

Statement of Ervin J. Massinga
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 16, 2023

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and to answer your questions on my nomination to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

I thank President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken for this tremendous opportunity to serve my country, and my wife Lauryne for helping to make all of this possible in countless ways.

My story is like all Americans, with my family having many different origins. From my mother's roots in Louisiana, where her parents and grandparents worked tirelessly to establish an educational foundation for later generations despite the enormous challenges of the era, to my father's parents and grandparents, who struggled with the Portuguese colonial regime in what is now Mozambique, I am deeply humbled today to appear before the United States Senate as an ambassadorial nominee. My parents themselves provided clear guidance and instilled bedrock values that I have aspired to emulate, from discipline, integrity, treating people with kindness and respect. Public service has always been a hallmark in my family, from my mother's national level leadership in the social services arena, to her father's service in a World War 2 refinery and her mother's service as a school principal. If confirmed by this body, I pledge I will do my utmost to live up to these values and models in leading this important diplomatic mission.

My career includes challenging tours in China, Latin America and leadership roles in Guinea, Sudan and Washington, all of which have reinforced my core belief that there is no higher calling than to serve my fellow Americans

and mentor the next generation of foreign policy practitioners.

Mr. Chair, the United States seeks a trusted partner in Ethiopia – a country significant not only for its strategic location and growing population, but for its economic potential as well as its prominent role in the history and the global community.

The last two years have tested our bilateral relationship. The conflict that began in late 2020 wrought horrific violations and abuses upon the citizens of Ethiopia. In response, as required by U.S. law, the United States placed restrictions on our foreign assistance and suspended Ethiopia's trade benefits from the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. But our diplomatic engagement never faltered, and to the credit of the Ethiopian federal government and Tigrayan regional authorities, they left the door open to our efforts to seek a peace agreement in concert with our partners – notably the African Union, Kenya, and South Africa.

The November 2022 cessation of hostilities agreement silenced the guns, and I am deeply proud of the role the State Department played in facilitating that outcome. We continue to focus on supporting the implementation of the agreement – be it through human rights monitors, humanitarian assistance, or transitional justice. But more must be done to ensure peace in Ethiopia is durable. I believe we must be ready to support Ethiopia in all ways that further our own policy objectives.

Chief among these objectives is security and stability in the Horn of Africa. Historically, Ethiopia has been an exporter of stability, for example by being one of the largest global contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. But instability within Ethiopia, notably in Oromia, threatens to destabilize the region; we welcome the recent announcement of government talks with the OLA and we stand ready to facilitate these discussions if asked. Ethnic tensions persist and youth unemployment is high – now exacerbated by the need to demobilize thousands of soldiers following the cessation of hostilities in the north. Investment in the country's democratic and

economic reforms will address the root causes of conflict, including economic and social fragility.

At the same time, we need to ensure there is accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict. That's key to ensuring true reconciliation and durable peace. To that end, we should support Ethiopia's nascent transitional justice efforts. Transitional justice is a key part of any country's path from war to peace, and Ethiopia will be in urgent need of international support and technical expertise as it seeks to heal, pursuing the key transitional justice elements of truth-telling, accountability, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence. We should support these efforts not just out of a commitment to peace and human rights, but also because a durable peace in Ethiopia will promote security throughout the Horn of Africa, making Americans at home and abroad safer.

Finally, we should be clear-eyed about our primary mission in any overseas embassy—to protect and serve U.S. citizens. In that context, I echo the thanks extended to the government of Ethiopia for enabling the evacuations out of Sudan. I am proud to make it my mission to ensure U.S. citizens in Ethiopia can expect the high level of attention and service that they deserve.