

Statement of Earl Gast
Assistant Administrator Nominee
Bureau for Africa
United States Agency for International Development
Before the
Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
on
December 8, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as the nominee to be the next Assistant Administrator for Africa at the United States Agency for International Development.

I want to express my appreciation for the trust and confidence that President Obama has placed in me by nominating me for this important position, and for the strong support of Secretary Clinton and Administrator Shah. I would also like to thank Sharon Cromer, an extremely dedicated senior officer who has ably led the Bureau for Africa across the past year. Her leadership has been invaluable, especially as the Agency began implementing key foreign assistance reforms.

My own professional life has been devoted to improving the lives of others. In the aftermath of the People Power Revolution, I went to the Philippines to support the restoration of democratic values and economic opportunity. I worked in Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union to help build new nations, and I served in Kosovo and Iraq during conflict and war to help implement our reconstruction efforts. During two years as Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator and then acting Assistant Administrator for USAID's Africa Bureau, I got to know the complex fabric that makes up the continent's 48—now 49—countries. And most recently, I completed a tour in Afghanistan, where I led USAID's efforts during the U.S. Government's civilian surge. All of my assignments have been challenging—some more than others. But I have always willingly committed myself to serving the U.S. Government's efforts to confront those challenges.

If confirmed, another important challenge awaits me. After more than 20 years in the foreign service, I've seen development improve people's lives and help countries grow, but I've also seen it fail to live up to our hopes and expectations. Nowhere does development show more promise yet pose such challenge than it does today in sub-Saharan Africa, and nowhere can we more effectively apply the lessons we've learned from both our successes and our failures. If confirmed, I look forward to working with my talented colleagues at USAID, our partners throughout the U.S. government, the private sector, multilateral and nongovernmental organizations, and our counterparts in Africa to address critical development and humanitarian needs on the continent. I also look forward to deepening our relationship with Congress, whose long-time bipartisan commitment to the African people has provided the foundation for our programs and the springboard for our success. Whether meeting with you here in Washington or

at our missions overseas, we always value the opportunity to discuss our work with you and demonstrate how our investment there is making a difference in people's lives.

Africa's future is bright. Our investments in its future are paying off, and the Administration has plotted a path for our long-term support that capitalizes on the region's emerging opportunities.

Many Americans see only Africa's seemingly intractable problems. But the remarkable progress on the continent is the often untold side of the story. Ghana and Tanzania are stable democracies leading their own development plans that we contribute to, not dictate. Kenya, in its recovery from post-election violence, has created a coalition government that is working to reconcile differences that stretch back decades before 2007. Liberia and Sierra Leone are quietly reaping the dividends of peace after their brutal civil wars, building sustainable institutions that provide their people with social services. Our response to the crisis in the Horn of Africa is providing emergency food, healthcare, and other lifesaving services to millions of people suffering from the region's historic drought. And perhaps most extraordinary, millions of South Sudanese citizens came together to vote against war in favor of a peaceful independence from Sudan.

U.S. support helped to create that environment in which the Sudanese people were able to conduct a free and fair referendum. This is a potent illustration of what diplomacy and assistance can achieve in Africa and how continued U.S. involvement is critical to supporting African progress. There is no denying Africa's importance to the United States, both for our moral imperative to help solve the biggest development challenges on the planet, and for the imperative to protect the United States' own national security and economic growth. Through *USAID Forward*, Administrator Shah's comprehensive reform agenda, the Agency is improving the impact, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of development programs. Our work with local organizations is helping to build home-grown capacity that will continue to thrive long after USAID achieves its goals. USAID is also committed to collaborating with other donors, private sector partners, and faith-based organizations to leverage our relative strengths and amplify the effect of U.S. investments in development. These efforts are already having an effect on our work in Africa, and if confirmed, I am eager to advance this new approach to doing business.

On a personal note, I am honored to be considered for this position and to contribute to the goal of improving democratic systems, security, economic opportunity, health, food security, and education for Africans. I am deeply committed to USAID's goals and the integrated role that it plays with the Department of State and the Department of Defense in advancing U.S. policy and national security objectives, and if confirmed, I will work diligently toward advancing these goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions you might have.