

Statement of Sean Cairncross
Nominee to be Chief Executive Officer of Millennium Challenge Corporation
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
February 27, 2018

Before I begin, I'd like to thank Senator Cornyn for his thoughtful introduction; I am grateful for his trust and confidence in my nomination, and I am proud to have worked for him.

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, members of the Committee – It is a privilege to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the next Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

If I could beg the committee's indulgence, I would like to thank the members of my family who are here today. Nobody accomplishes anything alone – or at least I haven't – and I've been very fortunate to be surrounded by strong support. This is mom and dad, Donna and Andy. This is my sister-in-law, Margaret. And this is my wife, Emily – whom I met when I was six – and these are my children, India and Dominic.

I have been interested in foreign affairs and America's role in the world since I was a boy, growing up in Minnesota. As a student, I studied international relations, both as an undergraduate, in Washington D.C. and England, and as a graduate student in England. Living abroad gave me an appreciation for the importance of how our country is perceived overseas -- and the power that the United States has to inspire and be a force for good in the world.

I became involved in national politics as a means to become involved in the American democratic process and government. I served in senior management in two national party committees, overseeing hundreds of employees and budgets that aggregated in the hundreds of millions of dollars. When I served as chief operating officer and general counsel to these organizations, I was responsible for the compliance and reporting of these highly visible, scrutinized, and regulated entities. I feel fortunate to have gained this management experience while actively participating in our nation's electoral process.

I entered government when I joined the White House in January 2017. During my time in the Trump Administration I've had the opportunity to participate in the national security policy making process, and I have gained a practical respect -- to compliment my formerly academic appreciation -- of the importance of American soft power and U.S. global engagement.

Emily and I do our best to teach our children to appreciate what it means to be an American. Indeed, India just participated in a model United Nations program in New York last weekend. It is our wish that they remain interested in U.S. engagement, and it is our hope that they leave this hearing today with a deeper understanding, and assurance, that the United States is a constant force for good in the world. That good governance, economic freedom, and ruling justly are not just words, but concrete values that America supports throughout the world to improve lives and support her interests.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation embodies this, providing a framework that mobilizes these ideals while also requiring partner country commitment and holding partner countries accountable for results.

I am honored and humbled to be nominated to lead such a unique and effective agency. Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will take the lead at MCC during an exciting, yet challenging time for the agency and the development community at large. With this in mind, I have three overarching priorities that I'd plan to pursue.

First, I would maintain MCC's model, and its track-record of transparent, data-driven results – and its strong history of bi-partisan support -- and I will rely on MCC's deeply knowledgeable, diverse, and talented professional staff in doing so.

Second, I would seek to increase collaboration with U.S. government agencies and third party partners, particularly U.S. businesses – and maximize the “crowding in” of domestic partner country resources.

Finally, I'd like to help realize the potential of regional compacts. Legislation pending with the Senate would open the door for the MCC to engage in regional market building. I believe that, done correctly, there is tremendous potential to increase MCC's impact.

Mr. Chairman, MCC is a great asset in America's foreign policy toolbox. Should I be confirmed to lead it, I commit that I will work hand in hand with this Committee, Congress, and the Administration to maintain MCC's bi-partisan support and its standard of measurable accountability in reducing poverty through economic growth.

I look forward to discussing these, and other matters concerning MCC today -- and, hopefully, in the future.