

**Testimony of Kenneth F. Hackett
Ambassador-Designate to the Holy See
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 30, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and Members of this distinguished Committee,

It is a great honor to appear before you today. I want to express my gratitude to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the trust and confidence they have placed in me with this nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. Of course, I could not be here today without the love and support of my wife Joan and my children, Jennifer and Michael.

Growing up, I never expected that my life would be dedicated to international service. My model was my dad, a telephone worker who returned from World War II, started climbing poles for the New England Telephone Company, and rose through the ranks into senior management. At Boston College, I studied business and thought for sure that I would work at a major U.S. corporation after graduation. But as chance would have it, in my senior year, a Peace Corps recruiter convinced a friend and me to sign up. A few months later, I found myself in Ghana working with isolated farming and fishing communities. I began my journey in international service in a very rural village on the Afram Plains where I was assigned housing at a Catholic mission with a priest from the former Czechoslovakia. This was 1968: the year of the Prague Spring. As we listened to the short wave radio each night, my host would interpret and explain what was happening in his country. After three-and-a-half wonderful years in Ghana I knew that I wanted to dedicate my career to international relief and development work.

When I returned home from Ghana, I applied to work at Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Initially, I was turned down by CRS but I was persistent and finally was hired and sent back to West Africa. I spent 18 years as President/CEO of CRS and a total of 40 years at the organization. Throughout those four decades, I encountered many inspired, dedicated, and heroic people in countries around the world. Whether they were lay people, clerics or religious, they exhibited true witness to faith through acts of compassion during times of hardship and often physical danger.

During those years I had numerous opportunities to engage with leaders of the Catholic Church in countries where CRS works. And in many cases, my work led

me to the Vatican. As you can read from my record, I served for many years as a member of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Holy See's coordinating body for Catholic charitable endeavors, and as the North American Vice President of Caritas Internationalis, the confederation of national Catholic charitable entities. I have met frequently with staff and leadership in the Secretariat of State and other offices of the Holy See in the Vatican.

If confirmed, I would expand not only on my connections with the Holy See in Rome, but with Catholic leaders and workers whom I came to know in over 100 countries over my forty-year career. Over the years, I found that cooperation and communication with leaders and lay people from other faiths was crucial as well. I look forward to expanding these interreligious ties in advancing U.S. policy goals.

Recent profound social changes across the world have highlighted the important role of religion and religious tolerance in our foreign policy. The Obama Administration considers religious freedom a strategic national interest and has made it a diplomatic priority. President Obama has called for integrating religious leaders and the faith community into the policy process to address the critical global issues of our day. The Holy See represents, I would suggest, one of the most significant religious entities able to affect the course of developments around the world. Since President Reagan established diplomatic relations with the Holy See almost 30 years ago, the United States and the Vatican have enjoyed strong cooperation on many important issues of mutual interest such as the pursuit of peace, inter-religious dialogue, environmental protection, spurring development, and promoting human rights.

With the Senate's consent, I would look forward to continuing to work with the Holy See - and its global network of dioceses, religious workers, and charitable and human development agencies - on these critical issues and others where we share a common purpose and cause. Let me expand on two areas that are priorities for the United States, where a global network of allies, including, I believe, the Catholic Church, is necessary for meaningful progress.

Human trafficking is an issue where our interests clearly overlap. The Holy See and the United States see trafficking as a human rights issue, and have already worked closely together to prevent and address this crime. Pope Francis has been at the forefront of advocacy for concerted international action to combat trafficking and is a natural partner for us. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Holy See on this priority and build on successful programs supported by the Embassy,

like the training programs for male and female religious in anti-trafficking skills, strategies, and networking that have made a real difference in this fight.

Just recently, the Holy See welcomed President Obama's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to contribute to a resilient, low-emissions world. I believe the President's plan provides a renewed opportunity to work more closely on environmental advocacy with the Holy See, a priority issue for the Church, linked to its goal of safeguarding the world's resources, and making them available equally to all.

Once again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity. I am humbled and honored to receive this nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other members of Congress in advancing U.S. policy and interests with the Holy See. I am more than happy to answer your questions.

