

Statement of David D. Pearce
Ambassador-designate to the Hellenic Republic
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 25, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, distinguished Members of the Committee. It is a great honor to be here today as the President's nominee to be the next U.S. ambassador to the Hellenic Republic.

I appreciate the opportunity to introduce my wife, Leyla, who has ably represented the United States, and served with me, for three decades of Foreign Service postings in the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa. With Leyla are my daughter, Jenny, and our son, Joey.

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for the confidence and trust President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me, and for the opportunity to appear today before this Committee.

Since the founding of our Republic, the United States has looked to Greece, where the very idea of democracy was born, with special respect and affection. Relations between Greece and the United States are excellent, and we look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Samaras to the White House on August 8. The bonds between our countries have been strengthened over the years by millions of Americans who trace their ancestry to the Hellenic Republic. The Greek-

American Diaspora community is always generous with its time, and if confirmed, I will look forward to working with them and seeking out their views.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

Greece is experiencing a critical period in its modern history as it seeks to emerge from an acute economic crisis that has now lasted four years. We stand in solidarity with the Greek people, who are making major but essential sacrifices to return Greece to economic prosperity. The Greek government has made deep budget cuts to restore fiscal sustainability, but now needs to make progress on structural reforms that will revive the country's economic growth, including opening up its markets, privatizing state assets, reducing the public sector, and improving tax collection. There are still many challenges, but it is very much in the U.S. interest that these reforms succeed. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Greek government to support its reform efforts -- which are essential to restoring Greece's competitiveness and growth, improving market confidence, and creating a more prosperous future for its people. I will also look for ways to expand bilateral trade and investment and advocate for U.S. business and investors.

While Greece has justifiably been focused on its economic situation in recent years, it also plays an important role in the wider region:

- In the first half of 2014, Greece will assume the presidency of the European Union.

- As a long-standing NATO ally, Greece has helped us meet global challenges, from supporting Allied operations in Libya to stabilization efforts in Kosovo. And our strong security relationship with Greece is exemplified by our excellent cooperation at the Naval Support Activity base at Souda Bay, Crete.
- We have worked together with Greece not only to investigate and bring to justice domestic anarchists who have claimed Greek and U.S. victims, but also to combat transnational terrorist threats.
- We applaud the efforts of the Greek and Turkish governments to foster closer ties and build trust – efforts that include a March meeting between Prime Ministers Samaras and Erdogan in Istanbul, and the resumption of Greek-Turkish Exploratory Talks on Aegean issues.
- Regrettably, the continued division of Cyprus has not yet been resolved. A mutually acceptable settlement is in the best interests of the people of Cyprus, and the region, so we look forward to settlement talks resuming later this year. The United States will work closely with the United Nations, both Cypriot communities, Greece, and Turkey to actively encourage reconciliation and reunification.
- Not least, we support the ongoing UN effort to settle the nearly 20-year-old name dispute between Athens and Skopje. Here too, a lasting and mutually

acceptable solution is manifestly in the interest of both countries and the wider region.

Mr. Chairman, those are some of the challenges and opportunities I look forward to working on if I am confirmed. I first visited Greece as a Classics student in the spring of 1971. In the four decades since, I have maintained that interest working as a journalist in southern Europe and the Middle East, and then as a diplomat in nearby Rome, Jerusalem, Damascus, Tunis, and Algiers. I have been a Chief of Mission twice, and also an Assistant Chief of Mission, Principal Officer, and Deputy Chief of Mission. So, if confirmed, I would bring that accumulated experience to the policy, security, and management challenges that Embassy Athens faces.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. If confirmed, I pledge to do my best to advance U.S. interests, and our relationship with Greece, a valued friend and ally, in every way possible. I look forward to working with this Committee, as well as your staff, and your colleagues, in that effort. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.