

Statement of Ana Escrogima
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 16, 2023

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished Members of the Committee: It is my honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to represent the United States as Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. I am grateful for the trust that the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me.

I am joined on this special occasion by my father, Pedro Escrogima, and my mother, Ana Fernandez, immigrants from the Dominican Republic and retired career public servants. My siblings and I admire their example of service and dedication to family. I want to thank my husband Houssam Eddine Beggas, my partner on this exciting journey, which became even more exciting with the arrival of our year-old son Pedro. I understand our little guy is watching on screen, although he may not exactly realize what is happening.

Senators, I have spent most of my Foreign Service career protecting the interests and security of the American people in the Middle East. If confirmed, I would draw on this experience to advance U.S. values and national security interests in Oman. I will work every day to ensure the safety and well-being of our Mission Oman team, and the American citizens working and traveling in Oman.

The warm and enduring U.S. relationship with the Sultanate of Oman dates to the earliest days of our republic. We established commercial relations 190 years ago, in our first trade agreement with an Arab state. Today, the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement supports American jobs and drives bilateral trade, which reached a record high of \$4.2 billion in 2022, a 30 percent increase from the prior year. This February, Oman hosted the inaugural U.S.-Oman Strategic Dialogue, where we pledged to build our economic relationship for the future. We have a strategic opportunity to support Oman's economic diversification toward the renewable energy, manufacturing, and logistics sectors. We signed a \$500 million EXIM MOU that will support American companies seeking to be a part of that transition. If confirmed, I will work

with our Omani partners to grow trade and commercial ties, and build opportunities for our countries to innovate, contribute to global energy security, and create further prosperity.

The bright and prosperous future we seek in the region is only safeguarded if we can address the security challenges that affect Oman and its neighbors. The safety and wellbeing of Americans in Oman will be my top priority. The Gulf is vital to key U.S. national security priorities in the region, and the Sultanate of Oman has consistently been a valued partner in advancing those priorities. Together, we have worked to prevent smuggling across Oman's borders and to pursue a resolution to the conflict in Yemen and move the peace process forward. We partner with Oman to address security challenges in the Strait of Hormuz, through which 88 percent of the region's oil transits. Oman has since 1996 hosted the Middle East Desalinization Research Center, the longest functioning regional integration mechanism that includes Israel.

If confirmed, I intend to build on these solid foundations to explore further avenues for deepening regional integration, prosperity, and security. I will focus on countering Iran's destabilizing actions, and on advancing concrete, strategic alternatives to the People's Republic of China's aggressive practices in the region. I will encourage Oman to build on its announcement permitting Israeli civilian overflights through its airspace by taking additional steps, including consideration of full normalization with Israel.

We are also in an exciting moment in the U.S.-Oman people-to-people relationship. We recently announced the resumption of the Fulbright program for Omanis and a new partnership between Oman and the Arizona National Guard. If confirmed, I would support exchanges that advance shared priorities and bring together students and experts to take our relationship forward into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.