

Testimony of Ambassador James Swan
Ambassador-designate to the Democratic Republic of the Congo
Tuesday, July 30, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am grateful to the President and Secretary of State for the confidence they have placed in me. Before beginning my formal testimony, I would like to recognize my wife, Daphne Michelle Titus, and children Mitchell and Garner, who regrettably are unable to be here in person today.

Mr. Chairman, I have devoted the majority of my Foreign Service Career to African issues, most recently serving as Special Representative for Somalia since 2011, and prior to that as Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti (2008-2011). If confirmed as Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would return to a portfolio I have known well since the mid-1990s. I served as Desk Officer for then-Zaire (1996-1998) during the rebellion that toppled Mobutu Sese Seko after 32 years in power and during the turbulent first year of his successor, Laurent Kabila. I was then assigned to our Embassy in Kinshasa for six years (1998-2004), including three years as Deputy Chief of Mission, during the peace process that led to the withdrawal of six foreign armies from Congo and an internal political settlement that resulted in a transitional government to prepare for nationwide elections. I later returned to Washington as Director of Analysis for Africa in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (2005-2006) and then Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs (2006-2008). In both of these positions, DRC issues were also at the top of my agenda. If confirmed, I look forward to drawing on this extensive background to engage the Congolese government and people to advance the wide-ranging U.S. agenda in the DRC and the Great Lakes.

U.S. Interests in the Congo

Mr. Chairman, the United States has significant interests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa (as large as the United States east of the Mississippi) and borders nine other nations. It has an enterprising population of some 70 million people, vast natural resources, and global environmental significance due to the Congo River Basin rainforest. With its size and geography, Congo's chronic instability has a destabilizing effect in the

broader central Africa region, which stretches from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. A stable, prosperous, and well-governed DRC would advance peace and development throughout central Africa and the Great Lakes and could go a long way in fostering regional economic integration and realizing the Congo's significant energy potential. Regrettably, in recent decades, the DRC has instead been more notable for recurring cycles of cross-border conflict, internal rebellion, human rights abuses, sexual and gender-based violence, humanitarian crises, and weak human development indicators. As a sign of the challenges faced by the DRC and the help it needs, the country hosts the second-largest UN Peacekeeping Operation in the world, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

In preparing to serve as Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, if confirmed, I see three sets of issues as of particular importance to U.S. interests over the next several years:

Conflict in Eastern Congo and Security Sector Reform

First, we must intensify efforts, working with our regional and international partners, to help the Congolese resolve the longstanding conflict in their eastern provinces. There are many dimensions to this decades-long human tragedy, including recurrent meddling by the neighbors, the proliferation of armed groups, the lack of sufficiently capable and professional Congolese security forces to secure the region, impunity for human rights abusers, a horrific pattern of sexual and gender-based violence, protracted internally displaced and refugee populations, the ongoing illegal trade in conflict minerals, the absence of government services, and inadequately representative regional and local governance structures. A durable response to the conflict in the east will require a comprehensive approach that addresses all these factors, among others. A number of U.S. government agencies, both at State and at the United States Agency for International Development, will play an important role in developing this comprehensive response, as well as in continuing to ensure the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

While this array of challenges may seem daunting, we are encouraged this year by the opportunity for peace presented by the February signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement amongst 11 countries in the region and the resulting increase in international attention and energy being devoted to the Congo and the Great Lakes. To address the root causes of conflict and instability in the region, the Framework agreement includes commitments by the DRC government

to undertake much-needed security, governance and economic reforms. The signing of the Framework also launched a comprehensive peace process, which has been bolstered in recent months by UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon and World Bank President Jim Kim's historic joint visit to the region, the World Bank's commitment of \$1 billion in development assistance under certain conditions, the appointment of former Irish President Mary Robinson as UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes to oversee the peace process, the UN Security Council's approval of a robust 3,000-person Intervention Brigade to strengthen MONUSCO's military capability, and the refocusing of the Congolese government's commitment to significant security sector reform. Along with other international partners, the United States is increasing its already considerable focus on the Great Lakes, for example, Secretary Kerry's appointment of former Senator—and Chairman of this Sub-Committee—Russell Feingold as U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, the Secretary's convening and chairing a Ministerial Debate at the UN Security Council just last week, and the active Congressional engagement on Congo and Great Lakes issues. While a great deal of work remains to implement the Framework agreement and to translate these positive steps into lasting progress on the ground, the increased attention and commitment I have noted is an important start.

I am also encouraged by the DRC's commitment in the Framework to undertake security sector reform, or SSR, a key objective in the DRC. The people of the Congo will not know safety and security until the country has a military capable of securing the territory and protecting the people. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the DRC government to prioritize SSR, including the army, police, and judiciary, as an integral part of combating the conflict in the East, eventually paving the way for the eventual exit of MONUSCO, and in upholding the Framework agreement. I welcome the DRC government's recent publication of its army and police reform plans, but much more needs to be done to implement both plans, including implementing a more robust vetting system, increasing the capacity of the judicial sector, and ending impunity across all military ranks.

Elections and Governance

In addition to the international attention on eastern Congo, a second main area of focus must be support for improved Congolese governance. Only through effective and representative governance at the national, regional, and local levels can Congolese leaders truly speak for their people and make legitimate decisions to address the critical policy issues facing the country. With strong international support, the DRC held national elections in 2006 that—while not perfect—were

generally hailed as credible and reflective of the will of the people. Electoral assistance from the United States and other partners was catalytic in helping Congolese institutions prepare for that vote. Regrettably, the flawed 2011 elections were widely perceived as a step backward. We now have the opportunity of upcoming regional—and possibly local—elections in 2014 and 2015 and then the next presidential election in 2016 to ensure that the Congolese people are afforded a free and fair choice of their leaders, consistent with the Congolese constitution. This focus on elections must of course also be matched by continued attention to building strong legislative, administrative, judicial, and civil society institutions to sustain improved governance beyond polling day.

Development and Economic Growth

A third emphasis must be on continuing to work to unleash the economic potential of this resource-rich country and its people. This means working to develop the human capital of 70 million Congolese by improving their health and education and ameliorating the country's infrastructure. USAID is a key partner in these endeavors, among many others.

In order to unleash Congo's potential, we will also need to help foster a stable, predictable, and attractive investment climate. By helping the DRC increase transparency in public finances, decrease corruption, and expand the legal and licit trade of natural resources we can help boost private sector growth that will benefit not only the Congolese population but also American firms, such as those already invested in the manufacturing, mining, oil, and telecommunications sectors in Congo. Vast natural resources in agriculture, energy, minerals, and many other sectors present real opportunities for rapid economic growth—even beyond recent levels of approximately seven percent real GDP growth per year—if the right enabling environment can be established. The DRC's resources, of course, also include priceless environmental assets, notably the Congo River Basin Rainforest, the second largest in the world after the Amazon, and the Congo River and its tributaries, which has the hydropower potential to help provide electricity to much of the entire continent.

American Citizens and the Embassy Community

Finally, let me mention two overarching priorities that will guide my work every day if confirmed as Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The well-being of all American citizens will of course be my top priority. Americans in the DRC, working in private business, for non-governmental organizations, on

missionary programs, with UN agencies, or in other endeavors number in the thousands. I also take with utmost seriousness my responsibility, if confirmed, to lead the entire U.S. Embassy team, including American staff of all agencies, their family members, and our invaluable Congolese colleagues and to ensure their safety. I will advocate tirelessly for our team to have the necessary management platform and security support so that we may represent the American people to maximum effect in the DRC.

Mr. Chairman, once again, I am honored to testify before this distinguished committee and stand ready to answer any questions. Thank you.