

**Statement of Robert F. Godec**  
**Nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Kenya**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Wednesday, November 28, 2012**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Kenya. I want to thank the President and Secretary Clinton for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the other Members of Congress to advance U.S. interests in Kenya and the East African region.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce to you my wife, Lori Magnusson, who is here with me today. Lori has been a constant source of strength, support, and wisdom to me throughout my career. I would also like to introduce my mother, Nancy Dietrich, and to express my profound thanks to her for all she has done for me over the years.

Kenya is a strategic partner for the United States. Our two countries are linked by history and shared values. Kenya is a positive and constructive leader in a region that faces major challenges, including conflict, violent extremism, and poverty. For 50 years, as friends, Kenya and the United States have stood together to face these challenges. Meeting them is in the interest not just of Kenya and its neighbors, but of the United States and, indeed, the world.

As a consequence, our relationship with Kenya is both broad and deep. We work together with Kenya to resolve regional conflicts, combat terrorism, and provide humanitarian assistance. As a partner, we have a commitment to a strong Kenya and are assisting with Kenyan efforts to reform their political institutions, accelerate economic growth and development, and improve health and education systems. If confirmed, I will continue our work on these challenges and will engage with Kenyans from across the country to do so.

A democratic Kenya, which embraces national reconciliation and rejects corruption and impunity, is critical for the future of East Africa. Since the deadly violence that swept Kenya following the disputed December 2007 presidential elections, the United States has focused on supporting political and constitutional reform in Kenya. Kenya's new constitution, adopted in August 2010, is one of the most progressive in Africa and envisions nothing less than the complete overhaul of the political system. It holds the promise of anchoring Kenya's democracy firmly in the rule of law. Despite facing many other challenges, including internal political disagreements, drought, and the global economic crisis, Kenya has made significant progress passing the legislation necessary to implement the constitution. Kenya's judicial reforms have been a particular bright spot.

The upcoming March 2013 election is the next key moment for Kenya in the implementation of its new constitution and in advancing political reform. The responsibility for the election rests squarely with the Kenyan government and people, and success, frankly, is not assured. If I am confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to support Kenyan efforts to make the election free, fair, and peaceful. We have a strong and varied set of programs in place to assist institutions charged with carrying out the most complex election in Kenya's history. We are working with government, civil society, religious leaders, community leaders, and youth across the country to promote peaceful participation in the election. We are also coordinating closely with the international community and other partners on our election assistance to ensure the wise and effective use of taxpayer resources.

Beyond the election, Kenya faces many other internal challenges, including devolving power to new county governments, carrying out land reform, improving environmental protection, combating HIV/AIDS, and strengthening its institutions. Kenya needs to make progress to address these challenges and, if confirmed, I will continue our Mission's work to assist the Kenyans to do so. I will also seek to deepen and strengthen our economic and commercial ties, including the promotion of U.S. exports and protection of U.S. investment.

Kenya's security remains a major concern. It is inextricably linked to our own, as was clearly illustrated in the 1998 bombing of our Embassy, carried out by al Qa'ida, which left 218 people dead and thousands injured. Kenya has borne a heavy burden from the insecurity, extremist violence, and humanitarian challenges associated with the conflict in Somalia. As a troop contributing country to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Kenya has helped to establish the security necessary for the new government in Mogadishu to begin serving the needs of the Somali people. In taking a higher profile in Somalia, however, Kenya increasingly has become a victim of violent attacks by terrorists. If confirmed, I will continue to support Kenya's effort to secure its borders and to protect its citizens, while working to ensure that Kenya respects human rights and international law as it fights terrorism.

Kenya also hosts more than 600,000 refugees, primarily from Somalia, which places a considerable burden on its limited resources. The United States will continue to assist Kenya to meet its international obligations with respect to refugees.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, a tangible indicator of Kenya's importance to the United States is the fact that U.S. Mission Nairobi is now our largest in Africa. The staff at the embassy has recently weathered a period of transition and uncertainty. In my brief time as Chargé d'Affaires, I have been impressed by the professionalism, dedication, and integrity of the Mission staff, both American and Kenyan. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, if confirmed, I would be honored to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Kenya and to lead the capable and committed public servants at our Mission there.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions you might have.