

**Statement of Matthew T. Harrington
Ambassador-Designate to the Kingdom of Lesotho
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 24, 2013**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to be considered for the position of U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Lesotho. I am grateful for the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have shown in me by this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and the Congress in advancing U.S. interests and supporting Lesotho in its efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, reverse its HIV/AIDS epidemic, and achieve sustainable, broad-based economic growth.

At the outset, I want to recognize and thank my father, Tracy Harrington, who travelled from Georgia to be with me today. My mom and dad took me to Tanzania at the age of one and later to Zambia when I was eleven. Those enlightening experiences instilled in me a respect for other cultures and drew me to a career in the Foreign Service. I also appreciate the support of friends and colleagues who are here today.

I am excited by the opportunity to return to the continent where I have spent much of my life – as a child, as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and as a Foreign Service Officer. If confirmed, I will draw on my knowledge of the region, as well as the opportunities I have had to lead interagency teams, oversee large PEPFAR programs and MCC compacts, and design programs to encourage effective and accountable governance. Those experiences will enhance my effectiveness in

working with the Government and people of Lesotho to shape what is in our mutual interests: a country that is stable, healthy, and prosperous.

A democratic Lesotho is consistent with American interests and contributes to regional stability. The United States remains a strong supporter of Lesotho's efforts to consolidate the gains achieved since the country's embrace of democratic governance in the 1990s. The parliamentary elections of 2012 produced the country's first peaceful transfer of power between political parties since independence and the establishment of its first coalition government. If confirmed, I will work in partnership with the Government of Lesotho to continue to strengthen democratic institutions and help ensure that the progress made so far is sustained.

One of Lesotho's greatest challenges is an HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate of 23.6 percent, one of the world's highest. Lesotho has demonstrated a strong commitment to fighting this scourge, which has devastated the country's social and economic fabric. The government covers half the cost of the total HIV/AIDS response, while most external support comes from PEPFAR and the Global Fund. As a result, the country has made substantial progress. Sixty percent of adults who require treatment now receive antiretroviral therapy (ART), while more than half of HIV-positive pregnant women receive ART to prevent transmission of HIV to their children. These interventions, along with a recently launched medical male circumcision campaign, are critical in reducing the incidence of new infections, but they must be expanded. If confirmed, I will focus on promoting the continued expansion of these key elements of the HIV/AIDS response.

As the largest bilateral donor to Lesotho, the United States plays a pivotal role in helping promote economic development in a country whose government is strongly committed to improving the lives of its citizens. This month marked the end of the five-year implementation period for Lesotho's \$362.5 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact. Through this partnership, Lesotho is realizing significant improvements to its water and sanitation systems, healthcare infrastructure, and investment climate. As a sign of its substantial commitment, the Government of Lesotho pledged \$150 million of its own funds to cover additional costs associated with compact projects. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Lesotho to ensure that MCC investments are sustained and benefit as many Basotho as possible.

Lesotho is a shining example of how AGOA stimulates economic growth. AGOA has spurred a vibrant textile and apparel industry that is the nation's largest private sector employer and sub-Saharan Africa's largest exporter of garments to the United States. Lesotho was also the most improved country in Africa in the World Bank's most recent Doing Business report, due in part to reforms implemented under the MCC Compact. The country continues to face substantial economic challenges, however. If confirmed, I will work to encourage the Government of Lesotho to continue policy and legislative reforms necessary to promote sustainable economic growth, empower Basotho entrepreneurs, and attract foreign investment. I will also engage with the American business community to ensure U.S. companies are aware of investment opportunities in Lesotho.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions.