

Statement of Stephanie Sullivan
United States Ambassador-Designate to the
Republic of the Congo
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 24, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the Committee, it is a privilege and honor to appear before you this morning as the President's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to The Republic of the Congo. I appreciate the confidence the President and Secretary of State have shown in nominating me for this position. I am also grateful for the consideration of this distinguished committee. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress, and congressional staff, to protect and advance American interests in The Republic of the Congo.

If I may, I'd like to introduce my husband John and our sons Dan and Scott, who are here with me today. John accompanied me to both Cameroon and Ghana. Our children have happy memories of our four years in Accra. I have spent nearly half of my 30-year career working on African issues, starting with my service as a Peace Corps Volunteer, some 50 miles from Brazzaville, across the river in The Democratic Republic of the Congo. If confirmed, I look forward to serving in the region again.

The Republic of the Congo offers many opportunities for positive United States engagement. The country has largely recovered from the 1997 civil war, thanks to rising oil revenues that have funded reconstruction and infrastructure projects. The Republic of the Congo is sub-Saharan Africa's fourth largest oil exporter. President Sassou-N'Guesso's development strategy known as "Congo Vision 2025" targets 2025 as the year that The Republic of the Congo will become an emerging economy.

Our bilateral relationship with The Republic of the Congo aims to promote three mutually beneficial goals: to strengthen democratic institutions; promote economic development; and improve regional security.

The first goal is to strengthen democratic institutions. This includes the promotion of civil and political rights. The government carried out legislative elections in mid-2012, in an atmosphere of relative calm. In the run up to The Republic of the Congo's presidential elections in 2016, the United States is focused on strengthening civil society groups that advocate government accountability and transparency. If confirmed, Mr. Chairman, I will encourage the government of The Republic of the Congo to enhance democratic institutions and continue implementing judicial reforms. We note that recent improvements in The Republic of the Congo's legal

framework have resulted in more effective enforcement of laws against human trafficking.

The second goal is to promote economic development. To achieve debt relief, the government of The Republic of the Congo committed itself to reforms, including changes in government procurement practices, more rigorous fiscal discipline, and more effective budget implementation. This year, The Republic of the Congo was found compliant under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, representing steps towards transparency in The Republic of the Congo's main revenue source, petroleum. However, more remains to be done. If confirmed, I will vigorously encourage improvements to the business climate and support U.S. private sector engagement.

As a significant contributor to the Global Fund, the United States is working with The Republic of the Congo and other partners to improve the health of the Congolese people, half of whom are under the age of 15.

Sound management of the environment is another important area of partnership. The United States supports several regional environmental initiatives. Enhanced transparency in forest management has forged linkages between climate change mitigation, good governance, and economic development.

The third goal is to improve regional security. The munitions depot explosions in Brazzaville in 2012, which killed more than 200 people, highlighted new opportunities for security cooperation with the United States in disaster management. Our programs aim to further professionalize the Congolese armed forces and improve maritime security, which is critical to The Republic of the Congo's offshore petroleum sector and anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Guinea. Indeed, in 2011, the U.S. Coast Guard certified the deep-water port of Pointe-Noire under the International Port Security Program, as maintaining effective anti-terrorism measures.

The Republic of the Congo has begun to play a more active role in a region that faces chronic regional security conflicts. The Republic of the Congo has sent peacekeepers to the Central African Republic and will assume the rotating presidency of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in the fall of 2013. Talks to resolve the conflict in the eastern DRC have been held under the auspices of the ICGLR.

Continued U.S. engagement with The Republic of the Congo on security issues will advance our broader regional goals of promoting peace and stability, countering terrorist groups and protecting civilians from conflicts.

If confirmed, I would enthusiastically pursue my mandate to protect U.S. citizens and interests in The Republic of the Congo. I would use all our

public diplomacy tools to advance our goals of strengthening democratic institutions, promoting economic development, and improving regional security, while enhancing the relationship between our two nations and peoples.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward, if confirmed, to serving the United States in Brazzaville, The Republic of the Congo. I would be happy to respond to any questions.