

**Statement by Cassandra Q. Butts
Ambassador-Designate to The Bahamas
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 13, 2014**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next Ambassador to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. I am profoundly grateful for the honor that the President has bestowed upon me and for the confidence shown in me by Secretary Kerry as I look to take up this assignment, if confirmed.

Please allow me to introduce the members of my family who are here today: my mother Mae A. Karim, my aunt Barbara Jordan, my brother-in-law Frank Abbott and my nephews Alston and Ethan Abbott. Unfortunately, my sister, Deidra Abbott, could not join us today because of a work-related commitment. My family has been a wellspring of support. I am here today because of their love and support and because of their dedication and belief in me.

I believe my experience as a lawyer and policy advisor and my service to my country in the executive and legislative branches have well prepared me for the duties of Ambassador to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. Having worked on some of the major legal and policy issues of our time, including my most recent experience in international development at the Millennium Challenge Corporation,

I have always sought solutions consistent with the values of our great nation. I understand that leading with our values is the basis for finding lasting policy solutions and building strong partnerships at home and abroad. If the Senate were to confirm me, I would bring these experiences, grounded in my strong belief in equality, justice and compassion, to the post of Ambassador to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

Through close political, economic, and cultural ties, the United States and The Bahamas have forged a strong bilateral relationship that has served both countries well. Bahamians regularly travel to the United States to visit friends and family and to conduct business. And approximately six million U.S. citizens travel to The Bahamas annually. The proximity of The Bahamas to the United States inextricably links our countries' national security. Together, we are confronting shared challenges such as illicit trafficking, including in narcotics, arms, and people.

If confirmed, my first and foremost priority will be to ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens living in or visiting The Bahamas, as well as the Turks and Caicos Islands, which are included under Embassy Nassau's consular oversight. If confirmed, I will work closely with local authorities and the U.S. law enforcement officials under Chief of Mission authority to lower crime rates and other illegal activities. Other priorities would include promoting greater economic ties and

growth, including exploring ways to support the development and enforcement of stable and transparent regulations as well as improving the business environment through transparent procurement and investment procedures. We also want to encourage countries like The Bahamas to adopt cleaner technologies and build strong and resilient energy markets. These steps are important not only to provide a more secure and sustainable clean energy future, but also to further economic growth and limit the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. I will also seek to further gender equality and expand opportunities for disenfranchised youth.

Expanding educational exchanges is one of the best ways to deepen the already existing cultural and historical ties between the United States and The Bahamas. At present, approximately 1,600 students from The Bahamas study in the United States, and more than 750 students from the United States study in The Bahamas. If confirmed, I will seek to increase levels of educational exchange between our two countries, including through enhancing existing partnerships and the building of new ones.

While geography and history have forged strong bonds between our countries, The Bahamas also maintains close relations with many other nations. Historically, foreign investment in the Bahamian banking sector has been mainly by Europeans and Canadians. The key tourism and hospitality sectors have seen increases in American, European, and, more recently, Asian investment as the world economy

continues to rebound. We do not see foreign economic and commercial links to The Bahamas as a threat to U.S. interests. We believe that beneficial and sustainable international trade and investment must be carried out in adherence to international standards of transparency and good governance, while respecting local environmental and labor regulations. We should continue to focus our interests on the greater good of regional stability.

The United States has not had an ambassador in Nassau for nearly two-and-a-half years, but we have had a strong US embassy staff in the Bahamas continuing the important work of the mission. If confirmed, I will work to further their good work and strengthen our already close and productive bilateral relationship.

In closing, I am confident that I have the experience, imagination and energy to lead our bilateral relationship with the people and the Government of The Bahamas. While at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, I have seen firsthand the important work carried out by our ambassadors and their teams as they engage and advocate for U.S. goals and objectives. If confirmed, I pledge to uphold the tradition and high standard of public service that ambassadors are expected to uphold. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve my country.

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