

**Statement of Eunice S. Reddick**  
**U.S. Ambassador-Designate to Niger**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**September 24, 2013**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Obama's nominee for United States Ambassador to Niger. I deeply appreciate the confidence and trust the President and Secretary of State have shown in nominating me for this position. Thank you as well to the Committee for your consideration, and I look forward to working with the Congress to advance our relationship with Niger.

I began my Foreign Service career in Zimbabwe over thirty years ago, and have since had the great fortune to serve and travel throughout Africa, including as Ambassador to Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe, and most recently, as the Director of West African Affairs in the Department of State's Africa Bureau. During my career, I have witnessed firsthand Africa's great challenges, including the effect on populations of conflict, drought, floods and famine. More importantly, I have also witnessed an incredible growth in vibrant democracies and economies driven by phenomenal human capital. If confirmed, I will draw upon my experience to expand the strong friendship between Niger and the United States, as we continue to work towards our mutual goals of combating extremism throughout the region, strengthening democratic governance and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Niger is a committed partner of ours, who has invested its own limited resources to combat the scourge of extremism, both within its own borders and across the Sahel region. Despite being one of the poorest countries in the world, President Issoufou has – in two and a half years since Niger's return to democracy – invested in concrete steps to break Niger's destructive cycle of conflict and coups. Niger has made such significant progress in developing democratic institutions, combating corruption, and promoting human rights that the Millennium Challenge Corporation selected Niger in December 2012 as eligible to develop a proposal for a Compact. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Nigerien government and civil society to continue this momentum for reform by creating strong and responsive democratic institutions, improving the delivery of government services and promoting food security.

Despite some encouraging progress, Niger faces great challenges. The country's expansive and harsh terrain would be difficult to protect under the best of circumstances. The collapse of security in southern Libya and conflict in Mali and northern Nigeria have placed Niger at a dangerous crossroads, as extremist groups and international criminal networks exploit porous borders and long-used smuggling routes to move people and weapons between the Sahel and North Africa. Niger has also been a victim of terrorism. In May, coordinated Al-Qaeda-associated terrorist attacks against a military barracks in Agadez and a uranium mining company in Arlit took the lives of over 20 Nigerien soldiers and civilians. The United States and Niger share a common goal of combating terrorist groups and denying extremist ideology an environment to thrive. We are committed to supporting Niger's efforts to protect its borders, build capacity to interdict illicit material and people, and help return security and stability to northern Mali.

Niger has been a leader in the international response to the Mali crisis, both by providing critical support for the political process and committing a battalion of ground troops to the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and an even larger 850-ground-troop contingent to the follow-on UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The United States provided those troops logistical support, training and equipment through the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program.

Niger is also a strong partner in our Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), through which we are working together to increase security sector capacity, address underlying causes of radicalization, and increase the voices of moderate leaders to positively influence populations potentially vulnerable to radicalization. If confirmed, I will seek to advance our already strong security cooperation to further our shared goal of denying extremist groups space to operate.

On top of great security threats, Niger also continues to face serious humanitarian challenges and persistent food insecurity. A severe drought in 2011 resulted in a humanitarian crisis in 2012 as 6.4 million of Nigeriens were at risk for food insecurity, including more than 330,000 children at risk for severe acute malnutrition. Despite its own serious humanitarian situation, Niger generously opened its doors to over 50,000 Malian refugees, who they continue to host. Since Fiscal Year 2012, the United States has provided over \$172 million in humanitarian assistance in Niger to address food insecurity and the needs of Malian refugees.

The United States and Niger partner across a variety of programs to address the needs of Niger's most vulnerable people and build resiliency to the Sahel's constant cycle of droughts. The Nigerien government has created innovative programs to address food security, including the "3N Initiative" (Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens) that empowers local communities to work together to improve agricultural productivity. USAID selected Niger as one of its priority countries for the new Sahel Joint Planning Cell effort, which focuses on combating food insecurity and building resiliency among vulnerable populations through layering, integrating and sequencing humanitarian relief and development programs. In Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2013, the U.S. provided \$66.4 million in bilateral development-focused assistance to Niger for programs supporting democracy, governance, health and nutrition, and agriculture. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting these efforts and exploring new areas of cooperation.

In addition to addressing food insecurity, Niger must generate sustainable economic growth to tackle high poverty rates and improve health indicators that place Niger at the bottom of most measures of wellbeing. Rapid demographic growth driven by the highest fertility rate in the world threatens to overwhelm the government's ambitious plans for development. Economic diversification, investments in infrastructure, and improvements to education will all be needed to create real economic opportunities. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage the Nigerien government to implement the economic reforms needed to attract investment and promote trade. I will also seek to build new relationships between Nigerien and American companies to create opportunities for trade that benefit both our countries.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that our bilateral relationship remains firmly rooted in our shared vision for a democratic and prosperous Niger that respects human rights and provides economic opportunities for all. Through this partnership, I look forward to fulfilling my priorities of protecting American citizens and interests, advancing U.S. national security interests in the Sahel, and expanding mutual understanding between our citizens.

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.