability. There is concern about corruption in the country. There is concern in regards to the human rights. The draconian Online Safety Act is looked at as trying to stifle any dissent in the country. So human rights are going to be front and center in our expectation of our Mission in Sri Lanka.

Can you assure us that that is going to be a key priority of the Mission, and that the U.S. Mission will be there to speak out on behalf of those individuals whose voices are being difficult to be heard in the country today?

Ms. HORST. Senator thank you very much for your question, and I share your concern and your commitment to human rights. And if I am confirmed, I will put accountability, governance, anti-corruption efforts at the forefront of what our Mission will be doing, including working with partners in civil society across Sri Lanka.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Shaheen, you have just come in? If you would like to go first, that is fine.

Senator SHAHEEN. Feel free.

Senator BARRASSO. OK, thanks.

I would like to talk about the World Health Organization, if we could. The Biden administration has vowed to reform the World Health Organization, but it threw away its leverage early on, in my opinion. The Administration, against the advice of many, rejoined the World Health Organization, gave it \$200 million without insisting on a single reform.

In a few weeks, the Administration is expected to commit the United States to two international agreements that would expand the World Health Organization's authority during a global pandemic. Last week, I joined my Republican colleagues in calling on President Biden to reject these agreements, which I believe are harmful.

Yesterday, the UK announced that they will refuse to sign the World Health Organization's Pandemic Accord, saying that they will only support the adoption if it is firmly in the UK's national interest and respects national sovereignty.

December 13 last year, during a hearing held by the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, you said, "This Administration is firmly committed to ensuring that the World Health Organization implements a comprehensive set of organizational reforms, particularly to strengthen its governance, its budgetary and

financial management processes, and to improve oversight to strengthen the organization's efficiency and effectiveness.”

You know, instead of focusing on reforming the World Health Organization, the Administration is choosing to hand over U.S. sovereignty to them. We are the United States, not the United Nations. So, the question is, do you commit to ensuring that U.S. sovereignty is not infringed upon?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Senator, let me respond in the affirmative. Absolutely. The sovereignty and security of the United States will not be undermined in this negotiation process. We have been very insistent that there are two articles in the Pandemic Accord discussion that I would like to just reiterate.

Article 3 states clearly that WHO has no authority over sovereign states. Absolutely not. Article 24 of that same negotiation further expands, and it states clearly that the neither the Secretariat of WHO nor the Director General has any authority over any sovereign state in the areas of dictating, telling them what to do in terms of mandate, use of any tools, including vaccines, lockdown, et cetera. I think it is absolutely very clear in Article 24. We will oppose any, any attempts or any perception of that accord that seeks to undermine or is perceived as going to undermine the sovereignty of the United States.

I would just end Senator by saying that the sole purpose for us in the discussion is to protect our national security interests. And there are three things that we are seeking to achieve in this negotiation. One is to ensure that we have capacity globally that can allow us to easily detect, prevent, and control, and respond to disease outbreaks as we know it. A disease outbreak anywhere in the world becomes a threat right here. One million Americans died because of COVID-19.

Second, is to ensure that we have access in a timely fashion to biologic materials, including specimens, data that will allow us to develop vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics that will protect us. And last, the ability to distribute those resources in an equitable manner.

Senator BARRASSO. So, following the UK's announcement just yesterday about their refusal to sign, is the UK alone able to block the passage of the Accord? If not, how many other member countries would need to oppose it in order for the Accord to fail?

Mr. NKENGASONG. The Accord, Senator, is being discussed, including as of this morning about several issues, especially areas related to intellectual property, or technology transfer, pathogen access, and sharing, as I indicated.

This accord has been going on the discussions for about 2 years. So, we remain hopeful that countries that are discussing receive value in our collective security, and learn the lessons, as Chairman said, of what Covid taught us about our common vulnerability. So, we just do not exactly know who is going to oppose it or not, but we have to show our leadership. As I said in my introduction, this is the moment for us to show the leadership. We have been a global [unclear] leader over the years, and this is not the moment for us to relent on our leadership.

Senator BARRASSO. Mr. Chairman, can I have one quick last question, and it is to Ms. Kelly Adams-Smith. Moldova's recent, al-

most exclusively reliant on Russian energy. Tuesday, Norway and Moldova signed an agreement to tighten cooperation in their energy sector. Can you tell me the current status of the Moldova's energy grid?

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Thank you very much for the question, Senator.

It is true that Moldova was 100 percent dependent on Russia for its energy sources. After the Russian reinvasion of Ukraine, it became clear that that was no longer possible. And the Moldovan government with assistance from the United States and European allies has made some successes in becoming less dependent.

The energy grid, the electricity grid of Moldova is now hooked up to the European grid. USAID is funding an electrical line between Romania and Moldova. And Moldova is now also buying for the first time non-Russian gas, which is an incredibly positive development.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHAIRMAN. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning.

Congratulations to each of you on your nominations.

Ms. Adams-Smith, I want to begin with you because I had the opportunity to travel to Moldova for the first time back in February, and I was very impressed with the commitment of the Moldovans we talked to about joining the EU and looking West, and concern about what is happening in the war in Ukraine and what Russia is doing.

Also met with President Sandu, Chisinau, and she shared her focus on judicial reforms and how important she thinks that is ahead of the upcoming presidential elections. So, and I think rightfully so, that without a reformed judiciary, it will be very hard for Moldova to continue the reforms that they need to make.

So, can you talk about what more we can do, what more you would do if confirmed to help support Moldova as they are looking at these particularly the judicial reforms?

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Senator, thank you very much for the question.

Our assistance has focused on helping the Moldovan government improve its rule of law and fight anti-corruption, especially in terms of increasing the independence of the judicial sector. We have assisted the Moldovan government in creating a system for pre-vetting of prosecutors and judges, and created a model court system.

And if I am confirmed, we will continue these efforts, but also focus on working with creating space for free and independent media, and working with civil society, because those are absolutely essential in holding the government to account on its anti-corruption path.

Senator SHAHEEN. The other thing we heard concerns about is the amount of Russian disinformation that is being spread throughout Moldova. Just this week there was a *Politico* article that pointed out that Russia is responsible for circulating deep fake videos of President Sandu to try and undermine her reelection campaign.

So, is there more that we should be doing to help the Moldovans protect themselves from this kind of disinformation?

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Thank you, Senator, for the question.

Russian malign influence takes many forms. In Moldova there is this disinformation and propaganda. There is also energy coercion, hybrid and cyber attacks. There is also conventional threats.

Our assistance is focused on helping the government increase its resilience toward this disinformation. I think they are learning a lot. They learned a lot from last year's regional or local elections. And is there more that we can do? Absolutely. I believe that we should use all the tools in our toolkit. If there is evidence of election tampering, or use of propaganda, or deep fakes that interfere with the running of free and fair elections, we should consider using sanctions and visa bans and to send a powerful signal that this cannot happen in Moldova.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I really appreciate that. And hopefully, the Global Engagement Center can help us as we are thinking about how we can help other countries.

Ms. Horst, the People's Republic of China has considerable economic leverage over Sri Lanka because of its infrastructure, investments, and loans. Now, I was pleased to see a recent U.S. investment in Sri Lanka's port capabilities, but it is really a drop in the bucket compared to existing Chinese capital in the country.

So, can you talk about what the implications are of China's ability to leverage infrastructure investments and other energy, other issues in the country, and what more we should be thinking about as we are trying to provide a counterbalance to what China's doing?

Ms. HORST. Senator, thank you very much for that question. And it gets to the heart of the Indo-Pacific strategy. And Sri Lanka is an incredibly important member, or an incredibly important part of that, not only because of the geography, but also because it is a democracy with an open economy.

And so, the investment by DFC that you named is a great example of how we are using tools that the U.S. Government has to invest and show a different model of investment that is different than what the PRC might offer. This is a half a billion-dollar investment in what we see as Sri Lanka's future. It is transparent, it will promote good governance. And this is exactly the kind of alternative that we feel will just demonstrate to Sri Lankans that they have a choice, and we think that our model is better.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I am out of time, but I just returned from a trip to the Indo-Pacific about a month ago. And one of the things we heard in the countries that we visited where China has tried to make those kinds of investments, is that they would rather do business with the United States because for all the reasons you just gave.

But unfortunately, we have not always come to the table in ways that can provide the support that those countries need. So, thank you. I appreciate your comments, and I do not know if you want to respond to that before I am out of time.

Ms. HORST. Senator, if I am confirmed, I will find ways to bring all of the resources that United States, and our friends and allies have to help continue along these efforts.



Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Thank you all.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And let me start by congratulating all of you on your nominations.

And I just want to second what Senator Shaheen said with respect to Moldova and others. We look forward to working with you, Ms. Adams-Smith, if you are confirmed.

I do want to pick up on the Sri Lanka question. I have a long term affinity to Sri Lanka, and I visited Sri Lanka last year on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of U.S.-Sri Lankan relations. And I believe Ambassador Julie Chung has been doing a great job, and I know you will as well, if you are confirmed, Ms. Horst. I was pleased to see the DFC commitment.

Could you speak a little bit about how Sri Lanka's progressing with respect to the IMF reform package? As you know, this was a long time in coming. There have been serious economic issues. How do you gauge progress with respect to the IMF reform package?

Ms. HORST. Senator Van Hollen, thank you. And thank you. I know you do have a very special relationship to South Asia and to Sri Lanka, so I appreciate very much your interest.

The IMF is working closely with partners and with the Sri Lankan government to make sure that Sri Lanka can get back on better economic footing. We are making sure that any debt negotiations treat all partners fairly, and that are transparent. And there is an element of the IMF program that also looks at governance to make sure that any IMF programs that come in also take care of the most vulnerable and are spread fairly.

So, if I am confirmed, I will continue to work and follow in the mighty footsteps of Ambassador Chung to make sure that we continue to work with the IMF to help Sri Lanka on economic footing.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you. And you know, while I was there, one of the programs that we have got that I think was appreciated was greater transparency in the budgeting process. And look forward to continuing our conversation on that piece as well, which is important to the United States, important to the IMF, and important to others.

And I do want to also—I know Senator Cardin raised the issues of human rights. I had a number of conversations about progress toward transitional justice. And so, I do look forward to continuing that conversation as well.

Ms. Sarri, it is great to have a Marylander as part of the group. Congratulations. As you well know, as we seek to make a transition toward cleaner energy, critical minerals are critical part of this. The United States really got caught, you know, decades behind China in terms of sourcing of minerals, the developing of the batteries. But one of the sources of some of these minerals are these undersea nodules. So maybe that is an opportunity, but clearly there are also environmental risks.

So, my question to you is, how do you think about that and especially in light of the fact that the United States is not part of the Law of the Seas Convention. Does that put us at a disadvantage as part in this conversation?

Ms. SARRI. Senator, thank you so much for the question.

The U.S. not being part of the Law of the Seas does put us at a disadvantage. There is an International Seabed Authority that is responsible for this type of deep sea mining. The U.S. is able to be an observer on it, and the U.S. has worked very hard to make sure if deep sea mining does go forward, that it is done in a precautionary manner with strong protections for the environment.

But because we can only be an observer, we do not have as much influence. And it is the PRC that is moving most quickly forward with development. And I can tell you that whenever we try to exert something under the Law of the Sea, because we are not a member, the PRC does not feel that it needs to follow our advice.

So if confirmed, I would be working very hard on this issue. OES works on the recycling aspects, and tries to make sure that any type of critical mineral mining is done in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. I have long believed it was a mistake for us not to be part of the Law of Sea Convention. I hope, you know, Congress will get with it, given the disadvantages we face.

Ambassador Nkengasong, it is wonderful to see you again. I think the last time we were in person may have been in South Africa on the 20th anniversary of PEPFAR. So thank you for your leadership there. And as you know, many of us believe that the success of PEPFAR can be built on in terms of creating a preventive health and health infrastructure. Could you talk a little bit about how we might leverage the success of PEPFAR into other areas of health?

Mr. NKENGASONG. Thank you, Senator. Good to see you again, and thank you all for the support in securing the 1-year reauthorization of PEPFAR to next March, which as the Chairman said, we look forward to working with you to reauthorizing it for a full, clean 5 years.

Senator, over the past 21 years, PEPFAR has been extremely successful and impactful in saving more than 25 million lives, preventing 5.5 million children born free from HIV infection. But in addition to that, it has built a large platform that is currently being used when needs arise in responding to other disease threats like cholera outbreaks, like Ebola outbreaks, Marburg, mpox currently going on in DRC. So we should be very, very proud of that. I mean, those are not taken away resources from PEPFAR but leveraging those systems and institutions that we already have in country.

And that is what I believe PEPFAR should continue to do. That is, stay focused on its mission to bring HIV AIDS to an end as a public health threat by the year 2030, which means bringing down the rates of new infections down to below 90 percent compared to 2010. But with that platform, given the current context of rapidly emerging diseases, partner countries continue to use that to get that goal of bringing HIV AIDS to an end as a public health threat.

As all of us discussed when we are in South Africa, we need to look at the priority populations that we need to invest in more and be very laser focused in adolescent girls and young women, and bring down the rates of infections among those, in children, and in key populations. Put our resources there so that we maintain the

gains that we have achieved over the years and accelerate so that we can absolutely effectively get to 2030.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you for all your good work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Schatz.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you to all of the nominees for your willingness to serve.

Ms. Sarri, good to see you again. I want to talk to you first about IUU. I just want to understand how you envision working to implement some of the tasks recommended by the IUU Working Group, between agencies, between NOAA, between State. There is a kind of cross-agency coordination that is necessary, and I am wondering how you intend to prioritize your tasks.

Ms. SARRI. Senator, thank you very much for the question. I know you have been a long time leader trying to combat IUU fishing, so I appreciate your leadership on that.

I think, first of all, the Maritime SAFE Act by creating an inter-agency group, which OES is the current chair of, has been incredibly important.

I think sometimes people hear about, you know, illegal unregulated fisheries, and they think, oh, it is just an environmental issue. And it is not. It touches on everything. It is a human rights issue. It is a food security issue. It is also an environmental security issue.

So, we really need to, through this interagency partnership, have everybody have very concrete responsibilities, measurable outcomes, and take action even within the Department of State. We need to work very closely with INL, with DRL, and then also with EAP, where most of, you know, IUU is either taking place or the countries that are involved in IUU fishing as well.

Senator SCHATZ. And I would just add to that, there is a line of effort that is purely at the diplomatic level. In other words, even if we did not care about the kind of conservation and ecological impacts here, even if there were no economic aspect that mattered to us, it is important to our friends and allies in the Pacific, in particular.

And you know, we just had a good meeting with a number of Ambassadors from Pacific Island nations, and IUU always comes up. So, I am wondering if there are some kind of small bore ways we can start to provide assistance, because I am—look, you gave a really smart and cogent answer. The problem is that if I am meeting with the Ambassador from Palau, or Fiji, or the Federated States of Micronesia, they are not sure how quickly any of that is going to happen. That is a lot of three and four letter agency—

Ms. SARRI. Yes.

Senator SCHATZ [continuing]. Names.

Ms. SARRI. Agreed.

Senator SCHATZ. And they are kind of going, “So is help on the way or not?” So, what can we do in the short run?

Ms. SARRI. I think there is the Shiprider Program that is taking place in the Pacific Islands. I think it has been very effective. And that is where local law enforcement rides aboard with Coast Guard and can go and enforce with areas. State is also working very close-

ly with USAID on technical assistance. And if confirmed, I would be very happy to work with you and your staff, and work with the Pacific Islands to figure out what more kind of technical assistance we have.

Good governance is also going to be important. I actually think, Senator, one of the things we also need to do, diplomacy is important. I do not think Americans want to have illegal caught fish on their plate. So, we need to actively figure out working with the other partners, too, about how we are going to stop those chains, and have the countries of origins of where fish can take place be part of that dialogue as we think about a whole of government approach.

Senator SCHATZ. Would just add that I think, and I am satisfied right now, that people are monitoring technological developments. But I just do think that there could be a moment at which we sort of move from a—we have to have people, we have to have ships, we have to be underway totally to—a lot of this is about monitoring. A lot of this is about people knowing that we have eyes on them because there are extremely rare situations where this would get kinetic.

And so, I think there may be cheaper ways to have eyes and presence throughout the Pacific. I know that the Navy is thinking along these lines as well, but drone technology, satellite technology has come a very, very long way. And the bureaucracy, which is, I think, moving in the right direction, understandably, is implementing a plan that was many, many years in the making.

And so, I just want you to be receptive to a disruptive technology and how you would integrate that into a kind of the machinery that is already on its way.

Ms. SARRI. Senator, I would be very interested in that. I would be happy to work with your office, if confirmed. What happens aboard these illegal fishing boats is awful. They have tremendous human rights violation. Anything that we can do to stop it as soon as possible, I think, is something we should explore.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me follow up on Senator Schatz's point and others that have raised this illegal fishing issue. It is well beyond the Pacific nations or the Asian Pacific. I was in Ecuador, and the PRC vessels there are outrageous in some of the richest fishing areas in the world. And you are absolutely right. It is not only an environmental disaster and abuse of rights, but it is also a human rights violation on the way they use motherships and have forced labor for lengthy periods of time.

And we do need a strategy that will work in the short term as well as the long term. The technology is there to be able to track these vessels. They have to communicate. We can track the communications. They are violating laws. We need international enforcement, and that is not going to happen without U.S. leadership.

So, I just really want to underscore, as you have heard from so many members on this committee, that that has to be a top priority. And we are looking forward to your suggestions as to how we can put a spotlight on this so more Americans understand what is going on because ultimately as consumers, we can put a lot of pressure on this globally. So we need to do that.

I also want to mention the area that you mentioned in your comments about plastics and the negotiations in regards to International Treaty, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, and you will play a major role in that. There is a lot of interest in trying to have an aggressive policy led by the United States, and this treaty might give us an opportunity to do that on dealing with the plastics issues in our order, so.

There are two areas that are a very high priority to our committee.

I want to ask one additional question in regards to human rights, whether it is Moldova, which needs to move toward the EU, needs to protect itself from Russia's aggression. We have the Transnistria issue that ultimately has to be resolved, and we have a weakness in their judicial system and prosecutorial system in which the EU and U.S. can help.

So, Ms. Adams-Smith, I just really want to get your commitment that we need to work with Moldova to try to strengthen their internal institutions so they can transition closer to EU sessions and to the West.

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Senator, thank you very, very much for that question. I absolutely commit to working with this committee and working as hard as I can to ensure that Moldova is resilient enough to take the steps that it needs to take to take the reforms and become an EU member after a very rigorous succession process.

I firmly believe that it is going through this process that will enable the country to reach the future that it wants. It is not going to be easy, it is not going to be short, and they are going to need the United States and European allies working together to make sure that the country is able to take all the steps along the way to become an EU member state.

The CHAIRMAN. And there is a strong diaspora community that can help in this transition. So, it is another area that we might want to try to develop that could help Moldova along this path.

Ms. ADAMS-SMITH. Thank you very much for that comment, Senator. Absolutely true. The Moldovan diaspora in the United States, more than 50,000 people who are a great resource for the Moldovan government.

If I am confirmed, I intend to work with allies and partners across Europe as well to ensure that we are activating the diaspora in those countries as well, to give as much as assistance, and advice, and support to the Moldovan government which needs the human capacity to enact all of these reforms. And as you said, the Moldovan diaspora can be an important source of strength for them.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Horst, just to follow up on our questionings on the human rights in Sri Lanka. I want your commitment to keep us informed as to the progress you are making in dealing with the accountability issues, to deal with the ability to express dissent of government with this recent law that was passed, and what our Mission is doing to advance the basic freedoms for the people of Sri Lanka.

Ms. HORST. Senator Cardin, if I am confirmed, you have my commitment to work with your committee and Congress to make sure

that we are holding everyone accountable for the international standards that we want them to adhere to.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Horst, I wanted to follow up on just the conversations we had about the PRC. The Indian Ocean, obviously, is critical to the PRC strategic and economic interests, as well as geopolitical rivalry with India. Increasingly, PRC research vessels with ties to the PLA Navy have conducted sweeping surveys of the undersea floor in the Indian Ocean. These types of ocean surveys are carried out by vessels that have research applications for energy resources and marine environments.

However, the data can also be used for military purposes, including how to maneuver and obscure submarines during a conflict. According to CSIS, the 13 PRC vessels undertaking the bulk of the survey and research activity in the Indian Ocean since 2020, all have links to the PLA, and all displayed suspicious behavior, including docking at PLA military ports or temporary, turning off their tracking devices.

In January, Sri Lanka declared a year long moratorium on PRC research vessels entering the waters. Do you believe the presence of the PRC research vessels in the Indian Ocean poses a threat to the national security interest of the United States and our partner allies in the region?

Ms. HORST. Senator, thank you very much. And we share your concern about what PRC research vessels could be doing in the Indian Ocean, which is why cooperation with Sri Lanka on maritime domain awareness is a key part of our security assistance. It allows the Sri Lankans to have the tech capability and the technology to be able to patrol their own waters, and help defend their sovereignty.

And if I am confirmed, we will continue to work with the Sri Lankans to build their own capabilities.

Senator RICKETTS. OK. So, if confirmed, will you commit to work then to ensure the moratorium is maintained in place as well?

Ms. HORST. So, we are working very closely to make sure that there is fair access to ports for all ships.

Senator RICKETTS. So, you do not want to keep the moratorium on the PRC vessels out?

Ms. HORST. We would want to make sure that we are working with them. We have huge concerns about PRC vessels, and we have asked for that moratorium. We think it is in Sri Lanka's best interests.

Senator RICKETTS. OK. Great. And then, I just finally wrap up by saying Ms. Adams-Smith, Steve King, former Ambassador of the Czech Republic, you were his Deputy Chief of Mission, had nothing but high praise for you and gave you his highest recommendation.

Ms. HORST. Mr. Senator, that is so nice to hear. Thank you very much.

[Laughter.]

Senator RICKETTS. My pleasure. My pleasure. Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The record of the committee will remain open to close the business tomorrow for members who may be asking questions for the record. For any questions for the record directed to

any one of you, we appreciate you try to respond to that as thoroughly and quickly as possible so that we can complete our work in the committee in an expeditious way.

Again, with our thanks, our hearing will be adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:20 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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### **Additional Material Submitted for the Record**

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO JOHN N. NKENGASONG BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* How does the Global Fund add value to the work of PEPFAR on HIV AIDS, and how will the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy work with the Global Fund on its beneficial impact on global health security?

*Answer.* The Global Fund is a critical partner for PEPFAR, helping to amplify our HIV AIDS efforts globally. Our contributions help the Global Fund meet its 3-year replenishment goals. The Global Fund and PEPFAR both strengthen health systems as part of their work to combat HIV AIDS. These investments, including in areas like laboratory and surveillance systems, are critical to both sustaining gains and accelerating progress toward ending HIV AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 as well as to improving global health security.

*Question.* How is this distinct from the role of USAID's Bureau of Global Health?

*Answer.* The Secretary of State formally launched the GHSD Bureau on August 1, 2023 with a focus on three key areas: leading U.S. diplomatic engagement in global health and supporting programmatic efficiency to strengthen the global health security architecture; leveraging U.S. foreign assistance and promoting international cooperation to better protect the United States from health threats; and elevating and integrating global health security as a core component of U.S. national security and foreign policy. The U.S. Global Health Security Strategy, released in April 2024, outlines roles and responsibilities of the State Department and USAID to implement the strategy. If confirmed, I will represent the U.S. on the Global Fund Board and with the team in Geneva that actively supports USG engagement with Global Fund and coordination of programs in country.

*Question.* In coordinating bilateral assistance, is the Bureau responsible for approving any of the activities associated with money appropriated to USAID?

*Answer.* The GHSD Bureau continues to approve funding appropriated to USAID for HIV AIDS assistance, consistent with the longstanding authorities of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. The GHSD bureau is not responsible for approving other activities with funds appropriated to USAID or other departments and agencies.

*Question.* Do you commit, if confirmed, to putting in place institutional guardrails to prevent that from happening in future administrations?

*Answer.* I am committed to collaborating with USAID and the broader inter-agency and to following applicable requirements concerning administration of U.S. foreign assistance resources. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging my counterparts in USAID and the broader interagency to maximize impact of U.S. programming while respecting the authorities of each department and agency. I am further committed to providing GHSD Bureau staff the tools they need to fulfill this objective, including training, guidance, and promotion of interagency collaboration.

*Question.* Ambassador Nkengasong, you have been serving as Global AIDS Coordinator for close to 3 years. Please describe how the position of Global AIDS Coordinator is distinct and complementary to your proposed new role as the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Health Security and Diplomacy.

*Answer.* As the Global AIDS Coordinator, I am responsible for the oversight and coordination of all U.S. global HIV activities and funding across multiple U.S. implementing agencies and departments. The role of Ambassador-at-Large for Global Health Security has a broader focus on global health security efforts to address infectious disease threats, including but not limited to HIV AIDS. These roles are mutually reinforcing, and if confirmed, I will promote U.S. leadership and coordination

to achieve synergies while finishing the fight against HIV AIDS and addressing other infectious diseases that pose a threat to U.S. and global health security.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO JOHN N. NKENGASONG BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Of the \$900 million requested by the President for Global Health Security in fiscal year 2025, only \$250 million is requested for the Department of State, all of which is attributed to a planned contribution to the Pandemic Fund, housed at the World Bank. The Global Health Security and Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Act, enacted as part of the fiscal year National Defense Authorization Act, envisioned a significantly different scenario. Specifically, the Act intended for the Coordinator for Global Health Security and Diplomacy at the Department of State to serve as the strategy and assistance coordinator for the U.S. global health security programs implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and others, similar to the role played by the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator for AIDS Relief under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. If confirmed, you will serve concurrently in both positions but will only have resources for one: PEPFAR.*

*Question.* How do you propose to coordinate and align the activities of USAID, CDC, and other implementing agencies to advance the President's Global Health Security and Diplomacy Strategy absent budget authority?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that the full diplomatic expertise of the Department of State, particularly within the Bureau, complements the ongoing health security and technical efforts of USAID, CDC, HHS, and other U.S. Government agencies. The GHSD Bureau coordinates efforts across the State Department with its strategic focus on three key areas: (1) Leading U.S. diplomatic engagement in global health and supporting programmatic efficiency to strengthen the global health security architecture and better prevent, detect, control, and respond to infectious diseases, including HIV AIDS; (2) Leveraging U.S. foreign assistance and promoting international cooperation to better protect the United States and the world from health threats; (3) Elevating and integrating global health security as a core component of U.S. national security and foreign policy.

These efforts are well-aligned with the three goals outlined in the Global Health Security Strategy (GHSS) and are reflected in the roles and responsibilities outlined for the Department in that strategy. I communicate regularly with my counterparts across the interagency to share information and coordinate actions that advance U.S. global health security policy, as well as with the U.S. Coordinator for Global Health Security at the National Security Council. This close and productive coordination is similarly carried out by staff across the GHSD bureau.

*Question.* What assurances can you provide to the Committee that PEPFAR resources will not be "raided" in order to advance other global health security priorities?

*Answer.* The continued success of PEPFAR remains my top priority and focus. I am committed to following applicable requirements for administration of U.S. foreign assistance funding and staff resources. I am further committed to providing GHSD Bureau staff the tools they need to fulfill this objective, including training, guidance, and promotion of interagency collaboration.

*Question.* Is hypertension a global health security and pandemic prevention and preparedness priority?

*Answer.* The GHSD Bureau focuses on addressing an array of human health threats. Low-cost tools and technical assistance shared with other countries—for example, diagnosing and managing hypertension during routine HIV services as people living with HIV (PLHIV) have a two times higher risk of cardiovascular disease—will help decrease mortality for PLHIV and preserve the gains made through PEPFAR's program that supports more 20 million people on life-saving HIV treatment and will enable countries to dedicate health system resources to prepare for, respond to, and prevent outbreaks of other infectious diseases.

*Question.* If confirmed, what role will you play in advancing a reform agenda at the WHO?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will leverage the WHO's strengths and push the organization to address institutional weaknesses, including shortcomings in transparency,



accountability, efficiency, and in some cases, effectiveness. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed significant institutional gaps at WHO. The United States and likeminded partners have been actively engaging in WHO reform efforts to correct those gaps and ensure it is fit for purpose.

*Question.* What reforms would you prioritize?

Answer. I am clear-eyed on the strengths and weaknesses of the WHO. If confirmed, I would continue to engage the WHO and international community to achieve an institution that effectively strengthens health and health security. There are important reforms WHO should make, including on transparency and accountability. Thanks to vocal U.S. leadership, WHO Member States approved in May 2023 a plan detailing necessary institutional reforms, including:

- strengthened Member State oversight of WHO's budget and its prioritization;
- improvements in WHO's actions to prevent and respond to all types of sexual misconduct; and
- full implementation of long-delayed reform to WHO's internal oversight functions.

WHO has made progress addressing many of these reforms proposed by Member States, and the U.S. Government continues to push for implementation of all other necessary reforms.

*Question.* What role, if any, should the WHO play in the governance structure of a pandemic accord?

Answer. The U.S. position maintains that for a Pandemic Accord to be successful, WHO will need to work effectively within its current mandate with governments, stakeholders, and other relevant international organizations and global health actors. We have proposed language in the draft text to promote sustained engagement by these entities. We have supported WHO functioning as the Secretariat for the Accord in order to reduce costs and maximize efficiencies and synergies across pandemic-relevant workstreams in which WHO is already assisting Member States.

The WHO's powers are delineated in a legally binding international constitution that confines its authority to undertaking international health work. The WHO Director-General and staff cannot enforce decisions, such as imposing a lockdown, mandating vaccination, or dictating the opening or closing of borders. Such decisions remain within the sovereign domain of each country.

*Question.* Should the WHO serve as the global supply chain and logistics manager for vaccines and other countermeasures during a pandemic, or manage a global stockpile of vaccines and other countermeasures, as it has proposed during the pandemic accord negotiations? If so, why, and how?

Answer. I do not support proposals that would assign additional managing functions to WHO related to medical countermeasures beyond its current functions.

*Question.* If confirmed, you will represent the United States at the Pandemic Fund. What is your assessment of the Fund's performance to date?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will continue to represent the United States at the Pandemic Fund Governing Board and continue to work closely with my Treasury Department counterpart, who serves as Alternate Board Member. The Pandemic Fund successfully allocated \$338 million across 37 countries and will be allocating an additional \$500 million shortly for early warning surveillance, laboratory, and workforce capacity building. Early U.S. pledges leveraged a total of \$2 billion for the nascent fund. The key to impact and leveraging additional funding is U.S. leadership and a solid strategy. That is why I led the development of a strategic plan that clarifies the Pandemic Fund's unique value add, programmatic priorities, allocation approach, and coordination with other actors over the next 5 years.

Building on this momentum, the Pandemic Fund Governing Board is launching a resource mobilization effort with a two-track approach: a near term pledging event on the margins of the G20 this fall and an innovative financing track to operationalize in the medium term. This is an important opportunity for the Pandemic Fund to leverage additional money from donors.

*Question.* Is it appropriately focused on preventing and preparing for pandemics, versus responding to outbreaks?

Answer. The Pandemic Fund remains committed to preventing and preparing for pandemics. Under U.S. leadership, the Pandemic Fund is launching a 5-year strategic plan at the World Health Assembly this May. The Pandemic Fund will focus on three programmatic priorities: laboratory strengthening, surveillance, and workforce. These three programmatic priorities will be institutionalized via National

Public Health Institutes (or relevant public health institution) and global regional networks, organizations, and hubs. The strategic plan is a clear articulation of the Pandemic Fund's objective to improve the world's collective ability to prevent, detect, and respond to disease threats and stop them from becoming deadly and costly pandemics.

*Question.* Do you have concerns about overlap and duplication of efforts between the Pandemic Fund and the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria? If so, how can they be resolved?

*Answer.* I do not have concerns about overlap and duplication at this time. The number of countries that are both Global Fund and Pandemic Fund recipients is limited. The goal is to ensure the Pandemic Fund fills gaps in pandemic preparedness that are beyond the scope of Global Fund's work. In the few places where they both operate, our vision is to ensure investments complement one another and extend the reach of interventions. As members of both boards, we work hard to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent in the most efficient, effective ways.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO JOHN N. NKENGASONG BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the PRC and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose to do so. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national and global health security interests and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. Last year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that "the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally." As Secretary Blinken has said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. Through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy, I will work to advance our national and global health security interests in the U.S.-PRC relationship.

*Question.* Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* The PRC has undertaken many actions that undermine U.S. and global health security interests. The PRC has also taken some steps that have the potential to provide public health benefit to foreign populations, such as constructing new health facilities or providing access to medical supplies. Unfortunately, the PRC has often taken a coercive approach, making inappropriate demands of those receiving health assistance for their net benefit. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues across the U.S. Government to highlight the unhelpful and coercive actions of the PRC and emphasize the United States as a trustworthy and transparent partner of choice for global health. I will also work to encourage the PRC to adopt a more productive role in achieving improved global health security.

*Question.* Do you believe that there are any areas within which the CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared at a moment's notice? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC. I will collaborate with U.S. Government colleagues to encourage the PRC to adopt a more productive role in achieving improved global health security, including in addressing transnational challenges like the climate crisis, while also addressing the human rights abuses committed by the PRC.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national and global health security interests and countering efforts by our strategic and regional com-

petitors to undermine those interests. I will follow applicable policies on engaging the PRC to cease malign influence and adopt a more productive role in achieving global health security.

*Question.* As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas' brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, on January 16, 2024, employees from nearly two dozen agencies staged a walkout in protest of the administration's Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President's Israel policy?

Answer. No, I did not sign the open letter to the President.

*Question.* Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024, walkout?

Answer. No, I did not participate.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you define one of the employees or contractors operating under your supervision signing an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to address employee concerns personally by creating an open, trusting, and harassment-free work environment. I am mindful of and value Department employees' right to free speech under the First Amendment. Moreover, I understand the expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I would work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

*Question.* In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistle-blowing"?

Answer. I believe these employees were expressing a dissenting view to their leadership. I would hope that employees would feel confident to directly raise their concerns with their supervisors and management rather than signing an anonymous letter. If confirmed, I would work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make sure that all employees know that there are several avenues available to express policy disagreements. I would encourage employees to use established channels to express their views.

*Question.* Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza?

Answer. No, I have not expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza.

*Question.* Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas is a terrorist group and an antisemitic entity. This foreign terrorist organization seeks to eliminate the state of Israel; its founding charter calls for the killing of Jewish people.

*Question.* Would a cease fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Administration supports humanitarian pauses to allow for an influx of aid into Gaza and the safe exit of hostages and other vulnerable people.

*Question.* Do you agree that calling for a cease fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Administration's stated policy is to support temporary humanitarian pauses to enable a sustained flow of aid and to allow the voluntary movement of civilians seeking safer locations. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism, consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself, consistent with international law. The Administration has urged Israel to differentiate between civilians and Hamas terrorists and to avoid civilian casualties. Hamas's use of civilians as human shields, a blatant violation of international law, does not lessen Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law.

*Question.* Global Health Security (GHS) funding has seen significant increases in the past 10 years to confront infectious disease outbreaks and associated recovery efforts. There have been calls in the Senate for transparency on how GHS is using bilateral funds, as well as requests for clarity in regards to which agency is receiving funds authorized by the Global Health Security Act which authorizes funds for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Responses. If confirmed, will you commit to respond, in a timely manner, to oversight requests regarding GHS funding uses and which activities are supported by State and USAID for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and responses?

*Answer.* Yes, I am absolutely committed to responding to oversight requests in a timely manner.

*Question.* Regarding the ongoing reorganization at State, which established the Bureau you are nominated to lead, how will you effectively administer and manage oversight of your PEPFAR responsibilities, while also addressing competing Bureau duties and significant staffing vacancies?

*Answer.* The establishment of the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy (GHSD) elevates our health security diplomatic work and allows the State Department to bring the full strength of U.S. diplomacy to bear on addressing global health threats, including HIV/AIDS. As part of the bureau, PEPFAR's efforts remain focused on our goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Under my leadership, we have filled a significant number of vacancies since the launch of the bureau in August 2023. Much progress has been made and this has been supported by having an Executive Office with human resource capacity, and continued efforts to ensure adequate staffing to achieve the mission of the bureau.

*Question.* The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) announced a commitment to use its procurement power to drive localization of manufacturing in Africa. PEPFAR stated it would spend at least \$20 million to purchase at least 15 million rapid diagnostic tests and that by 2030, purchase at least 2 million antiretroviral treatments. What guardrails are in place to ensure PEPFAR's procurement drive on localization doesn't inadvertently use U.S. taxpayer money to subsidize Chinese companies to invest in the manufacturing sector in Africa?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national and global health security interests and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. Our efforts to support local and regional medical countermeasure manufacturing efforts will not compromise U.S. national security, commercial, and economic priorities, particularly those related to PRC. The United States has the opportunity to significantly increase efficiency, reduce supply insecurity, build pandemic preparedness, promote U.S. industry, and protect U.S. national and economic security through strategic support of regional manufacturing.

Building on existing capabilities and an analysis of future expansion potential, PEPFAR aims to procure 15 million HIV tests produced by African manufacturers in 2025. For antiretroviral treatments, PEPFAR aims to work alongside other partners and buyers to shift at least two million clients on first-line ARV treatments to use African-made products by 2030. PEPFAR procurements will continue to follow applicable requirements for US government procurement of products and services.

*Question.* Do you believe PEPFAR has appropriate guardrails in place to ensure no funding is used by implementing partners or grantees to promote abortion? How can these be strengthened or clarified given concerns PEPFAR, or implementing partners, may support abortions?

*Answer.* PEPFAR does not fund or promote abortion. The same restrictions on using U.S. foreign assistance funds for abortion-related activities have existed since PEPFAR's inception and continue to guide its implementation. PEPFAR staff also conduct routine annual compliance training for both U.S. Government staff and implementing partner staff on legal and policy requirements. Through PEPFAR, over 5.5 million babies have been born free of HIV, and we look forward to continuing bipartisan support for this lifesaving program.

*Question.* During COVID, China established technology transfer deals in Africa for rapid COVID testing. Are there policies currently in place to ensure no PEPFAR

dollars, or implementing partners, will be used to procure commodities that are just Chinese technology transferred to Africa?

*Answer.* Delayed access to COVID–19 diagnostics globally contributed to difficulties controlling the spread of COVID–19 and led to some countries partnering with coercive actors like the PRC to meet health needs. PEPFAR procurements will continue to follow applicable requirements for U.S. Government procurement of products and services. If confirmed, I will work closely with U.S. Government colleagues to advance U.S. national security interests and address the PRC’s efforts to expand its influence. I will encourage efforts to stimulate regional and local manufacturing of medical supplies to support resilient supply chains and lessen malign influence of strategic competitors.

*Question.* What will you do to ensure U.S. tax dollars won’t be used to purchase any products that stem from Chinese companies or are produced with the use of forced labor?

*Answer.* I will continue efforts to ensure that PEPFAR procurements of critical HIV commodities such as antiretrovirals and HIV diagnostics follow applicable requirements for U.S. government procurement of products.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO JOHN N. NKENGASONG BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

*Question.* What strategies would you propose to enhance international collaboration and coordination in the fight against TB?

*Answer.* Tuberculosis (TB) continues to be the leading cause of death amongst people living with HIV (PLHIV), and it is a continuing priority for PEPFAR to support programs to prevent and treat TB for this population. There are several strategies to highlight in this regard:

- PEPFAR aligns its TB/HIV approach with WHO’s End TB strategy and works collaboratively with USAID and the Global Fund (GF) to ensure that TB/HIV investments are synergistic. As an example, PEPFAR teams have regular information exchange calls with GF and WHO on the new PEPFAR TB Initiative to Reduce TB-related mortality and find missing TB cases among PLHIV.
- GHSD continues to align priorities, targets, and strategies across the USG interagency on global initiatives such as the STOP TB Partnership.
- The U.S. Government continues to advance targets and commitments from the 2023 U.N. General Assembly High Level Meeting Political Declaration on TB.
- The U.S. Government also continues to support and strengthen collaboration on laboratory diagnosis by actively participating in forums such as the Integrated Diagnostic Consortium (IDC) and by working with global organizations, such as the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) and national ministries of health, to implement joint activities, such as Diagnostic Network Assessments.
- GHSD continues to harmonize PEPFAR data with national and WHO data bases.
- GHSD promotes multi-country research projects to develop new treatment vaccines and diagnostic tools by actively engaging with research platforms, such as FAST-TB.

*Question.* What are the obstacles for ensuring children are diagnosed and receive treatment?

*Answer.* Despite improved coverage of prevention of mother-to-child transmission programs, there were still an estimated 133,000 children who were infected with HIV in 2022. Diagnosing infants with HIV requires a specialized approach called Early Infant Diagnosis (EID). Access to this type of facility-based testing—which must occur several times over the child’s first year of life to determine their final HIV status—can be a barrier. Additionally, access to point-of-care EID testing may be limited, which means a long turnaround time for results which can result in a gap in delivery of the diagnosis and enrollment in care.

Some children who acquire HIV during pregnancy and birth and many children who acquire HIV during the breastfeeding period (about 40 percent of new pediatric infections) have a much slower disease progression. Thus, it is important that efforts to find older children living with HIV (CLHIV) and adolescents living with HIV are uniformly implemented. All children (<15 years of age) of adults living with HIV should be tested for HIV; however, country-level policies, human resources for

health (HRH) and supply chain shortages, or lack of accessibility of appropriate testing services can prevent children and adolescents from being tested for HIV.

Enrolling and retaining children in HIV treatment requires additional flexibility (due to school and parent schedules) and differentiated service delivery models of care to ensure children and their families have the tools they need to achieve viral load suppression. Better and more palatable pediatric formulations (of medicines), better antiretroviral medications, and better adherence strategies are also important.

*Question.* Please describe your approach to supporting low- and middle-income countries in strengthening their TB healthcare systems and infrastructure.

*Answer.* Through PEPFAR implementing agencies, PEPFAR supports several TB health systems strengthening interventions at national (above-site) and at site levels. Above-site activities include:

(1) Technical assistance and capacity building: Funding Senior Technical Advisor positions for TB/HIV to support the national TB and HIV Programs in making strategic decisions on new policies, resource allocation, and implementation. Funding of supervision visits, annual reviews, and various training.

(2) Health Information System Support: Funding the development and maintenance of Electronic Medical Records (EMR) and Electronic Drug Surveillance Systems.

Site-Level activities include:

(1) TB case finding activities:

- Procurement of digital X-ray machines and ensuring their use in TB screening.
- Procurement and installation of AI software for digital X-ray machines.
- Sensitization of health workers on the use and interpretation of digital X-rays and calibrating computer-aided detection (CAD).
- Supporting introduction and operationalization of lateral flow urine lipoarabinomannan (TB LF LAM) assays for diagnosis of TB, especially in patients with advanced HIV disease.

(2) TB prevention activities:

- Procurement and distribution of shorter TB prevention therapy (TPT) regimens.
- TB preventive therapy (TPT) coverage gap analysis for PEPFAR supported sites.

(3) Infection prevention and control activities:

- Reducing the risk of TB infection through administrative, environmental, and personal measures, by reinforcing infection control committees/focal person(s).
- Instituting measures to ensure well-ventilated consultation rooms and waiting areas, availability of necessary supplies, and educating patients and staff on proper cough hygiene and mask use.

Finally, collaboration with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund), which is the largest donor for TB, is critical to ensure grants and national resources at country level have the greatest impact.

*Question.* From May 27 to June 1, the World Health Assembly (WHA) will be meeting and expected to vote on the final text of a new international “pandemic agreement.” Article 55 of the International Health Regulations (IHR) requires member states receive the text of any IHR amendment 4 months before they are to be considered at the WHA. As of May 10, negotiators failed to agree on a final draft agreement.

If confirmed, would you advocate for any new international pandemic agreement to be handled as a treaty requiring U.S. Senate advice and consent?

*Answer.* We remain committed to maintaining an open dialogue with Congress on these negotiations. The Agreement’s form and content are still being negotiated.

*Question.* In your opinion, should the IHR amendment still be considered during the upcoming WHA?

*Answer.* The United States seeks to enhance U.S. national security through the IHR amendment process. Consideration of these amendments at the upcoming WHA would be consistent with precedent, and WHO Member States’ previous consensus vote to advance negotiations to amend the IHR (2005). My understanding is the temporal requirements in Article 55 have been met. Since the first set of proposed

amendments were published, the WHO Secretariat and the IHR Bureau have routinely provided Member States with updated versions of the draft IHR amendment text during and after, each round of negotiations and/or intersessional meetings.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO ELIZABETH K. HORST BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Trafficking in Persons*

*In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Sri Lanka remained on Tier 2 for failing to fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.*

*Question.* If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Sri Lanka operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to engage with the government of Sri Lanka and with civil society to enhance Sri Lanka's capacity to operationalize prioritized recommendations in the Trafficking in Persons Report. Specifically, I will work with Sri Lankan authorities on increasing prosecutions and accountability for suspected traffickers and increasing victim identification and protection efforts through technical assistance, including through programs that support to the International Organization of Migration and the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you approach addressing the credible reports of Sri Lankan official complicity in impeding the government's effort to carry out anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts?

*Answer.* The Department of State continues to press the Government of Sri Lanka to increase its efforts to combat human trafficking. If confirmed, I will continue to raise these concerns with the Government of Sri Lanka and emphasize the importance of Sri Lanka's commitment to increasing its efforts to combat and prevent human trafficking, including by holding officials allegedly complicit in this crime accountable.

*Religious Freedom*

*Question.* What is your assessment of religious freedom in Sri Lanka and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

*Answer.* Religious freedom is guaranteed under Sri Lanka's constitution, and citizens are generally free to practice their beliefs. I am concerned about reports of discrimination, intimidation, and harassment of members of religious minority groups practicing their faith traditions. If confirmed, I will highlight how such practices are inconsistent with Sri Lanka's constitution and promote respect for freedom of religion or belief, including as it relates to members of minority communities. If confirmed, I also commit to working with our Office of International Religious Freedom and Ambassador at Large and to engage with Sri Lanka's minority religious communities and leaders of all faiths.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I commit to personally engaging with civil society, including about freedom of religion or belief for all. If confirmed, I also commit to engaging with Sri Lanka's minority religious communities and leaders of all faiths.

*Question.* If confirmed, what concrete steps can you take to help Sri Lanka increase their societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support civil society in Sri Lanka and engage with the government to increase societal and government respect for freedom of religion or belief so that people of all religious and belief backgrounds in Sri Lanka are free to practice their beliefs.

*Human Rights*

*In the State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report, the Sri Lanka was noted to have taken minimal steps to identify and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.*

*Question.* How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will urge the Sri Lankan government to credibly address longstanding human rights abuses, by holding abusers to account and addressing root causes of ethnic and religious tensions in Sri Lanka. I will use all available U.S. tools to promote accountability and address impunity. Additionally, I will continue U.S. efforts to advocate to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act with legislation that aligns with international human rights law. If confirmed, I will also continue dialogue with civil society organizations on how the U.S. can better support civic spaces and human rights progress in Sri Lanka.

*UN Peacekeeping*

*According to the UN's data base of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, Sri Lanka has an allegation involving three military contingent members serving in MINUSCA.*

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you work with the Sri Lankan government to ensure proper investigation into these allegations?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will urge the Sri Lankan government to credibly address allegations against its U.N. peacekeeping forces, including by completing investigations in a timely manner, transparently reporting back to the U.N. on the outcome of investigations and any actions taken and holding perpetrators of substantiated allegations accountable. Additionally, if confirmed I will use all available U.S. tools to promote accountability.

*State Management and Oversight*

*Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last several years.*

*Question.* What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Sri Lanka?

*Answer.* I understand that despite challenges from COVID-19 and the 2022 economic and political crises in Sri Lanka, U.S. Embassy Colombo has positive morale overall. The people who serve in U.S. Embassy Colombo, including our locally employed staff, do so because they believe in the mission and the Department's commitment to them. In April 2022, Acting Under Secretary John Bass approved Embassy Colombo's request to denominate locally employed staff's compensation in U.S. dollars for 6 months due to the rapid devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee, which helped alleviate some economic hardship for our local staff. If confirmed, I will pay close attention to mission morale and take the steps needed to ensure our team has the guidance, resources and support to do their work.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Sri Lanka?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will focus on creating a cohesive, inclusive team environment for all Embassy community members, including our locally employed staff and family members. I will ensure that my DCM and I communicate clearly and regularly our mission goals and priorities, and listen to the concerns of our team. We will be accessible through regular meetings with the locally employed staff committee, all-staff town halls, and team-building events for the embassy, as well as for the greater community. I will encourage every member of Embassy staff to share their ideas and concerns in order to improve our team environment throughout my tenure.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Sri Lanka? Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.

*Answer.* I believe the true source of diplomatic power is the people at U.S. Embassy Colombo. Our success starts with a common mission and vision, and an environment which encourages communication, creativity and new ideas, as well as opportunity and development for all. If confirmed, I will empower our interagency team and locally employed staff to make a difference in our bilateral relationship and practice a foreign policy that benefits the American people. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on these priorities.

*Question.* How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* I have an inclusive and empathetic management style. I care deeply about the morale and professional development of my staff, and having a personal connection that elicits real communication and discussion—even dissent. I encourage every team member to participate in policy discussions and present their ideas. Often the best opportunities to move the needle forward on goals come from ideas on the ground, and I want to make sure all staff have the opportunity to make a difference and contribute to achieving our objectives.



*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates. I am committed to enforcing the Department's new anti-bullying policy, creating and maintaining an environment free from bullying and ensuring everyone is treated with respect, civility, and professionalism. If confirmed, I will promote these values and take prompt action to address behavior such as bullying. I will hold my senior country team and mid-level managers accountable for the same.

*Question.* How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. The best front offices are where the DCM and Ambassador are in constant communication and lock step about the day's events and the mission's larger priorities. As a former Deputy Chief of Mission, I know how critical this relationship is for the success of our embassies around the globe. In Colombo, if confirmed, I envision a strong, open, communicative and trusting relationship with my DCM. I very much look forward to working closely with the DCM to create a unified leadership team for Embassy Colombo.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I envision a unified leadership team in the Embassy Colombo Front Office. We must be almost interchangeable, so that if the Ambassador is called away, the DCM can step in at a moment's notice. On a daily basis, the DCM manages most of the internal coordination and operations for the Embassy, and the Chief of Mission is the public face of the United States to both the government and public, as well as the strategic guidance for mission priorities and decisions. It is also essential that the Chief of Mission also know about internal operations and morale within the mission. If confirmed, I will work with my DCM to maximize their strengths and identify the most effective areas where they can help me to lead the Mission team.

*In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.*

*Question.* Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate annual employee evaluation reports. Throughout my Foreign Service career, I have met with each of my direct reports regularly to provide feedback on their ongoing tasks and set aside several times a year to review their overall progress. I also met at least twice a year with employees supervised by my direct reports. Finally, I was always available for additional feedback if requested by the employee. I believe the best way to develop the next generation of Foreign Service professionals is through direct and regular feedback. I intend to continue this practice if confirmed.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will require and expect each supervisor at Embassy Colombo to meet regularly with their employees to provide positive and constructive feedback on performance. I will also encourage all employees to draft meaningful award nominations for any deserving colleague or subordinate.

*It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens.*

*Question.* In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Our diplomatic works depends on the depth of our contact lists, and I expect every employee to have their key contacts on speed dial. It has always been my experience that our diplomats and locally employed staff make every effort to get out as much as possible. Ambassador Chung and her team interact with a wide range of people in Sri Lanka to accomplish U.S. foreign policy objectives and advance our interests. If confirmed, I will expect that Embassy Colombo staff invest in their external relationships at every level and in every portfolio.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

*Answer.* Advancing our priorities requires a whole-of-mission effort. If confirmed, I will prioritize outreach by all sections of Embassy Colombo to engage with a wide range of government officials, civil society members, journalists, academics, and young people to advance and promote U.S. policy priorities. My team will travel across Sri Lanka to get the perspectives of people beyond the capital.

*Congressional Delegations (CODELs) and Staff Delegations (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight mission.*

*Question.* Do you pledge to support fully CODELs and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post?

*Answer.* If confirmed, yes, I pledge to fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post. We welcome and appreciate your visits.

*Question.* Do you agree to support fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

*Answer.* If confirmed, yes, I commit to supporting to the fullest extent possible any CODEL or STAFFDEL.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO ELIZABETH K. HORST BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the “only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the PRC and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose to do so. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

*Answer.* As Secretary Blinken has said, the United States will continue to use diplomacy to make progress in both areas of difference and areas of cooperation that matter to the American people and the world as part of responsibly managing competition with the PRC. If confirmed, I will use diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Sri Lanka ties to advance U.S. national security interests and counter efforts by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to expand its malign influence and use of coercion.

*Question.* Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* As Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “undercut U.S. influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners, and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

*Question.* Do you believe that there are any areas within which the CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared at a moment’s notice? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* Even as we seek to deepen cooperation where our interests align, the United States is very clear-eyed about the challenges posed by the PRC and about our competing visions for the future. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress to counter behavior by the PRC that is against U.S. interests.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Sri Lanka and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If

confirmed, I will work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address the PRC's efforts to expand its influence in Sri Lanka and the region.

*Question.* As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas' brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, on January 16, 2024, employees from nearly two dozen agencies staged a walkout in protest of the Administration's Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President's Israel policy?

Answer. No, I did not sign the open letter to the President.

*Question.* Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024 walkout?

Answer. No, I did not participate.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you define an employee or contractor, operating under your supervision, that signs an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to address employee concerns personally by creating an open, trusting, and harassment-free work environment. I am mindful of and value Department employees' right to free speech under the First Amendment. Moreover, I understand the expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I would work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

*Question.* In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistleblowing"?

Answer. I believe these employees were expressing a dissenting view to their leadership. I would hope that employees would feel confident to directly raise their concerns with their supervisors and management rather than signing an anonymous letter. "Whistleblowing" is a term and activity covered by legislation and regulations; I defer to the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the referenced actions are considered protected whistleblowing activity.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make sure that U.S. employees at Embassy Colombo know that there are several avenues available to express disagreements. I would encourage employees to use established channels to express their views.

According to Department regulations, insubordination is a disciplinary matter related to conduct on the job and may result in counseling and a penalty commensurate with the scale of the offense. If confirmed, I would address discipline issues, including insubordination, in consultation with the Department's human resources and legal professionals.

*Question.* Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza?

Answer. No, I have not expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza.

*Question.* Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas is a terrorist group and antisemitic entity. This foreign terrorist organization seeks to eliminate the state of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jewish people.

*Question.* Would a cease fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you agree that calling for a cease fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that

orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

*Answer.* The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself consistent with international law. The Administration has urged Israel to differentiate between civilians and Hamas terrorists and to avoid civilian casualties. Hamas' use of civilians as human shields, a blatant violation of international law, does not lessen Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law.

*Question.* Since 1979, the U.S. has been Sri Lanka's largest goods export market. While historically friendly, Sri Lanka has increased large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the port of Hambantota, with China. Even with debt restructuring with China and the U.S., Sri Lanka's ability to address its financial shortfalls continue. If confirmed, how will you ensure that these debt loads don't cause Sri Lanka to form closer bonds with China?

*Answer.* As part of the parameters of its IMF program, Sri Lanka is currently negotiating a restructuring to reduce its external debt. The United States is working with the Government of Sri Lanka to return the country to debt sustainability, thereby reducing the PRC's opportunity to take advantage of the situation. If confirmed, I will continue to work alongside our partners in the Paris Club and on Sri Lanka's Official Creditor Committee to achieve a debt deal where all of Sri Lanka's creditors, including China, implement restructurings on comparable and transparent terms. The Government of Sri Lanka has affirmed its commitment to treat all creditors on a comparable and transparent basis.

*Question.* How would you describe Sri Lanka's current relationship with China?

*Answer.* We have spoken openly about our concerns regarding the PRC's pattern of accumulating economic leverage over Sri Lanka from unsustainable loans and debt, including non-concessional loans for large infrastructure projects. Partnerships between countries should be open, transparent, and mutually beneficial. That is the basis for the U.S. relationship with Sri Lanka. If confirmed, I will strive to establish the United States as a partner of choice for Sri Lanka by supporting infrastructure projects that meet Sri Lanka's development needs, invest in the local community, and respect local financial conditions.

*Question.* How does increased PRC presence in Sri Lanka and the Indian Ocean impact U.S. strategic interests?

*Answer.* Our security partnership with Sri Lanka is essential to protecting our interests in the Indo-Pacific. If the United States is not reliably present, we leave a vacuum our adversaries will seek to fill. In response to the PRC's challenges to the rules-based international order, we are investing domestically, we are aligning with allies and partners like Sri Lanka, and we are competing with the PRC. As a responsible power, we keep channels of communication with the PRC open, so that our competition does not veer into conflict.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the PRC's role at the port of Hambantota?

*Answer.* The Office of the Director of National Intelligence assesses that the People's Liberation Army will continue to pursue the establishment of overseas military installations and access agreements to project power and protect China's interests abroad. Beijing reportedly is considering pursuing military facilities in multiple locations, including Sri Lanka. If confirmed, I will support Sri Lanka through our ongoing efforts in security cooperation and capacity building for the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) to help manage the nation's ports, including Hambantota, in a transparent, rules-based manner and in line with international standards.

*Question.* How do you see Sri Lanka's role in the region currently and in the years ahead?

Answer. The United States and Sri Lanka share a vision of an Indo-Pacific region that is free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient.

Due to its strategic location at the maritime cross-roads of the region, economic engagement opportunities are numerous in Sri Lanka, including in ports and logistics. In November 2023, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) announced that it will invest \$553 million to support the development of a deepwater shipping container terminal in the Port of Colombo. This terminal will provide critical infrastructure for the South Asian region and reflects the United States' enduring commitment to Sri Lanka's economic growth and regional economic integration.

Sri Lanka also has an increasingly important regional leadership role. As the current chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Sri Lanka is demonstrating its capacity to lead a multilateral platform in addressing cross-cutting and strategic issues across the region.

*Question.* What are the U.S.' strategic interests in Sri Lanka?

Answer. Current U.S. policy in Sri Lanka aims to support Sri Lanka's democratic institutions, encourage its economic development, counter terrorism, and build maritime security to promote a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. Both governments intend to promote further economic cooperation and exchanges in maritime security and safety, and desire to pursue joint initiatives to enhance security, stability, transparency, and economic opportunity for mutual benefit.

*Question.* If confirmed, what will your top priorities be in our relationship with Sri Lanka?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize taking care of and leading the people at U.S. Embassy Colombo, as well as our policy to promote Sri Lanka's role in maintaining a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific region. This includes supporting Sri Lanka's democratic and economic reforms and support for human rights and good governance.

*Question.* Beyond economic, what other options can the U.S. utilize to facilitate a greater partnership with Sri Lanka?

Answer. Our security assistance and cooperation are tailored to build capacity and strengthen professionalization of Sri Lankan security forces—military and law enforcement—while promoting rule of law and respect for human rights, to enable them to defend against security threats affecting Sri Lanka and U.S. national interests, particularly in the maritime domain.

*Question.* If confirmed, are there specific DFC projects you would like to see proposed for Sri Lanka?

Answer. In November 2023, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) announced that it will invest \$553 million to support the development of a deepwater shipping container terminal in the Port of Colombo. This terminal will provide critical infrastructure for the South Asian region and reflects the United States' enduring commitment to Sri Lanka's economic growth and regional economic integration. DFC has also provided hundreds of millions in financing for women-owned businesses, healthcare education, and value-added agricultural exports. We are eager to find other projects that meet DFC's objectives, including in renewable energy.

*Question.* Sri Lanka and India have a long-standing history and have seen themselves as having common strategic interests in the past. This relationship has been strained given the visit of a Chinese military vessel to Hambantota Port in August 2022, despite Indian and U.S. concerns over the visit, as well as subsequent Chinese port calls. The current Sri Lankan President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has signaled he is aligning Sri Lanka's path with India in the region and recently thanked India for its economic support, however, concerns remain given a territorial dispute surrounding fishing rights on a small Sri Lankan territorial island. How can the U.S. assist in facilitating closer and continual relations between Colombo and New Delhi?

Answer. The United States and India are pursuing an ambitious agenda to expand our strategic partnership and promote a more free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific region, including for Sri Lanka. The United States and India share an interest in supporting Sri Lanka's sovereignty, economic development, and democracy. For instance, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and the Adani Group are supporting the development of the Port of Colombo. If confirmed, I will work with both Sri Lanka and India to advance our shared interests.

*Question.* How do you assess the current relationship between Sri Lanka and India?

Answer. Both Sri Lanka and India are vital partners to promoting a prosperous, free, and open Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will work with both Sri Lanka and India to advance our shared interests.

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RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO ELIZABETH K. HORST BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* Sea routes across the Indian Ocean have become sanctions evading highways, particularly for Iran and Russia. We need to prioritize calling out illegal activities and continue building cooperative partnerships across these waters, even when it is partners that are potentially at fault for facilitating sanctions evasion. Please give us a preview of your engagement strategies with your would-be host nations in this respect.

Answer. Our security partnership with Sri Lanka is essential to protecting our interests in the Indo-Pacific. If the United States is not reliably present and not making targeted investments with Sri Lanka, we leave a vacuum our adversaries will seek to fill. Our security assistance and cooperation are tailored to build capacity and strengthen professionalization of Sri Lankan security forces—military and law enforcement—while promoting rule of law and respect for human rights, to enable them to defend against security threats affecting Sri Lanka and U.S. national interests, including in sanctions enforcement.

We have seen first-hand the benefit—for the United States and the region—of investing in Sri Lanka’s maritime security and maritime domain awareness capabilities. For example, over the last few years, Sri Lankan authorities have seized hundreds of kilos worth of illicit drugs, including drugs originating from Iran, transiting regional waters. We are proud that some of the vessels used in these missions were transferred to the Sri Lankan maritime forces by the United States as Excess Defense Articles (EDA) from the U.S. Coast Guard. As another sign of the positive influence of our investments and engagements, Sri Lanka contributed one of these EDA vessels for a patrol to counter Houthi Rebels in the Arabian Sea. If confirmed, I will continue this commitment to U.S.-Sri Lanka security cooperation to promote free, transparent, and open waterways in the Indian Ocean region.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO TROY FITRELL BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* What is your current assessment of the risk climate change poses to the country?

Answer. Climate change poses substantial and multifaceted risks to Seychelles. According to the World Bank, climate change poses long-term sustainability risks for the country: ocean acidification and coral bleaching affects both tourism and fishing, Seychelles’ two biggest industries; rises in ocean levels threaten many of Seychelles’ low-lying atoll islands; and increases in storms and storm surges threaten greater economic losses from flooding and landslides.

*Question.* How can the U.S. and international partners further safeguard the Seychelles key economic industries as events like rising sea-levels and flooding threaten people’s lives and livelihoods, and what steps can you take if confirmed to assist with those efforts?

Answer. The United States and the international community are working together to provide technical expertise to Seychellois partners to improve governance and enhance capacity there to respond to climate-based threats. For instance, I understand that the U.S. Government has previously placed a science fellow with the Ministry of Environment to help develop a robust “blue carbon” policy framework. If confirmed, I would work to strengthen our engagement through mechanisms like the Ocean Conservation Pledge, which Seychelles was one of the first countries to endorse, and to promote coordination with U.S. universities and private sector actors to maximize the impact of our interventions.

*Question.* How significant a threat is piracy to Seychelles?

Answer. Piracy off the Horn of Africa dropped significantly beginning around 2011 thanks to international anti-piracy measures. However, since late 2023 and into 2024, there have been several attacks in the region. Seychellois authorities have ex-

pressed concern that piracy could affect fishing and other vessels within its exclusive economic zone, particularly near its small northern islands.

*Question.* What protections are needed to counter rising piracy in the region?

Answer. Maritime domain awareness and regional coordination are key to countries in the Western Indian Ocean being able to protect their territorial waters. They struggle to accomplish this due to large exclusive economic zones and small coast guard fleets. Countries also need justice sector and law enforcement reform and capacity to sufficiently bring pirates to justice.

*Question.* What will you do to better support the Seychelles against this threat if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage expansion of our long-standing anti-piracy activities in the Seychelles, including law enforcement and maritime security capacity-building assistance, increased information-sharing, and justice sector support to increase the Seychelles ability to effectively prosecute and adjudicate piracy cases. This would be strengthened by increased regional and multilateral cooperation on anti-piracy efforts and maritime security, including having convicted Somali pirates serve sentences at United Nations-funded prisons in Somalia. I applaud Seychelles' efforts in supporting a legal finish for recent piracy cases in the region.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you intend to center anti-corruption and good governance activities within the U.S.'s relationship with the Seychelles?

Answer. Since emerging from many years of single-party rule and related graft, Seychelles has made progress on efforts to combat corruption and strengthen its democratic institutions. At the forefront of that advance is the Anti-Corruption Commission Seychelles (ACCS), which the Department of State publicly recognized in December 2023 by giving its Anti-Corruption Champion award to its Commissioner May de Silva. Additionally, the U.S. is pleased that Seychelles has been an active member in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) since joining in 2018. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage the country's open government work as a vehicle to advance anti-corruption, transparency, accountability, and civil society participation. If confirmed, I would continue to highlight to the region and the world the valuable work of the ACCS and key bilateral partners, while seeking to facilitate continued U.S. interagency support for Seychelles' government institutions.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Seychelles? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. President Ramkalawan's election in 2020 marked the first peaceful, democratic transition since the country's independence in 1976. As Seychelles seeks to solidify its nascent democracy, it confronts significant government resource limitations, historic corruption, and pervasive illegal narcotics and high addiction rates, among a host of other challenges. By reopening our embassy in 2023 and returning to a full-time presence, the United States is better placed to support Seychelles' democratic trajectory. If confirmed, I would provide support to Seychelles' governing institutions; support civil society; coordinate the embassy's efforts to monitor the national elections set to take place in 2025, in conjunction with other international partners; and hold up Seychelles' progress as an example for the rest of the region.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support investment and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I would prioritize projects that contribute to inclusive economic growth, education, and improvements in the justice sector. I would also work with Prosper Africa, which is coordinated through USAID, to conclude deals in Seychelles and look for opportunities to provide technical assistance that promotes inclusive economic growth.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGO's, and other members of civil society in Seychelles? What steps will you take to pro-actively address any efforts to restrict or penalize NGO's and civil society via legal or regulatory measures should they occur?

Answer. If confirmed, I would engage civil society organizations to support efforts to improve the overall human rights situation and defend the advances won in recent years. I see discussions with civil society as a fundamentally important part of my role and a valuable opportunity to learn from those leading positive change.

Local human rights NGO's offer valuable perspectives on the issues they focus on, and their partner NGO's in the United States are helpful in building the capacity of local partners, creating platforms for their work, and making connections to U.S. policymaking processes. I plan on demonstrating my support for these NGO's and the critical role they play in any democracy.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Seychelles on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Seychelles?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be eager to meet regularly with the press and to share honest views with host government counterparts about the importance to democracy of a free and open press.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO TROY FITRELL BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* How should the U.S. plan to counterbalance Chinese influence in Seychelles while avoiding regional tensions?

Answer. Seychelles has been appreciative of and receptive to our offers of support in maritime security, economic governance, and academic and professional exchanges, and it wants to partner with the United States as an alternative to the People's Republic of China (PRC). Our re-opened Embassy will only increase our ability to expand our bilateral engagement with Seychelles and ensure we are its partner of choice. If confirmed, I will continue to expand our strong diplomatic, economic, and security partnerships with Seychelles.

*Question.* What steps should the U.S. take to ensure our military engagement respects the sovereignty and interests of the host nation while building a deeper and more active partnership in the Indian Ocean?

Answer. Most directly through an active presence in the Seychelles and the responsibility to coordinate across and within our interagency representation, as well as with strategic partner nations. AFRICOM, CENTCOM, and INDOPACOM all have equities in the region, so ensuring that our engagement and activities are known to and supported by our Seychellois partners would be a priority.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you help steer U.S. policy to address maritime security and illegal fishing issues in Seychelles?

Answer. In Guinea, our efforts to improve maritime domain awareness have proved effective, particularly to help the Government of Guinea counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. If confirmed, I would use similar approaches in the Seychelles, including using open-source satellite imagery and the domain awareness and analysis capabilities of the United States government to assist the Government of the Seychelles to enforce their laws in their territorial waters.

*Question.* What measures do you plan to take to strengthen U.S.-Seychelles security cooperation and enhance Seychelles' defense capabilities, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I would look to expand and enhance cooperative and capacity-building activities, particularly related to the AFRICOM and CENTCOM areas of responsibility. Particular areas of cooperation would include maritime and aerial domain awareness, remotely piloted vehicle operations, and data analysis, amongst other areas, designed in cooperation with Seychellois authorities. I will also support continued strong participation from the Seychelles Defense Forces in IMET-funded programs. These opportunities have allowed us to support the professional development of many members of the country's security forces who are now in senior positions.

*Question.* How should U.S. policy aim to mitigate the economic vulnerabilities of island nations like Seychelles, which are reliant on tourism and fishing, significantly post-COVID-19?

Answer. The United States should encourage and support science-based sustainable fisheries management in Seychellois fisheries as well as the development of aquaculture resources where appropriate and the possibility of expanded value-added processing and exports.

*Question.* What specific strategies will you use, if confirmed, to promote U.S. investment in non-tourism sectors and strengthen bilateral trade ties?



Answer. If confirmed, I would look to support the growing financial services sector in the Seychelles, through engagement and capacity-building efforts, both to advance that sector and for it to be a catalyst to other economic growth sectors. In addition, although Seychelles represents a small commercial market, there is a significant high-end consumer base that could be a fruitful target for expanded marketing of U.S. luxury products.

*Question.* How can the U.S. better leverage Seychelles' economic success to enhance U.S. interests?

Answer. Greater economic success in the Seychelles would help institutionalize transparent and reliable economic policies, continuing and deepening Seychelles' actions in partnership with the United States in international fora. Moreover, the United States' private sector is well-positioned to seize opportunities in the energy sector, including natural gas, solar, and electricity generation, information technologies, and financial services.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to increase U.S. participation in vital sub-regional economic and trade initiatives and entities like the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission?

Answer. If confirmed, I would use our resident diplomatic representation to build significant relationships with such entities and initiatives to advance United States interests.

*Question.* How is U.S. policy supporting the consolidation of democratic governance in Seychelles, and what specific support will you push for from the U.S. if confirmed?

Answer. Continued direct engagement across the political spectrum would help consolidate the democratic gains the people of the Seychelles have achieved in recent years. If confirmed, I would continue efforts to improve capacities in the justice, education, and economic sectors to help demonstrate that democratic advances mean tangible advances to the population. We will continue our work with the interagency on capacity-building measures for good governance in Seychelles, for example by supporting Department of Justice staffing of a liaison to work on anti-money laundering issues.

*Question.* What strategies will you use, if confirmed, to promote human rights, freedom of expression, and fair elections in Seychelles?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support continued capacity-building engagement with the justice sector, which would strengthen efforts toward supporting fundamental freedoms, free and fair elections, and continuing to combat trafficking in persons and other crimes. I would also pay particular attention to media activities and popular participation in electoral efforts, working with USAID and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to support elections planning. Further, I would engage with civil society to discuss their concerns and urge the government to address those concerns.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to support the Seychelles Human Rights Commission and other institutions in their efforts to maintain independence and effectiveness?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue a career-long dedication to supporting human rights defenders and their efforts to provide an independent voice in support of the fundamental freedoms of the people. As noted, continued efforts in the justice sector would help safeguard these freedoms and I would maintain an ongoing relationship with the Human Rights Commission and its leadership and staff.

*Question.* How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation?

Answer. If confirmed, I would engage civil society organizations to support efforts to improve the overall human rights situation and defend the advances won in recent years. I see discussions with civil society as a fundamentally important part of my role and a valuable opportunity to learn from those leading positive change. Local human rights NGO's offer valuable perspectives on the issues they focus on, and their partner NGO's in the United States are helpful in building the capacity of local partners, creating platforms for their work, and making connections to U.S. policymaking processes. I plan on demonstrating my support for these NGO's and the critical role they play in any democracy.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions will you propose to ensure transparency and fairness in governance, including addressing government corruption and enhancing the effectiveness of the Anti-Corruption Commission?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would energetically support transparency and fairness in governance, including enhancing the effectiveness of the Anti-Corruption Commission. I would seek opportunities to direct capacity building support to the Commission and to related governmental and non-governmental institutions.

*Question.* If confirmed, what role will you have the U.S. play in promoting freedom of the press and ensuring media operations without undue influence in Seychelles?

*Answer.* Civil society organizations report that the Constitutional provisions protecting the media are robust, and self-censorship has gone down since the 1990's. Following the decriminalization of defamation in 2021, journalists in the Seychelles are rarely targeted for critical reporting. The few attacks against journalists mainly occur online, which is something I will monitor, particularly because of the prevalence of women journalists in Seychelles and the fact that, around the world, online attacks against women journalists are more often gendered and sexualized than threats against their male counterparts. Like in many countries, print media struggles to maintain viable business models, especially due to distribution costs between islands, which narrows the media landscape and can take a particularly heavy toll on independent journalists.

*Question.* If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Seychelles operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to engage the Government of Seychelles on the issue of trafficking in persons. As noted in the 2023 TIP Report, the government has made progress in both prosecution and protection efforts. This includes prosecuting and convicting more traffickers, increasing funding for victim services, and opening and operationalizing the country's first anti-trafficking shelter. If confirmed, I will encourage the government to address the 2023 TIP Report recommendations, including increasing the capacity of labor inspectors to identify trafficking cases, particularly in the Seychelles International Trade Zone; holding fraudulent labor recruiters accountable; and increasing funding and resources for victim services.

*Question.* What is your assessment of religious freedom in the Seychelles and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

*Answer.* Religious freedom is a U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department continues to monitor religious freedom in the Seychelles. Seychelles' legal framework protects religious freedom, including the right of individuals to change religion or belief. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to address the importance of religious freedom and further strengthen mutual respect for and among religious and non-religious communities in Seychelles.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will engage regularly with diverse religious groups and civil society organizations to advance respect for freedom of religion or belief and explore ways to strengthen civil society's inclusion in discussions and decision-making on related topics. I will use the convening power of the USG to advance inter-religious dialogue, which helps to increase social support for religious freedom.

*Question.* If confirmed, what concrete steps can you take to help Seychelles increase their societal and governmental respect for freedom of religion or belief?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Seychelles, civil society, and private sector partners to support and empower human rights defenders and civil society organizations and to promote respect for freedom of religion or belief. I also will forge strong personal and institutional relationships with religious institutions and civil society organizations to assess how to advance the U.S. government's priorities around respect for freedom of religion or belief.

*Question.* During your interaction with my staff, they discussed my Embassy in a Box Act with you, which I introduced in April. Given the startup nature of the Embassy in Seychelles and, if confirmed, the challenges and work you would face in standing up the embassy operations? Please provide your perspective on this legislation and its potential impact on your work and future Ambassadors in a similar situation.

*Answer.* I'm aware of the bill and appreciate your support and interest in the implementation of the micro missions (aka "embassy in a box"). I understand Depart-

ment experts are doing a thorough review of the legislation with an intent to return with substantive thoughts.

Reopening an embassy will be a challenge, although I believe, if confirmed, I will be uniquely suited to take on this challenge as I was previously credentialed to the Seychelles. Re-establishing management and operations will be critical, as well as strengthening our relationships with civil society and the Seychellois government to ensure smooth operations in country. If confirmed, I welcome you and your staff to visit to see our progress firsthand.

*Question.* What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Seychelles?

Answer. Although the mission is currently quite small, our one American officer and two locally employed staff are extremely motivated and glad to be part of this example of expeditionary diplomacy.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Seychelles?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to maintain positive morale by providing opportunities for meaningful work and professional development and ensuring open lines of communication.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Seychelles?

Answer. To become and remain united, the members of the Mission must understand the organization's priorities and strategic goals. If confirmed, I intend to consistently articulate these priorities, and to provide good constructive feedback to the team on our shared progress. In addition, I would model strong personal ethics and set clear expectations for behavior.

*Question.* How would you describe your management style?

Answer. A fundamental tenet of my management style is to consider each staff member the key mission member on that person's professional portfolio. In that sense, each member has leadership and policy responsibilities and provides counsel to the overall mission leadership. I consider it my responsibility to provide opportunities to my staff, but also coaching or encouragement in the manner that the staff member needs. I believe in situationally appropriate and individually appropriate engagement.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. Never.

*Question.* How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. I consider the Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission to be two parts of a unified mission leadership. While I seek complementary skills and experiences when recruiting a Deputy Chief of Mission and seek alternative opinions in our private discussions, we speak publicly with one voice. It is my responsibility to ensure my Deputy Chief of Mission is both effective and happy.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. In the particular structure of our nascent mission in the Seychelles, the Deputy Chief of Mission would take primary responsibility for the management operations of the embassy and be the first-line supervisor of the other staff, but we would be each other's primary backup and I would expect and encourage the Deputy to have a range of senior relationships and policy responsibilities as well.

*Question.* Do you believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I take the responsibility for accurate employee evaluation reports very seriously. As U.S. Ambassador to Guinea and in my two stints as a Deputy Chief of Mission, I provide an annual training seminar on this subject that I make mandatory for everyone in my mission that rates another officer. If confirmed, I would continue this practice in the Seychelles.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I believe this is an issue that requires continuous attention. I remind my staff of this regularly and believe they respond well to the encouragement to do so.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. I believe our diplomats must always seek opportunities to meet people in their communities. As the head of a similarly sized mission, I had a rule that all direct-hire American staff had to engage in public speaking and community outreach. While some resisted at first, they came to see it as an enjoyable exercise and an important professional development opportunity, while advancing our outreach goals. If confirmed, I intend to continue that policy in the Seychelles.

*Question.* Do you pledge to support fully CODELs and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree to support fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer. Yes.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO TROY FITRELL BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the “only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the PRC and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose to do so. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. Last year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that “the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally.” As Secretary Blinken has said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and counter the People’s Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problematic influence and use of coercion, through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Seychelles ties.

*Question.* Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “pre-empt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedges between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

*Question.* Do you believe that there are any areas within which the CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared at a moment’s notice? If so, please explain.

Answer. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges when it is in the U.S. interest to do so. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Seychelles and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If

confirmed, I will work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address the PRC's efforts to expand its influence in Seychelles and the region.

*Question.* As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas' brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, on January 16, 2024, employees from nearly two dozen agencies staged a walkout in protest of the administration's Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President's Israel policy?

Answer. No.

*Question.* Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024 walkout?

Answer. No.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you define an employee or contractor, operating under your supervision, that signs an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I would plan to create a trusting atmosphere where employees felt free to air concerns. I place a high value on Department employees' free speech rights. I understand that expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I would work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

*Question.* In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistleblowing"?

Answer. I support employees' right to express their views and hope that employees working under my leadership would feel comfortable directly raising their concerns with me or their direct supervisors. I believe those employees were expressing a dissenting view to their leadership. "Whistleblowing" is a term and activity covered by legislation and regulations; I defer to the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the referenced actions are considered protected whistleblowing activity.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I would address misconduct, including insubordination, through documentation and direct counseling with an opportunity to improve. Continued violations could result in disciplinary measures as spelled out in our personnel policies.

*Question.* Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza?

Answer. No. I understand the Administration has expressed support for limited cease fires in order to secure the release of hostages and surge the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

*Question.* Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas espouses antisemitism. Hamas, which is designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization, seeks to eliminate the state of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jews.

*Question.* Would a cease fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you agree that calling for a cease fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

*Answer.* The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

*Answer.* It's very difficult in the heat of war to make a definitive assessment about any individual incident but what the National Security Memorandum-20 report states is that the IDF has undertaken steps to implement IHL obligations for the protection of civilians in the current conflict, including the requirements related to distinction, proportionality, and precautions in offensive operations. Israel's own concern about such incidents is reflected in the fact it has a number of internal investigations underway.

*Question.* For 27 years, the U.S. managed its relationship with the Seychelles remotely from Mauritius. During that time period, China increased partnerships with the Seychelles, constructed infrastructure, and built goodwill with the population. The U.S. reopened our embassy in mid-2023 in the Seychelles. If confirmed, how will you ensure that U.S. partnership is increased, given the great power competition we are currently engaged in with China and the U.S.' absence the past 27 years?

*Answer.* The first and most important step was to return. If confirmed, I would use our presence to promote our interests and the conviction that the Seychelles' future is best assured through participation in a rules-based, transparent international order. I would look to implement U.S. Government tools to advance capacity-building and cooperative endeavors and encourage the U.S. private sector to consider opportunities in the Seychelles.

*Question.* How can the U.S. compete with China in the Seychelles if we cannot use the tools at our disposal due to misguided policies, such as environmental concerns?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would use the tools at our disposal to their fullest extent. In my previous stint as Charge d'Affaires covering the Seychelles, I led two significant endeavors to allow for U.S. Government engagement. For the first, I negotiated and, on behalf of the U.S. Government, signed an Investment Incentive Agreement that would allow U.S. Government financing for investment opportunities in the Seychelles, including then-OPIC (now the Development Finance Corporation). For the second, I persuaded the Seychelles to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative to help the Seychelles prepare to exploit potential natural gas deposits in a responsible way, particularly not to endanger the tourism or fishing industries. I would use both of these tools and consider others to ensure that we engage the Seychelles in a holistic way, advancing our mutual goals.

*Question.* If confirmed, what other mechanisms do you envision using to increase U.S.-Seychelles partnerships?

*Answer.* In addition to the economic tools described above, if confirmed I would look to advance maritime security efforts to protect some of the busiest sea lanes in the world and the Seychellois fishing operations. I would look to systematize the process of sharing information but also to provide the analytical tools to develop further the Seychellois capacities to police and defend their own waters. Information is vastly more available than the last time I served with the Seychellois and our engagement needs to reflect that.

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RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO TROY FITRELL BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* Sea routes across the Indian Ocean have become sanctions evading highways, particularly for Iran and Russia. We need to prioritize calling out illegal activities and continue building cooperative partnerships across these waters, even when it is partners that are potentially at fault for facilitating sanctions evasion. Please give us a preview of your engagement strategies with your would-be host nations in this respect.

Answer. If confirmed, I would engage and coordinate between the various U.S. Government entities, including defense and law enforcement, to advance information-sharing activities with the Government of the Seychelles. I would look to expand capacity-building activities with my host government partners and provide opportunities for those partners to coordinate and amplify our efforts in international fora. I would look to provide the analytical and physical tools to help the Seychelles enforce their own laws and international best practices across the massive ocean space that are territorial waters.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO KELLY ADAMS-SMITH BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Democratic Reforms*

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you support democratic, anti-corruption, and rule of law reforms in Moldova? Please be specific.

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support Moldova as it increases the capacity of its democratic institutions, advances judicial and broader rule of law reform, promotes prevention and accountability, and supports an inclusive society that respects human rights. The United States has supported integrity vetting of judges and prosecutors to root out entrenched corruption. Moldova's participation in the Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR), with U.S. assistance, has been a positive step in terms of accountability.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you support Moldova's integration into the transatlantic community and European Union? Please be specific.

Answer. If confirmed, I will support the Moldovan government on its path to EU accession and in its pursuit of reforms to strengthen democratic institutions, combat corruption, diversify the Moldovan economy, and support human rights. The Moldovan government has remained steadfast and vocal in its commitment to EU accession, and U.S. assistance plays a major role in helping Moldova to modernize and increase the capacity of Moldovan law enforcement and the Moldovan army and support essential reforms in the justice sector.

*Question.* How will you engage with both ends of the political spectrum while continuing to promote reforms that help Moldova develop its defenses against foreign influence?

Answer. It is in the United States national security interest to support a whole, secure Moldova that can resist Russian malign influence and address other transnational threats. We provide a range of targeted security assistance to Moldova to advance these U.S. goals. U.S. assistance also contributes to Moldova's development of sustainable, professional defense capabilities that enhance Moldova's security and ability to contribute to U.N. and other international peacekeeping operations. If confirmed, I will work with leaders across the political spectrum to ensure this assistance continues.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions will you take to help Moldova increase the stability and security of its economy as well as decrease foreign leverage over its economy? Please be specific.

Answer. Despite the challenges posed by the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Moldova is making strides in building a strong, diverse, and export-oriented economy. If confirmed I will channel U.S. assistance to help develop Moldova's two largest export sectors, high-value agriculture and information technology as well as explore new export potential. Development in these sectors will continue to move Moldova's economic focus toward the West and away from Russia.

*Question.* If confirmed, what action will you take to support Moldova's energy security, diversify its regional energy connections and reduce its dependence on Russia? Please be specific.

Answer. Through unprecedented U.S. and international efforts, Moldova relies significantly less on consumption of Gazprom gas. If confirmed, I would focus on supporting Moldova's energy security and diversification by further leveraging U.S. technical assistance, promoting renewable energy, and encouraging greater reform and infrastructure build out to better link Moldova to European energy markets.

*Question.* How will you work with your Ambassadorial counterparts in the neighboring countries and across the region to advance regional cooperation and integration in the mutual interest of the United States and Moldova?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I will work closely with regional Ambassadorial counterparts to advance our shared policy goals through regular communication and engagement with each other as well as with Washington. I would also encourage Embassy Chisinau employees to establish relationships with their counterparts in other missions to promote information sharing and cross-team collaboration to achieve common goals.

**Question.** How do you propose to engage the government of Moldova, as well as its population, on the importance of maintaining solidarity in support of Ukraine, which will be a difficult task as Russia continues to pressure Moldova to withdraw its support?

**Answer.** Moldova has maintained a clear and courageous stand in support of its neighbor, Ukraine, and welcomed more than one million refugees from Ukraine, of whom about 118,000 remain. The approximately \$774 million in U.S. assistance committed since February 2022—including \$118 million in U.S. humanitarian aid delivered through U.N. agencies to support refugees in Moldova—plays a crucial role in implementing reforms and increasing resilience to malign influence. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. assistance to Moldova is used to build resistance to Russia’s pressure.

**Question.** In which areas do you believe that the United States can help move Moldova closer toward its stated goal of joining the European Union? Why do you believe that the U.S. should focus on those particular issues or sectors rather than others?

**Answer.** The United States supports Moldova’s chosen path toward transatlantic integration. If confirmed, I will commit to providing U.S. support for the Moldovan government as it pursues reforms to strengthen democratic institutions, combat corruption, strengthen its economy, and promote an inclusive society that respects human rights. I will work with our missions in Brussels and throughout the EU to support Moldova’s accession process. I will also work closely with civil society which plays an important role in promoting accountability for elected leaders and in driving reforms.

**Question.** To what extent do you believe that Moldova should be included in any future EU or U.S. projects to rebuild Ukraine?

**Answer.** Moldova offers a viable staging ground for Ukraine’s economic recovery. With a shared wide-gauge rail network and multiple road border crossings, Ukraine bound containerized or bulk shipments arriving in Moldova via the EU rail network can be safely transferred for direct shipment to Ukrainian endpoints. Moldova’s large local population of Russian language speakers with cultural ties to Ukraine, as well as the Ukrainian refugee population themselves, provides an advantage in coordinating efforts with Ukraine.

#### *Trafficking in Persons*

*In the State Department’s 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Moldova received a Tier 2 ranking for failing to fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.*

**Question.** If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Moldova operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

**Answer.** U.S. support in the fight against human trafficking in Moldova has included prevention, protection, and prosecution programs. Combating corruption in law enforcement and the judiciary, particularly among officials complicit in trafficking crimes, as well as building capacity within Moldovan law enforcement, will improve Moldova’s ability to prosecute and prevent trafficking crimes. If confirmed, I will encourage the Moldovan government to increase efforts to convict more traffickers, proactively identify victims, and ensure all identified victims receive state-funded assistance.

#### *Religious Freedom*

*In the State Department’s 2022 International Religious Freedom report, Moldova was noted for its constitution’s protections of the rights of individuals to practice their religion.*

**Question.** What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I will ensure our engagement with all religious groups reflects our core values, including respect for religious freedom. I will engage all religious communities and inform the Department’s understanding of religious freedom.



I will speak out about upholding the fundamental freedom of religion or belief. I will work with Moldova's new Special Envoy for Countering Antisemitism and Preservation of the Holocaust Memory to advance efforts to provide a measure of justice to Holocaust victims and their heirs.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue?

*Answer.* Yes, U.S. engagement with Moldovan civil society is key to advancing our international religious freedom priorities, and if confirmed, I commit to regular engagement with civil society on this issue.

*Question.* If confirmed, what concrete steps can you take to help Moldova increase their societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would lead the Embassy in identifying critical touchpoints throughout the year and host engagements with Moldovan religious leaders, and also leverage public diplomacy tools to work with educational institutions and CSOs to support freedom of religion or belief. I will also seek opportunities to coordinate with the Ambassador-at-Large to speak out against attempts by malign actors to instrumentalize religion to advance pro-Kremlin policies and spread disinformation that undermines Moldova's democracy and stands contrary to U.S. values.

#### *Human Rights*

*The State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report noted that there were no significant changes in the human rights situation over the year. Significant human rights issues included reports of torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.*

*Question.* How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work closely with civil society organizations to help us assess human rights issues, develop programs, and advocate for stronger policies and necessary reforms. Civil society plays an important role in promoting accountability of elected leaders, driving meaningful reform, supporting the rights of members of minorities and marginalized groups, increasing access to justice for vulnerable communities, and strengthening independent media.

#### *State Management and Oversight*

*Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last several years.*

*Question.* What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Moldova?

*Answer.* I understand that Mission Moldova's morale is quite high under Ambassador Logsdon's leadership, and if confirmed, I commit to ensuring this continues. The morale of Embassy Chisinau employees as well as their families will be a top priority for me.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Moldova?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with my Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure that we create an atmosphere in which our staff knows that they can bring serious issues to us and know that they are being heard at the highest level. I will ensure that everyone in the mission understands that my highest priority is the safety and security of the team. If confirmed, I will promote training and professional development, and ensure that all staff members are aware of the employee and family support resources that the Department offers to assist employees.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Moldova?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I plan to establish a strong team with a clear understanding of our goals and objectives, maintain open and transparent communications throughout the mission by sharing information, and seek ways to support and ensure the safety and community of the mission the community—both American and local staff. I will also work to advance the process of establishing a New Embassy Compound for our Mission to address the longstanding challenge posed by our limited physical spaces.

*Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.*

*Question.* How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* I have a collaborative management style. I believe in sharing information and empowering my team, being open to ideas and suggestions from throughout the mission, and providing clear guidance and decisions as needed to lead.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. I do not believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private, and if confirmed will expect my team to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

*Question.* How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. I have been a Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) twice—at the U.S. Embassy in Prague, Czech Republic, and currently at the U.S. Mission to the European Union. To be successful, a DCM must be the Chief of Mission's alter ego, confidante, and partner in managing and leading the mission. If confirmed, I fully expect to have that kind of positive relationship with my DCM in Chisinau.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I anticipate entrusting my Deputy Chief of Mission to manage the day-to-day operations of the mission, and to be fully engaged on and informed about all aspects of policy and mission management should the deputy need to step in to lead.

In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

*Question.* Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is critical to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles. I will hold accountable those who have performance or conduct issues. This is what I have done throughout my career.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers. I will hold accountable those who have performance or conduct issues.

*It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens.*

*Question.* In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In my experience, U.S. diplomats have gotten outside of our embassy walls sufficiently to accomplish our mission, and if confirmed I would stress the importance of getting outside of our Embassy by example. Access to and engagement with local contacts and populations is the foundation of our work overseas. Throughout my career, I have created mission-wide public outreach programs and participated in public outreach to all parts of society, from students to non-governmental organizations to the media, and will continue to do so.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage embassy staff to spend time engaging with local populations, including from marginalized groups, and developing contacts. I will also lead by example to demonstrate to my team that it is important to engage with our local counterparts and to participate in public outreach to provide information about our goals in a country and to learn from our hosts about local conditions.

*Congressional Delegations (CODELs) and Staff Delegations (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight mission.*

*Question.* Do you pledge to support fully CODELs and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I pledge that Embassy Chisinau, under my leadership, will fully support and welcome CODELs and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post.

*Question.* Do you agree to support fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I pledge that Embassy Chisinau, under my leadership, will fully support and welcome CODELs and STAFFDELs with exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO KELLY ADAMS-SMITH BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People’s Republic of China is the “only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

*Answer.* Last year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that “the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally.” As Secretary Blinken has said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and counter the People’s Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problematic influence and use of coercion, through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Moldova ties.

*Question.* Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* As Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “pre-empt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedges between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

*Question.* Do you believe that there are any areas within which the CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared at a moment’s notice? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, when it is in the U.S. interest to do so. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Moldova and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address the PRC’s efforts to expand its influence in Moldova and the region.

*Question.* As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas’ brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, on January 16, 2024, employees from nearly two dozen agencies staged a walkout in protest of the administration’s Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President’s Israel policy?

Answer. No, I did not sign the open letter to the President.

*Question.* Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024, walkout?

Answer. No, I did not participate.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you define an employee or contractor, operating under your supervision, that signs an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to address employee concerns personally by creating an open, trusting, and harassment-free work environment. I am mindful of and value Department employees' right to free speech under the First Amendment. Moreover, I understand the expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I would work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

*Question.* In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistleblowing"?

Answer. I believe these employees were expressing a dissenting view to their leadership. I support employees' rights to express their views and hope that employees feel confident to directly raise their concerns with their supervisors and management. "Whistleblowing" is a term and activity covered by legislation and regulations; I defer to the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the referenced actions are considered protected whistleblowing activity.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. According to Department regulations, job-related insubordination is a conduct matter and may result in counseling and/or discipline, including a penalty commensurate with the scale of the offense. If confirmed, I would address conduct issues, including insubordination, in consultation with the Department's human resources and legal professionals.

*Question.* Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza?

Answer. No, I have not expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza. I understand the Administration has expressed support for limited cease fires in order to secure the release of hostages and surge the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

*Question.* Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas espouses antisemitism. Hamas, which is designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization, seeks to eliminate the state of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jews.

*Question.* Would a cease fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you agree that calling for a cease fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administrations' hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism and its military objective on an enduring defeat of Hamas, consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

*Answer.* It's very difficult in the heat of war to make a definitive assessment about any individual incident but what the National Security Memorandum–20 report states is that the IDF has undertaken steps to implement IHL obligations for the protection of civilians in the current conflict, including the requirements related to distinction, proportionality, and precautions in offensive operations. Israel's own concern about such incidents is reflected in the fact it has a number of internal investigations underway.

*Question.* After gaining independence in 1991, Russia has backed and stationed military forces in the Moldovan area of Transnistria. Transnistrian officials state the region's residents hold Russian citizenship, while Moldova counters the area's residents are Moldovan. A resolution to the conflict had been underway but has been inactive since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Do you believe there will be a peaceful reintegration of Transnistria into Moldova?

*Answer.* The United States remains actively engaged in Chisinau, Tiraspol, and Vienna to encourage the continuation of OSCE-facilitated 1+1 meetings between the Sides, and to support the OSCE-led 5+2 process. The 5+2 process seeks to achieve a comprehensive, peaceful, and sustainable settlement of the conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova with a special status for Transnistria within Moldova's internationally recognized borders.

*Question.* Has Russia's war in Ukraine increased or decreased Russia's influence in Transnistria?

*Answer.* Russia maintains a military presence in Transnistria without Moldova's consent, and the Kremlin promotes malign actors' engagement in Moldova's domestic politics, involvement in the Moldovan media space, and influence in the energy sector. These activities threaten to undermine Moldova's democratic reforms and pro-Western trajectory through disinformation, cyber and hybrid attacks. At the same time, Ukraine's closure of its border with Moldova that is adjacent to the Transnistria region has furthered Transnistria's economic integration into Europe on Chisinau's terms.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you intend to continue promoting a resolution to the conflict?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would continue to support a results-oriented OSCE-led 5+2 process to resolve the Transnistrian conflict and uphold Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO KRISTEN SARRI BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order, and increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the PRC and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose to do so. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

*Answer.* Last year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that "the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally." As Secretary Blinken said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and counter the People's Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problematic influence and use of coercion, through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy around the world.

*Question.* Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* As Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of Na-

tional Intelligence's 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to "pre-empt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedges between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system."

*Question.* Do you believe that there are any areas with which the CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could disappear at a moment's notice? If so, please explain.

*Answer.* I understand that the United States will work with the People's Republic of China (PRC) to address transnational challenges when it is in the U.S. interest to do so. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

*Answer.* On behalf of the Department of State, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) is responsible for coordination and oversight to all major science or science and technology agreements and activities between the United States and foreign countries, international organizations, or commissions of which the United States and one or more foreign countries are members. I am fully aware of, and concerned about, the People's Republic of China's (PRC) national strategies related to science and technology, as well as its domestic legal landscape. If confirmed, I will only support cooperative activities with the PRC that advance U.S. interests in science and technology and align with U.S. values of transparency, reciprocity, and openness.

*Question.* As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas' brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, on January 16, 2024, employees from nearly two dozen agencies staged a walkout in protest of the administration's Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President's Israel policy?

*Answer.* No, I did not sign the letter to the President.

*Question.* Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024, walkout?

*Answer.* No, I did not participate in the walkout.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you define an employee or contractor, operating under your supervision, that signs an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek to address employee concerns personally by creating a work environment that is open, trusting, and harassment free. I recognize Department employees' right to freedom of expression under the First Amendment and understand that expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of State's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should a matter arise.

*Question.* In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistle-blowing"?

*Answer.* I understand the Department of State follows the statutory definition of a whistleblower as an employee who reports information they reasonably believe is a violation of any law, rule, or regulation; gross mismanagement with substantial risk of significant adverse impact on mission; a gross waste of funds (more than a debatable expenditure); abuse of authority, an arbitrary decision for personal gain and/or to injure others; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs' employees understand that there are several avenues available, such as the Secretary's Dissent Channel, Open Forum, and Policy Ideas Channel, to express policy disagreements and would encourage employees to use established channels to express their views.

*Question.* Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease fire in Gaza?

Answer. No. I have not expressed support for a unilateral Israeli cease fire against Hamas. I believe that Israel has a right to defend itself against Hamas.

*Question.* Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas espouses antisemitism. Hamas, which is designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization, seeks to eliminate the state of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jews.

*Question.* Would a cease fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), for which I am nominated, is not engaged on Middle East security, and my expertise is in natural resource and science policy. I would defer to the Bureau on Near Eastern Affairs. Based on news reports and Administration press conferences, I understand that the United States is committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians.

*Question.* Do you agree that calling for a cease fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), for which I am nominated, is not engaged on Middle East security, and my expertise is in natural resource and science policy. I would defer to the Bureau on Near Eastern Affairs. Based on news reports and Administration press conferences, I understand that the United States supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism and its military objective on an enduring defeat of Hamas, consistent with international law.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

Answer. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), for which I am nominated, is not engaged on Middle East security, and my expertise is in natural resource and science policy. I would defer to the Bureau on Near Eastern Affairs. My understanding is that Israel must take all possible precautions to avoid civilian harm during operations and must also investigate credible allegations of law of war violations when they arise, and that the United States is in communication with the Israeli government.

*Question.* At the Our Ocean Conference held in April 2024, the Department announced more than \$508 million to protect the oceans by advancing marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, and solutions to the climate crisis. One such initiative the Department announced was \$13.4 million to protect coral reef habitat and fisheries in Tanzania. How does this help promote the stated mission of the State Department of promoting American prosperity and national security?

Answer. Our Ocean Conference announcements reflect initiatives from across the Federal interagency. My understanding is this announcement refers to a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) initiative to establish an enabling environment and science-driven framework for sustainable marine protected area and wild-caught fishery co-management by government, communities, and the private sector in Tanzania.

*Question.* Shouldn't this type of funding for coral reefs and fisheries be used on domestic efforts with extensive coastlines instead of a foreign country?

Answer. The United States remains at the forefront of coral reef conservation and is committed to advancing efforts to protect and restore coral reefs. Coral reefs are essential habitats globally that support food security and livelihoods for millions. Activities and programs to conserve and restore key coral reef ecosystems at home, such as NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program, and abroad are a valuable tool in building relationships and supporting U.S. interests across the globe and promoting national security, stability, and prosperity.

*Question.* Would you agree American prosperity and national security is better served by conserving U.S. coral reefs and fisheries?

Answer. Scaling up work to enhance the resilience of coral reef ecosystems at home, and supporting other countries in doing the same helps reduce the risk of fu-

ture global instability and helps protect coral reefs which are amongst the most biologically productive and diverse ecosystems in the world.

Internationally, the United States is a leader in efforts to conserve and manage highly migratory species that require attention throughout their range, including intersections with U.S. waters and fisheries, and to ensure that international fisheries supplying the U.S. market are both sustainable and meeting the conservation standards that U.S. fishers must meet.

*Question.* There is ongoing debate in Congress regarding how to remediate orbital debris. Just last month, it was confirmed that a piece of this space garbage crashed through a roof in my home State of Florida, thankfully not harming the occupants. Not all of this garbage, or debris, belongs to the U.S. and the amount in orbit is increasing. How should the Department negotiate with other countries regarding responsibility for, and cooperation on, this debris?

*Answer.* According to U.S. Space Command, three countries generate approximately 96 percent of orbital debris: Russia (33 percent), the United States (32 percent), and the People's Republic of China (31 percent).

The Department of State, as the representative of the United States at several multilateral fora on space, is committed to preventing, mitigating, and addressing orbital debris by promoting U.S. standards and best practices at the international level. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), as Head of Delegation to the U.N. Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS), negotiated the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines adopted in 2007 and the Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities adopted in 2019.

These guidelines identify best practices to maintain the sustainability of space and safety of space operations. If confirmed, I would promote these guidelines and encourage other UNCOPUOS members to implement them.

*Question.* For example, should the U.S. be the sole country cleaning up the various pieces of debris placed in orbit by the Chinese, Russians, or Iranians?

*Answer.* No, the United States should not be the sole country cleaning up debris in space, as countries are internationally responsible for their own and their nationals' activities in space. If confirmed, I am committed to promoting U.S. standards and best practices for orbital debris prevention, mitigation, and remediation at the international level, and practical implementation of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS) Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space and the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines.

*Question.* Do you have recommendations on who should be held liable or responsible should future pieces of debris damage property or endanger human life?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would work with the Department of State's Office of the Legal Adviser and interagency partners to assess claims for damage. Depending on the situation, the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects of 1972, a treaty that provides for launching state liability under international law, may be applicable in addition to domestic law.

*Question.* How well do others, such as Iran, China, Russia, and North Korea, coordinate with State and other interagency partners to ensure the items they launch into orbit, and associated debris, do not negatively impact manned and unmanned orbital platforms of the U.S. and its allies?

*Answer.* I am concerned about the People's Republic of China and Russia's ambivalence to spaceflight safety hazards caused by debris. I understand that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs (OES), in partnership with the Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability, has raised concerns at every available fora, including through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS). Within UNCOPUOS, OES leads U.S. engagement in the Long-Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Working Group, and if confirmed, I would advocate for the implementation of the LTS Guidelines adopted by UNCOPUOS in 2019.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO KRISTEN SARRI BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* What does America gain by being at the table as a party to binding treaties? Does the United States accrue any benefit by sitting outside the decision-making fora those specific treaties create?



Answer. The Bureau on Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs leads U.S. efforts in over 400 international agreements and international organizations. Only as a party to international instruments can we fully represent the United States, promote U.S. policies and positions, counter other powers, and secure key U.S. interests.

For example, the United States is not a party to the Law of the Sea Convention and only can participate as an observer to the International Seabed Authority, which severely limits the U.S. ability to influence decisions of the body.

*Question.* Whether to explore mineral or energy resources in, or to designate for protection the newly mapped section of our extended continental shelf (ECS) in the Arctic is an inherently sovereign decision of the United States. With Russia officially stating that it will not recognize our ECS claims without the U.S. first ratifying the Law of the Sea treaty (UNCLOS)—and other Arctic nations conceding that position informally—would you recommend the Senate provide UNCLOS advice and consent?

Answer. Yes. I believe that U.S. interests are best served by joining the Law of the Sea Convention. Past Democratic and Republican administrations, the civilian and military leadership of the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as leading industry and non-governmental organizations have all strongly supported the United States' joining the Convention. While the United States has rights under customary international law to conserve and manage the resources of its Extended Continental Shelf (ECS), joining the Convention would enable the United States to maximize legal certainty and international recognition of our sovereign rights over the U.S. ECS, including by dismantling unjustified objections to our ECS by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO KRISTEN SARRI BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

*Question.* Are you committed to eliminating duplication and redundancies at the Department of State?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I am committed to eliminating duplication and redundancies at the Department of State.

*Question.* What percentage of the work of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs deals with international climate change? In fiscal year 2023, what percentage of the Bureau's funding was spent on international climate change programs?

Answer. The Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), advances U.S. diplomatic and foreign policy priorities across a wide range of oceans, environmental, and international scientific issues. In terms of foreign assistance programs in fiscal year 2023, I understand OES was allocated \$166.5 million in Economic Support Funds for adaptation, clean energy, and sustainable landscapes programming, 71 percent of total fiscal year 2023 OES foreign assistance programming.

*Question.* Please provide examples of specific projects funded by the Bureau for adaptation, clean energy, and sustainable landscapes in fiscal year 2023. What were the tangible results and impacts of the funding?

Answer. Using fiscal year 2023 funds, I understand Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) adaptation programming is expanding climate information services and mobilizing public and private finance for resilient infrastructure enhancements; OES's energy programming is deploying cleaner, more reliable, and secure energy sources; and OES sustainable landscapes programming is bringing in new sources of private finance for conserving and restoring forests, as well as leveraging U.S. technical expertise to build capacity in countries for monitoring, measuring, and reporting forest and terrestrial carbon.

My understanding is the OES's fiscal year 2023 funded programs will be obligated, and the Bureau will begin expending funds by September 30, 2024, subject to congressional notification.

*Question.* How does the Office of Climate Change in this bureau interact with the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate? In what areas is there overlap in responsibilities and duties? Please identify and delineate the lines of authority and responsibilities between the two.

Answer. The Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs' (OES) Office of Global Change (EGC) has been the Department's long-running

permanent program office for climate issues. My understanding is that OES coordinates on climate-related issues between EGC and the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate (SPEC). If confirmed, I would continue the close collaboration between OES and SPEC. I understand the work SPEC has been leading throughout this Administration continues to be a top priority for both the President and the Secretary.

*Question.* Please describe the current staffing, resources, and responsibilities of the Office of Climate Change. In addition, please describe when the Office was created and under what statutory authority.

*Answer.* To my knowledge, the Office of Global Change (EGC) was established under the authority of the Secretary of State to administer the Department, including under the Department's Basic Authorities Act. I understand EGC has been the Department's long-running permanent program office for climate issues. It is responsible for representing the United States in negotiations under the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and in other international fora and manages the obligation, monitoring, and evaluation of adaptation, clean energy, and sustainable landscapes foreign assistance funding.

*Question.* Please describe the current staffing, resources, and responsibilities of the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. In addition, please describe when the Office was created and under what statutory authority.

*Answer.* I understand that the President created the position of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 14008, and that the Department of State established the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate in 2021 following congressional notification consistent with applicable requirements. I do not have no knowledge of the current staffing and resources of the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate.

*Question.* China is the world's second largest economy and the largest emitter of carbon dioxide, yet it is not listed among the countries in Annex I of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. Should China be considered a developed country instead of a developing country for the purpose of this treaty?

*Answer.* I understand that the 2015 Paris Agreement, which does not contain annexes or define the terms "developed country" or "developing country," is now the primary international agreement under which states are taking climate action. I also understand that the United States was instrumental in ensuring that the Paris Agreement did not refer to the Convention's annexes, and that the Agreement's key mitigation commitments apply to all Parties, including the People's Republic of China, regardless of their development status.

*Question.* China is the world's second largest economy and the largest emitter of carbon dioxide, yet it is not listed among the countries in Annex I of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. If confirmed, will you work to get China listed in Annex I with the other developed countries?

*Answer.* My understanding is that the United States succeeded in ensuring that the primary international agreement under which states are now taking climate action, the 2015 Paris Agreement, does not refer to the Convention's annexes. The Agreement's key mitigation commitments apply to all Parties, including the People's Republic of China (PRC), regardless of their development status. I understand that the United States continues to be focused on securing actions by PRC that are consistent with its high capability to act.

*Question.* Please describe your relevant experience and background regarding negotiating an international treaty or agreement.

*Answer.* In my professional career in the Senate and in the executive branch, I was responsible for negotiating legislation and building interagency consensus on policy issues. The experiences gave me valuable skills in listening to different perspectives, looking for mutual interests, building coalitions, and defining bottom lines. These skills and experiences are all applicable to negotiating international treaties and agreements.

*Question.* The United Nations is in talks to develop a legally binding treaty to address plastic pollution. What are the national security implications of this treaty?

*Answer.* The global agreement is still being negotiated, and therefore, it is too early to determine any potential national security considerations or implications that may need to be addressed. I understand that at the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee the United States inserted a placeholder in the draft text to consider such issues at a later stage in the negotiations once substantive provisions have been further elaborated. The Office of Environment Quality

within the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs is leading the negotiations for the U.S. Government. If confirmed, I would work closely with OES staff and the negotiating team to represent U.S. interests.

*Question.* Under your leadership, would you ensure this treaty is submitted to Congress for its advice and consent to ratification?

*Answer.* The substantive provisions of the plastics agreement are still being negotiated. It is my understanding that it is too early to determine the appropriate domestic form of a future agreement, and that the executive branch would review to this issue after the negotiations conclude.

*Question.* What is the Biden administration's current position regarding the plastic treaty?

*Answer.* I understand that the Administration seeks a strong and inclusive global agreement on plastic pollution that every country, including major producers and consumers of plastic like the United States, would be in a position to join. I also know that the Administration continues to be committed to engaging closely with stakeholders, including from Congress, sub-national governments, the private sector, civil society, and scientists, throughout the negotiations, and to consider their views.

