

**Statement by Peter Henry Barlerin
Ambassadorial Nominee to the Republic of Cameroon
Submitted to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
October 3, 2017**

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

It is an honor to appear before you today as nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Cameroon. I thank President Trump and Secretary Tillerson for the trust they have placed in me by nominating me for this position.

Thank you to my wife Ines Rulis Barlerin, who is here with me today, as well as our sons Sebastien and Maximilian and our daughter Ines Alexandra, who are very much here in spirit.

I would also like to recognize my sister Joan and other family and friends here today and wish my mother and mother-in-law could have lived to see this day.

It has been an honor to have had the opportunity to serve in an interim capacity as senior official in the Bureau of African Affairs for nearly half a year. The people of the Africa Bureau are an extremely hard-working, dedicated, and mutually supportive family. I cherish their confidence and friendship.

Turning to Cameroon, the United States was one of the first to establish diplomatic relations with the country in 1960. Since 1962, nearly 4,000 Peace Corps volunteers have given their all there, and the many I have talked to were transformed by the experience.

Cameroon is known as *Africa in miniature* because of its cultural diversity and because it has nearly all of the many, varied geographic features of the entire continent – active volcanoes, rainforest jungles teeming with wildlife, broad savannahs, and a beautiful coastline.

Cameroon also faces a number of the same challenges as the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, in terms of health, security, and governance. These challenges are somewhat holding back a country that is as full of potential as any other in Africa. If confirmed, I would do everything I can to help the government and the people of Cameroon to realize that potential.

On health, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief provides treatment, care, and prevention to the many thousands of Cameroonians affected by HIV/AIDS. And as a Global Health Security Agenda Phase I country, Cameroon partners with the United States to strengthen its ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases with pandemic potential. Finally, at the UN General Assembly last month, USAID Administrator Mark Green announced Cameroon would be a focus country of the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative.

On security, the United States is proud to support Cameroon and its Lake Chad basin neighbors in their effort to defeat Boko Haram and its off-shoot, ISIS-West Africa. If confirmed, I will work to emphasize that their soldiers stand a much greater chance of defeating the enemy when they respect human rights, and when they have the trust of civilians. I would also seek to engage Cameroon to implement the Tripartite Agreement with Nigeria and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on the treatment of Nigerian refugees.

My experience in Africa has taught me that good governance is the single most important factor in the success or failure of a nation, and that the ends do not justify all means. If confirmed, I would encourage the government to release peaceful protesters detained in connection with the situation in the Anglophone regions, and urge all parties to commit to dialogue. Violence on anybody's part is not the solution.

In spite of the challenges, Cameroon has achieved considerable progress in the brief period since its independence. If confirmed, I would seek to help build on that progress, and I would work with the government, the people of Cameroon, and our international partners to ensure that elections in 2018 are free, fair, and credible, as well as peaceful.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee and others in Congress to advance U.S. interests in Cameroon. I would be happy to answer any questions.