

Statement of Ambassador Robert A. Wood
Nominee for Alternate Representative of the United States of America
For Special Political Affairs in the United Nations
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 23, 2022

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today as you take up my nomination to serve as the United States' Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs at the United Nations in New York. I am greatly honored by the confidence and trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me through this nomination; and if confirmed by the Senate, I will defend to the utmost of my ability the fundamental values and interests of the American people.

I also wish to thank my lovely wife, Gita, and son, Jonathan, for their love and support throughout our extraordinary Foreign Service journey. Without them, I would simply not be where I am today.

As you know from reviewing my body of work over 34 years of government service, I have a great deal of experience working on multilateral issues that spans leadership roles in our Missions to the European Union, the UN in Vienna, and the Conference on Disarmament. Multilateral diplomacy can be extremely challenging and frustrating, yet it is so vitally important to the defense and promotion of American values and national security interests.

During a previous assignment at the U.S. Mission to the UN in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, I witnessed the great work the UN can do – for example, the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1267, which mandated sanctions on the Taliban and Al-Qaida; and of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, establishing the UN Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee.

The passage of these two critical measures exemplified what the founders of the UN had envisioned: a body whose members would take prompt and effective action against those forces that represent serious threats to international peace and security.

What also stood out for me at that time was just how essential U.S. leadership was to the passage of those two resolutions. U.S leadership is especially crucial today as the international community confronts Russia's unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against the people and territory of Ukraine. Because of Russia's war on Ukraine, its international isolation is now profound. If confirmed, I will work with other nations at the UN to widen and deepen that isolation. Russia must understand that its military and political leadership will be held accountable for the death and destruction it has perpetrated upon Ukraine. Let there be no mistake about that.

Mr. Chairman, there are of course other immense challenges around the globe that call out for urgent international action, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction, growing anti-Semitism, and a rise in the number of autocratic regimes and the inherent threats they pose to freedom of expression. No single state

can or should be expected to tackle any of these issues by itself; it is only through collective action that we can hope to successfully address major threats.

In the Security Council and beyond, the relentless efforts of our adversaries to undermine the broader rules-based international order should be a call to action for all who believe in a transparent, open, and human rights-centric United Nations. If confirmed, I will work vigorously to push back on Russian and Chinese efforts to reshape and undermine international law, institutions, and standards.

The UN needs reform. If confirmed, one of my priorities will be to pursue President Biden's reform agenda for the UN. I will work tirelessly to ensure that American taxpayers' money is being well spent at the UN; that sexual exploitation and abuse are rooted out of UN peace operations; that the UN Secretary-General is given the tools to better fight malign influence; that human rights remain at the core of the UN's work; and that everything possible is done to put an end to anti-Israel bias throughout the entire UN system.

If confirmed, I would be honored to join Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield and her team at the U.S. Mission in New York in pushing forward the President's robust agenda at the United Nations, which includes increasing the number of qualified Americans employed at the world body – something, Mr. Chairman, I know you and your colleagues on this distinguished committee want to see as well.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.