

NOMINATION HEARINGS OF THE 114TH CONGRESS

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION—MARCH 10 THROUGH DECEMBER 2, 2015

SECOND SESSION—FEBRUARY 11 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 20, 2016

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

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NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

Christine Ann Elder, of Kentucky, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia
R. David Harden, of Maryland, nominated to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development
Elizabeth Holzhall Richard, of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic
Stephen Michael Schwartz, of Maryland, nominated to be Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia
Kelly Keiderling-Franz, of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay
Mark Sobel, of Virginia, nominated to be United States Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a Term of Two Years
Adam H. Sterling, nominated to be Ambassador to the Slovak Republic

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:55 a.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Corker [presiding], Perdue, Isakson, Barrasso, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Murphy, and Kaine.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Today, the committee will consider seven nominations.

First on our panel, we have Ms. Christine Elder, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of counselor, nominated to be Ambassador to Liberia. Ms. Elder is currently director of the Office of Southern African Affairs in the Bureau of African Affairs at the Department of State, a position she has held since 2013. Previously, Ms. Elder served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Mozambique from 2010 to 2013, and as a strategic planning officer in the Bureau of International Programs from 2007 to 2010.

Thank you so much for your service.

We have Mr. David Harden. He is nominee for Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance for USAID. He is a career member of the Foreign Service, class of minister counselor, and currently serves as mission director at USAID Mission in the West Bank and Gaza, a position he has held since 2013. Prior to this, he was deputy mission director at USAID Mission in Iraq from 2012 to 2013, and senior adviser to the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace from 2009 to 2012. Mr. Harden also served as senior development adviser in Libya in 2011.

Thank you so much.

Next we have Ms. Elizabeth Richard nominated to be Ambassador to Lebanon. Ms. Richard, a career member of the Foreign Service, class of minister counselor, is the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State, a position she has held since 2013. Previously, Ms. Richard served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Yemen from 2010 to 2013, border coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan from 2008 to 2010, and as director of counternarcotics law enforcement and rule of law programs at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan from 2006 to 2007.

Thank you so much.

Lastly, we have Mr. Stephen Schwartz, a career member of the Foreign Service, class of counselor. He currently serves as director of the Office of Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island Affairs at the Department of State, a position he has held since August 2015. Previously, Mr. Schwartz served as director of the Office of Western African Affairs from 2013 to 2015, deputy chief of mission at U.S. Embassy in Zambia from 2010 to 2013, and deputy director of the Office of Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands from 2008 to 2010.

You all are very accomplished, and your resumes are very long. Thank you so much. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you all for being here.

I do not know if you want to make an opening comments?

**STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to welcome not only four nominees but also the second panel of three nominees. Thank you. Each one of you has served your Nation in an extraordinary way in a career of public service, and we thank you and your families, because we know it is a family sacrifice. And we particularly appreciate your willingness to continue to serve our country in critically important positions.

I am going to put my full statement in the record, so we can go right to the hearing.

But, Mr. Chairman, I need to point out that Mr. Harden and Mr. Schwartz should be given special attention since they are from Maryland. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. As with so many of the folks in the State Department, they are from Maryland.

We welcome you, we certainly do thank all the families, in particular, for being here and for the support.

Senator FLAKE. Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes?

Senator FLAKE. May I just say, I have to go to another hearing, but I wanted to say how much I appreciated meeting with Ms. Elder and Mr. Schwartz in my office earlier. They are going to do great in Africa.

People tend to go to one country and go to another, go to another, and they are old Africa hands. And I appreciate their families and their sacrifice that they have made as well. I am just glad that they are here, and I am glad that we are so well-represented on that continent.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you for your tremendous efforts in the continent of Africa.

Yes, sir, Senator Isakson?

Senator ISAKSON. I just want to say I could not have said it better than Senator Flake did. I met with the nominees as well. They are outstanding citizens of our country. And to go to the countries they are going to and be the face of America where they are, we are very lucky to have people willing to sacrifice and do it.

I commend all of you for your commitment to the country.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

It appears you are not going to have a lot of questions. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. So we thank you, Senator Isakson.

With that, if we could begin testimony with Ms. Elder. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTINE ANN ELDER, OF KENTUCKY, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

Ms. ELDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee. It is truly an honor to be here today as the nominee to represent the United States in Liberia.

I am grateful for the confidence of the Secretary and the President in this nomination and deeply appreciative of the support, indeed, of my family, my friends, and my colleagues.

I especially would like to thank my husband, Paul Hughes, who was himself a Foreign Service Officer and grew up in the Foreign Service. He is here with his sister, Alice Hughes, and her husband, Dr. John Sharretts. Not here but very much in our hearts are my stepchildren, Ellie and Christopher in Washington State in school, my brother in Ohio, and my parents in Kentucky.

Mr. Chairman, the United States and Liberia do share a deep historical bond. If confirmed, I will deepen that partnership as Liberia continues to recover from Ebola, to restructure its security sector, strengthen its democracy, and expand economic growth and opportunity.

It was not long ago that Liberia and its neighbors were mired in the Ebola crisis. Peace hard-won through daily determination after a devastating civil war was threatened. We harnessed the full force of the U.S. Government, bringing together Departments of Defense and State, USAID, CDC, and others. We sent over 3,000 U.S. troops to set up treatment centers and help train new health care workers to replace hundreds who had died trying to save others.

Our assistance was over \$500 million, and this was all in support of Liberia's own efforts.

If confirmed, I will lead our Embassy team working together with Liberians on the Global Health Security Agenda to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks, so that they do not become epidemics.

The \$257 million MCC compact will boost Liberia's participation in Power Africa, where only 2 percent of the population has access to electricity. This project will quadruple power generation.

We remain Liberia's closest partner on national reconstruction. We have invested more than \$2 billion since the end of civil war in 2003. Of that, over \$350 million went to help rebuild their security sector. The growing capabilities and competence of their forces in that sector are reflected in the U.N. Security Council's authorization for the further reduction of the UNMIL mandate to a residual force as they conclude their peacekeeping mandate this year.

In recovery, the Liberian Government is rightfully focused on job creation. President Sirleaf understands the importance of battling corruption and also in advancing reforms to attract foreign investment.

If confirmed, I will advance U.S. interests to the benefit of both of our economies. I will ensure that our assistance is wisely spent, and well-coordinated.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the Liberian people want to lift themselves up, and they are deeply grateful for our counsel and our support. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Elder follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRISTINE ELDER

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, it is a great honor to appear before you today as nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia. I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary Kerry have shown in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the members of this committee and their staffs to promote and protect U.S. interests in Liberia. It has been my privilege in over 25 years of public service to have worked in both the Departments of State and Commerce, in both the Civil and the Foreign Service. I have served in Mozambique as Deputy Chief of Mission and with other postconflict countries in transition, and have worked on African issues for most of the past decade.

I can think of no higher honor than to represent the American people as Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Liberia, a country with which the United States shares a unique history. I deeply appreciate the love and support of my family, friends, and colleagues who have made me the person before you today.

I would especially like to thank my husband Paul Hughes, who was previously a Foreign Service Officer and grew up with Foreign Service parents, and acknowledge my sister-in-law Dr. Alice Hughes, who was born during their parents' assignment in South Africa, and has also dedicated herself to a life of public service. Unable to join us today but very much in our hearts are my stepchildren Ellie and Christopher, in school in Washington State, my brother in Ohio, and my parents in Kentucky.

Mr. Chairman, the United States and Liberia share a special bond rooted in our deep historical ties and preserved through our commitment to democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen our bilateral relationship and ensure that the United States remains a steadfast partner as Liberia continues to recover from the Ebola epidemic, reform its security sector, strengthen its democracy, and expand economic growth and opportunity for all its citizens.

Not long ago, Liberia and its neighbors were mired in crisis, confronting the deadliest and longest-recorded Ebola outbreak in history. As the death toll rose, the

country began to experience profound second-order effects: schools closed; an already fragile healthcare system collapsed; and commerce, industry, and tourism came to a standstill. Liberia's peace and democratic stability, earned through daily, dogged determination during the course of Liberia's post-civil war period, were suddenly under grave threat as a result of the epidemic.

In combatting Ebola, the United States adopted a vigorous, whole-of government approach to support Liberia's own efforts. The State Department, the Department of Defense, USAID, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other elements of the Department of Health and Human Services, all played critical roles. Our humanitarian assistance, including food aid, totaled more than \$509 million. The President deployed almost 3,000 troops to build treatment centers and assist in training healthcare workers. The Government of Liberia acted with determination to educate the Liberian people as local health care workers risked and—in many cases—gave their lives to save and ease the suffering of others. While no one can rule out a relapse, today Liberia has been declared Ebola-free, and with continued assistance from the United States, is on its way to recovery. We have confidence that if there is another outbreak, the country and its neighbors will be better able to control its spread.

If confirmed, I will lead our embassy's well-integrated interagency team, which remains deeply engaged in a partnership with Liberia to prevent, detect, and respond to future outbreaks before they become epidemics. I will make every effort to ensure U.S. assistance is spent wisely, and that synergetic efforts with the Liberian government and other partners support Liberia's development and post-Ebola recovery plan, as well as advance the Global Health Security Agenda.

Thirteen years after the end of Liberia's civil war and throughout the Ebola crisis, the security situation in Liberia has remained largely stable, and the country has made major security strides. The United States remains Liberia's closest partner in the reconstruction effort, investing more than \$2 billion in rebuilding the country since signing the peace accord in 2003, including over \$350 million on security sector reform. Since the signing of the peace accord, the country has successfully held two presidential and general elections, as well as Senate midterm elections and several by-elections. The U.N. Security Council lifted targeted sanctions in September 2015, and the United States lifted targeted individual sanctions in November 2015. The U.N. Security Council also authorized reducing UNMIL's remaining military and police components to a residual force by June 30, 2016, as they complete the final phase of the peacekeeping mandate. If confirmed, I will continue our bilateral efforts to promote the Government of Liberia's capacity to manage conflict early warning and response, to provide for its own security, and to strengthen the frameworks and institutions that underpin the rule of law.

But more work lies ahead to secure a lasting peace. Civil society is still fragile, and the country is challenged by widespread corruption, a lack of resources, and poverty. The next test will come in October 2017, when Liberia holds presidential elections. If confirmed, I will champion efforts such as USAID's five-year, Liberia Elections & Political Transitions program to ensure the people of Liberia continue on their chosen path of democracy by conducting free, fair, and peaceful elections in 2017.

As the situation in Liberia normalizes and the country continues to rebuild, economic development remains a top priority for the Liberian government. The government is rightly focused on job creation, including revitalization of the mining and rubber sectors, but also including diversification beyond commodities. President Sirleaf's government understands that battling corruption and advancing governance and economic reforms through initiatives such as the Partnership on Illicit Finance and accession to the WTO are important means of attracting foreign investment and bolstering the economy.

Broadening the U.S.-Liberian relationship to increase emphasis on trade and investment will also be one of my priorities, if I am confirmed. I believe Liberia's growth and recovery will depend on inflows of private capital, and there are opportunities for American businesses to benefit from increased trade and investment in Liberia's largely untapped mining, fisheries, agriculture, power, and service sectors. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work to advance U.S. business interests for the benefit of both the American and Liberian economies. I will also leverage our robust development assistance portfolios, spanning multiple sectors to help fight corruption, promote transparency and good governance, and help the Government of Liberia ensure that all Liberians have access to basic services, rights, and opportunities.

One key means to advance economic, social, and political development in Liberia is the recently signed \$257 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact. Liberia's MCC Compact will enhance Liberia's engagement in the President's Power Africa initiative, focusing on the development of Liberia's power and road sec-

tors. The local electricity utility currently reaches only two percent of the population. The MCC project will quadruple Liberia's power generation and significantly lower electricity rates for Liberians, which at 52 cents per kilowatt hour, are roughly five times the U.S. average. If confirmed, I will work closely with Liberia's government to support sustainability in the power and transportation sectors through targeted capacity building, and by encouraging robust private sector participation and investment in vital infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and the other members of the committee, and look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. We thank you very much. I know we have abbreviated our opening comments. As a matter of fact, we just did not give them, to give you time to be here and us finish this meeting. But we thank you all again for being here and your service.

Mr. Harden?

STATEMENT OF R. DAVID HARDEN, OF MARYLAND, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. HARDEN. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee for the assistant administrator for the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance at the United States Agency for International Development. We call it DCHA.

If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside the nearly 900 men and women of DCHA who seek to end extreme poverty and to promote resilient democratic societies.

I particularly want to thank my friend, colleague, and mentor, Tom Staal, for his leadership at DCHA over the past 18 months. My parents are here today, and my own family is watching this hearing from afar. My wife, Sharon, is at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. Tyler, my son, is at a tech startup in San Francisco. Ryan is at the U.S. Air Force Academy. And Waverley is at Bowdoin College.

We are a Foreign Service family. And like thousands of others, we have represented America in some of the toughest places on Earth. In 1999, Sharon and I packed up our preschoolers and moved to Bangladesh, and we have been overseas ever since.

My family's experience living in crisis zones has forged my understanding of the complex challenges in the world today and the importance of a robust American engagement. I believe USAID's DCHA Bureau represents the best of America. Its offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace are the first responders in global crises. They feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, comfort the sick, and shelter the displaced.

DCHA also assists nations with transition, and works to address the root causes of instability. The Office of Transition Initiatives and Conflict Management and Mitigation seek to improve delivery of basic services, give voice to the marginalized, and reduce the risk of violence.

DCHA teams continually analyze risk, whether of famine, mass atrocities, communicable disease, or flooding, in order to build the resilience in our partner nations. The Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance helps nations build effective institutions and robust civil societies so they can provide secu-

rity and justice, economic opportunity and political freedom for their people.

The Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad supports world-class global education and health facilities. It also promotes American values.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on four key areas. First, I will ensure DCHA is at peak operational capacity to be prepared for the crises ahead. Second, I will make certain our international food assistance remains cutting-edge, innovative, and reaches the most people in need. Third, I will work to expand funding for democracy, human rights, and governance, because we know these crises are in large part due to failed governance and undemocratic institutions. Finally, I look forward to working with the interagency and international colleagues to envision our world in 2025 and to advance a strategy to address regional instability and fragility.

If confirmed, I will lead with integrity, work for results, and be strictly accountable for U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harden follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF R. DAVID HARDEN

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee for Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). I am grateful for the trust and confidence President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Administrator Smith have in my leadership for a bureau so central to the United States' humanitarian, development, and foreign policy agenda. If confirmed, I will work to achieve USAID's mission of ending extreme poverty and promoting resilient democratic societies.

I look forward to working alongside the nearly 900 men and women who are leading DCHA programs in approximately 115 countries across five continents. I want to thank these colleagues for their unparalleled commitment, passion, and service. I also particularly want to acknowledge Tom Staal for his leadership of DCHA for the last 14 months. Tom has lived a storied life and career—he has also been a friend, mentor, and colleague as we worked together in Beirut, Baghdad, and Washington. USAID is stronger—and the world is better—because of Tom's service.

I would also like to thank my mother and father—who are here today. They taught me to work hard and follow my dreams and then gave me the opportunities to do so.

My own family is watching this hearing from afar—Sharon from the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, Tyler at a tech start up incubator in San Francisco, Ryan from the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado, and Waverly from Bowdoin College in Maine.

We are a Foreign Service family, like thousands of other families who represent America in some of the toughest places on earth. In 1999, Sharon and I packed up our preschoolers and moved to Dhaka, Bangladesh. We have been overseas since. The entire family has represented America for many years—in the hallways of the international schools, at gymnastic competitions, and on the streets and in the markets of South Asia, the former Soviet Union, and the Middle East. Street children in Dhaka, orphans in Almaty, and the children of war in Israel and Gaza have seen a compassionate America, because in the Foreign Service the whole family serves as diplomats abroad.

And yet there are unique challenges. Sharon and I worried about our young family living far from home on 9-11 when America was attacked. We have battled dengue, typhoid salmonella—and the innumerable childhood accidents that become near crises in lesser-developed countries. We gave Waverly a gas mask during the early days of the Syrian war, and explained to Tyler and Ryan's school that they should still fly back home to our family despite Tel Aviv being rocketed. During the 2014

war between Israel and Hamas, our family went to the bomb shelter more times in a single month than I did during my 17 months in Iraq. Foreign Service families face these types of challenges every day.

I appear before you today only because my family was willing to make the sacrifice of public service and accept the challenge of living abroad for close to two decades. To Sharon, I am forever grateful for her partnership on this extraordinary journey.

My family's firsthand experience living in crisis zones has forged my understanding of the complex challenges the world faces today and the importance of U.S. engagement abroad. From my perspective, USAID's DCHA Bureau represents the best of America's enduring leadership and goodwill. DCHA's Offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace are the first responders to global crises—whether an earthquake in Nepal, typhoon in the Philippines, Ebola in West Africa, or war in Syria, South Sudan, or Yemen. They feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, comfort the sick, and shelter the displaced. There is no more powerful and iconic symbol of America abroad than when USAID sends a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) into the heart of an emergency. Recall the images in 2014 of USAID and U.S. military personnel deploying to stem the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and of USAID coordinating with the U.S. military to deliver food and water by air to Yazidis trapped by ISIL on Iraq's Sinjar Mountain. Today, USAID has DARTs coordinating the U.S. humanitarian responses alongside State Department and other agencies in Syria, Iraq, and South Sudan—all massive complex crises that have been going on for years. Just last week, Administrator Smith announced the deployment of a DART to Ethiopia to avert a humanitarian crisis arising from an El Niño-triggered drought and to protect development gains.

DCHA also assists nations with the difficult task of post-crisis political and social transition and works to address the root causes of instability before conflicts become humanitarian emergencies. The Office of Transition Initiatives, for instance, has programs in Burma, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Somalia, where they work with national and local leaders to provide basic services and give a voice to people in marginalized communities. The Conflict Management and Mitigation office assesses the prospects of conflict and works with local and international organizations to reduce the risks of violence by supporting grassroots demands for peace. Teams from across DCHA continually analyze risk, whether of famine, mass atrocities, communicable disease, or flooding, to build resilience in our partner nations. To fulfill the U.N.'s initiatives on Women, Peace, and Security, DCHA teams also provide protection to women and girls in conflict settings and promote the participation of women in peacebuilding. By so doing, they directly mitigate the prospect of collapse, instability, and political vacuum—catastrophic events that undermine global development gains and challenge American interests abroad.

The Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance helps nations build effective institutions and robust civil societies so they have better potential to provide security and justice, economic opportunity, and political freedom for their people. The crises we see today so often reflect a lack of democratic foundations, effective governing institutions, and respect for human rights. The Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) directly supports some of the leading global education and health facilities—facilities that provide world-class services and promote American ideas and values. For instance, ASHA supports schools, like the Abaarso School of Science and Technology in Somalia, which shape tomorrow's global leaders who share our vision of peace and prosperity.

DCHA demonstrates extraordinary global reach and impact—it is also often the face of a generous America abroad when nations and people are at their most vulnerable.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress, the interagency, and the international community on four key areas.

First, I will ensure that DCHA is at peak operational capacity. As it stands, DCHA is a highly functional and effective organization. And yet we know the world will see new crises—whether rapid onset natural disasters or greater suffering from expanding wars. To achieve peak capacity, we must be prepared for the crises ahead—both known and unknown. Working with our Offices of Programs, Policy, and Management and Crises Surge Support, we will continue to prioritize staffing and facilities alignment, budget flexibility, coordinated analytical functions, and cross team integration. Through our Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation, I will deepen DCHA's already strong partnership with the military combatant commands. I will also expand its communications capabilities—both at home and abroad. I am acutely aware that the integrity and accountability of our assistance is of the highest concern and something I have championed in the West Bank, Gaza, Iraq, and Libya.

Second, I look forward to working with this committee to ensure our international food assistance remains cutting-edge and reaches the most people in need. The United States has a proud history of feeding the world's most hungry people. The complex emergencies we face today and in the future will require us to continue to adapt to meet growing demands and challenges most effectively and cost-efficiently. We will continue to harness our analytical tools, technology, and resources to determine the appropriate mix of U.S. commodities, local and regional food purchases, and market-based assistance to get the right food to the right people at the right time.

Third, I look forward to working with this committee to expand funding for democracy, human rights, and governance. The crises we face today are in large part a result of failed governance and undemocratic institutions. Extreme poverty is increasingly concentrated in fragile states. Sound governing structures must underpin everything we do in development. Additionally, strong civil societies help give voice to the disenfranchised; champion human rights; fight modern slavery; counter violent extremism; bolster anti-corruption efforts; and promote better responsiveness to citizen concerns. I will also tighten the analytical link between our work in democracy, human rights, and governance and its causal impact on political freedom, economic opportunity, and social inclusion. Democracies are more resilient to disasters and typically do not go to war with each other. Democracy, human rights, and governance must be at the center of our development agenda if we are to get ahead of crises and end extreme poverty.

Finally, I look forward to working with my State Department and other inter-agency colleagues and the international community to envision our world in 2025, particularly as it relates to regional instability in the Middle East, and fragility and resilience in sub-Saharan Africa. We must anticipate and prepare for future crisis drivers and consider how to better leverage emerging technology, big data, and the private sector into our responses. I have been impressed with the foresight of my predecessors—how they deepened our analytical capabilities, strengthened our relationships with the military, and integrated resilience planning. I would like to leave the same legacy for the next generation of DCHA leaders—envisioning and preparing for tomorrow's highly complex and connected world.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee, I am honored to be considered as Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. I am also humbled by the challenges and responsibility ahead. If confirmed, I will lead with integrity, work tirelessly for results, and be strictly accountable for U.S. taxpayer dollars. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.
Ms. Richard?

STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH HOLZHALL RICHARD, OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE LEBANESE REPUBLIC

Ms. RICHARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Cardin. I especially would like to thank the Senator from Virginia. Not all of us in the State Department are from Maryland. Some of us are from Virginia.

Thank you for staying, sir.

I am honored by President Obama's decision to nominate me to be Ambassador to Lebanon. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to achieve the important policy objectives we have there.

Over my 30 years in the Foreign Service, I have served in a number of challenging posts, as you noted, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. In those places, I have seen firsthand what a huge difference the United States can make when it leads.

The effects of the crises now raging across the Middle East make our leadership more important than ever. The Middle East is undergoing a period of unprecedented instability, but against this backdrop, the resilience of the Lebanese people is remarkable.

Lebanon faces three major challenges: the conflict in Syria; an ongoing governance crises; and the activities of Hezbollah, a terrorist organization that puts its own interests and the interests of its benefactors and patrons ahead of those of the Lebanese people.

Our partnership with the country's legitimate state institutions and its people is essential in helping Lebanon address these challenges.

Mr. Chairman, I am really struck by the incredible generosity of Lebanon in welcoming more than 1 million Syrian refugees, and I am very, very proud of the generosity of the American people as well. Our assistance to Syrian refugees and the communities that host them has eased this burden.

However, extremist groups like ISIL and al-Nusra continue to pose a grave threat to Lebanon and to U.S. interests in the region. With the generous support of Congress, we are helping Lebanon security institutions in their fight against extremism.

Effective security must be buttressed by effective political leadership, however. As you know, Lebanon has been without a President for almost 2 years now. It is time for the country to elect a President and to restore a functioning cabinet and parliament.

As for Hezbollah, its ongoing intervention in Syria to prop up the Assad regime was undertaken without the consent of the Lebanese people.

The administration strongly supported the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act passed by Congress just last December. Our shared goal is to dismantle Hezbollah's international financial network while supporting, at the same time, the legitimate Lebanese banking and other institutions.

If confirmed, I will do all I can to expand our anti-money-laundering and counterterrorism finance cooperation with Lebanon.

Most importantly, Mr. Chairman, I want to remember that Lebanon is hallowed ground for U.S. diplomats and for our military colleagues as well. The tragic bombings of the Marine barracks and the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983 will never be forgotten.

If confirmed, my highest priority will be the safety and security of all Americans in Lebanon. There is really no job more important to me than that. So with that, Mr. Chairman, members, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Richard follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH H. RICHARD

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored by President Obama's decision to nominate me as U.S. ambassador to Lebanon. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the members of this committee on achieving our policy objectives in Lebanon.

Over the course of my 30 years as a Foreign Service Officer, I have had the privilege of serving in some of our most challenging posts, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and—most recently—Yemen. In my diplomatic efforts to advance U.S. policy objectives, as well as in overseeing security assistance, counter-narcotics, economic and governance programs, I have seen firsthand how influential the United States can be when it engages. The effects of the crises raging across the Middle East on our national interests make U.S. leadership more imperative than ever.

The Middle East is undergoing a period of unprecedented instability. The roots of this instability are deep and systemic: weak political legitimacy, ineffective institutions, fragile economies, and religious sectarianism. Amidst this backdrop of un-

certainly, the resilience of the Lebanese people stands out. For centuries, Lebanon has been a rich tapestry of different religions and ethnicities. Respect for religious freedom and confessional tolerance lie at the very core of Lebanese identity. We must do all we can to help Lebanon continue to uphold these principles. If confirmed as ambassador, I will dedicate myself to further strengthening our partnership with Lebanon.

Lebanon today faces three major challenges: the spillover effects of the conflict in Syria, which has brought more than a million refugees to Lebanon; a political crisis that has severely hindered the work of government institutions and has deprived the Lebanese people of basic services; and—of course—the activities of Hizballah, a terrorist organization that puts its own interests and those of its foreign backers ahead of the Lebanese people. Our partnership with Lebanon's legitimate state institutions and our assistance to the Lebanese people are essential in helping Lebanon address all three of these challenges.

I am struck by the incredible generosity of towns and villages all across Lebanon in welcoming more than a million Syrian refugees. And I am very proud of the generosity of the American people as well. Our assistance to Syrian refugees—and the Lebanese communities which have graciously hosted them for nearly five years—has helped to alleviate the tremendous burden on the country. Just last month in London, Secretary Kerry announced over \$133 million in new humanitarian aid, bringing the U.S. contribution to Lebanon to over \$1.1 billion since the start of the crisis. The Department is grateful to Congress for supporting this assistance, which demonstrates America's unwavering resolve in addressing one of the most heart-wrenching situations in the world today. If confirmed, I will work hard to help Lebanon address this enormous humanitarian challenge.

Extremist groups such as ISIL and the Nusra Front pose a grave threat to Lebanon, and to U.S. interests in the region. Our partnership with Lebanon's security forces has played a critical role in preserving Lebanon's security against such threats. Lebanon is also a member of the Counter-ISIL Coalition we lead. If confirmed, I will do my best to build upon our strong relationships with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces. The November 12 bombing in Beirut, which killed 41 innocent civilians and injured many more, is a tragic reminder of the threat posed by ISIL. I was moved to learn that the U.S. Congress observed a moment of silence on the floor soon after the attack. This gesture showed that the American people stand shoulder to shoulder with the Lebanese as they battle ISIL and other extremists.

With the generous support of the Congress, we are supporting the Lebanese military with the tools and training it needs to fight ISIL and other extremists. Our security assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces, more than \$150 million in fiscal year 2015, makes a real difference on the ground. The Lebanese military has turned the tide against ISIL along the rugged border with Syria, so that northeastern Lebanon is no longer in immediate danger from extremist groups. Lebanese aircraft now use U.S.-supplied Hellfire missiles to pinpoint terrorists and take them out. Our partnership with the Lebanese Internal Security Forces is no less impressive. For example, FBI-trained Internal Security Forces now conduct forensic investigations to help bring justice for the Lebanese people in cases of terrorist attacks and serious crimes.

Effective security needs to be buttressed by effective political leadership. Lebanon has been without a president for almost two years—much too long. Now is the time for Lebanon to uphold its democratic principles and elect a president according to the Lebanese constitution. The Lebanese people deserve a government that can deliver basic services, promote economic prosperity, and address the country's most pressing security challenges. The United States has been clear and consistent: Lebanon needs a president and a fully functioning Cabinet and parliament without delay. This is first and foremost a Lebanese responsibility; they are the ones who have the greatest stake in their country's success. Through our leadership in the International Support Group for Lebanon, the United States has rallied the international community to speak with a united voice in calling for an end to the presidential vacancy. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to supporting the Lebanese in their efforts to seat a functioning government.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Lebanon's voices for moderation and progress to support Lebanon's quest for full sovereignty and independence. Hizballah's ongoing intervention in Syria to prop up the Assad regime—undertaken without the consent of the Lebanese people—contradicts the 2012 Baabda Declaration, which clearly—and wisely—states Lebanon's policy of dissociation from foreign entanglements. Hizballah's activities in Syria create serious security challenges for Lebanon. If confirmed, my mission will be to do everything I can to support Lebanon

to exercise full sovereignty throughout the country and to help build up the Lebanese military, its sole legitimate defender.

The administration strongly supported the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act passed by the Congress last December. We have made clear to all that our goal is to dismantle Hizballah's international financial network while supporting Lebanese institutions and the Lebanese people. This will contribute directly to promoting Lebanon's economic prosperity.

The success of the Lebanese banking sector, a backbone of the country's economy, relies on upholding an already excellent reputation. Both Lebanon and the United States have an interest in ensuring Hizballah cannot penetrate the Lebanese financial sector. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to working with the Lebanese financial sector to enhance our anti-money laundering and terrorism finance cooperation.

Our commitment to Lebanon's economic prosperity is one of the cornerstones of our bilateral relationship. From university scholarships that foster a new generation of Lebanese entrepreneurs to water and sanitation projects for rural communities, our assistance helps Lebanon deal with the economic fallout of a region in turmoil. If confirmed, I hope to expand trade between Lebanon and the United States and to promote U.S. exports to Lebanon. Lebanon's accession to the World Trade Organization would be a positive development and we stand ready to help better connect Lebanon to the global economy.

Most importantly—I want to remember that Lebanon is hallowed ground for America's diplomats and our colleagues in uniform. The tragic bombings of the Marine barracks and the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983 will never be forgotten. If confirmed, my highest priority will be the safety and security of all Americans in Lebanon. There is no job more important to me.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for this opportunity to address you. If confirmed, I look forward to seeing you and members of your staff in Beirut. I welcome the opportunity to address any questions you might have. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your testimony.
Mr. Schwartz?

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN MICHAEL SCHWARTZ, OF MARYLAND, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA

Mr. SCHWARTZ. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to be considered for the position of United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia. I am sincerely grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence they have shown in me through this nomination.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me to introduce my family. With me here today are my wife, Kristy Cook, and our two children, Hannah and Jonas. I thank each of them for their support and sacrifice.

In addition, I would like to pay tribute to my father, Robert, who fell ill and was unable to travel here for the hearing, and to my late mother, Carole. Their influence continues to shape and motivate me every day.

Mr. Chairman, the people of Somalia are regaining control of their country, and intensified U.S. engagement is vital to their success, and to ours. With measured, but real progress, Somalia is no longer a failed state, but a fragile recovering country with promise. Somalia's vibrant diaspora members are making important contributions to this renewal.

Last May, Secretary Kerry became the first Secretary of State to visit Somalia. While there, he announced that planning had begun to reestablish U.S. diplomatic premises in Mogadishu. If confirmed, fulfilling that commitment will be one of my top priorities, with the

safety and security of U.S. Government personnel always foremost among my considerations.

Mr. Chairman, we are working with Somalia's international partners on security, building governance institutions, and providing relief and development. For security, our top priority is to degrade al-Shabaab, an Al Qaeda affiliate. We are achieving this goal primarily by supporting the African Union Mission in Somalia, also known as AMISOM, and building the capacity of the Somalia military and police.

Security gains have created space for political developments, as outlined in Somalia's Vision 2016. In the coming months, Somalis plan to continue developing a new constitution, complete the formation of regional administrations, and agree on the rules governing the electoral process.

To grow the economy and build capacity, the United States supports the New Deal Compact as the basis of a strong Somali-led development partnership. Much more progress is needed, however, if Somalis are to enjoy a better future.

More than 20 years of conflict have uprooted 2 million Somalis both in and outside the country. Today, more than 700,000 Somalis are estimated to be acutely malnourished—many of them children.

Mr. Chairman, Somalia has many challenges but it is moving in the right direction and can count on the United States as a full partner. My nomination reflects our deepening relationship with the country and its people, and our faith that better times are ahead.

If confirmed, it will be my honor to lead our mission as the first United States Ambassador to Somalia in over 25 years. I thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schwartz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHEN M. SCHWARTZ

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to be considered for the position of United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia. I am sincerely grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence they have shown in me through this nomination.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me at this time to introduce my family. With me today are my wife, Kristy Cook, and our two children, Hannah and Jonas. The Foreign Service offers families unusual opportunities and challenges, and I thank each of them for their support and sacrifice. In addition, I would like to pay tribute to my father Robert, who is recovering from surgery and was unable to travel; and to my late mother, Carole, who died just two months before I began my Foreign Service career. Their influence continues to shape and motivate me every day.

Mr. Chairman, the people of Somalia are regaining control of their country and intensified U.S. engagement is vital to their success, and to ours. With measured but real progress over the last few years, Somalia is no longer a "failed state," but a fragile, recovering country with promise. Somalia's vibrant diaspora members are returning to help reconstruct their nation and, in so doing, are renewing and strengthening the linkages between the United States and Somalia.

On a governmental level, we are doing the same. The Somali government reestablished its embassy in Washington, D.C. last November, after a 24-year absence. Two years earlier, the United States officially recognized the Federal Government of Somalia for the first time in 21 years.

Last May, Secretary Kerry became the first Secretary of State ever to visit Somalia. While there, he announced that planning had begun to reestablish U.S. diplomatic premises in Mogadishu. As a first step, in September we established the U.S. Mission to Somalia, co-located in Embassy Nairobi. If confirmed, fulfilling the Sec-

retary's commitment will be one of my top priorities, with the safety and security of U.S. government personnel always foremost among my considerations.

Mr. Chairman, our policy for Somalia is focused on three key areas: security, governance institutions, and relief and development. For security, our top priority is to degrade al-Shabaab, an al-Qaida affiliate, so it is no longer a pernicious and destabilizing force. If confirmed, I will help lead our efforts to support and strengthen the African Union Mission in Somalia, better known as AMISOM, while we work to build the capacity of the Somali military and police so that they can assume responsibility for their own country's security.

Security gains have created space for political progress and state formation, as outlined in Somalia's "Vision 2016." Much more work needs to be done to hold a referendum on a permanent national constitution; complete the creation of Federal Member States and establish functioning governmental authorities; and to adopt rules governing political parties and an electoral process. If confirmed, I will lead the United States government's efforts to help Somalia build these institutions as the foundations of durable, accountable, inclusive, and effective governance.

To grow the economy and build capacity, the United States has supported the New Deal Compact as the basis of a strong, Somali-led development partnership. If confirmed, I will redouble our efforts to work with Somali authorities, civil society, the private sector, and the international community to improve education, support growth and employment in key economic sectors, and help Somalis realize a better future in areas liberated from al Shabaab's oppressive rule.

Over two decades of conflict have left over a million Somalis displaced in their own country, and almost a million as refugees in neighboring countries. More than 700,000 Somalis are estimated to be acutely malnourished, many of them children. The United States is committed to addressing humanitarian needs in Somalia and supports efforts to achieve durable solutions.

Mr. Chairman, Somalia has many challenges, but it is moving in the right direction. My nomination is a reflection of both our deepening relationship with the country and its people, and our faith that better times are ahead. I can assure you that, if confirmed, it will be my honor to lead our mission as the first United States Ambassador to Somalia in over twenty-five years. I will work hard to advance U.S. interests, and strengthen our bilateral relationship. I look forward to the opportunity to work with the committee to achieve those goals.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you all. We are very fortunate to have people of your caliber in the Foreign Service and do the things that you do, and the sacrifice that you have made on behalf of our country for many, many years.

I am going to defer on oral questions. I will give written questions. I hope that does not disappoint you. I know you all prepped for this meeting. I think Senator Cardin may be doing the same thing. I will let him speak to his own, but I am going to defer, because of the length of this meeting, and the fact that we have another panel. I am going to do mine in writing.

But again, your testimony is very good. We are very fortunate to have people, again, of your caliber, and we thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I really just want to underscore what the chairman said. The nomination process is a very important process in the Senate and confirmations we take very, very seriously. A good deal of work is done before the hearings in going through the resumes and records of those who are nominated by the President.

We had a relatively easy task with the panel before us and the next panel, because your career service to our country is incredible, and we thank you very much for everything you have done to help America.

We will be asking questions for the record, I want to make that clear, because it gives us a chance also to emphasize areas of major concern.

So I have a quote from Mr. Harden. In his statement, he covered an issue that I will be talking to each one of you about in your po-

sitions, and that is, "I look forward to working with this committee to expand funding for democracy, human rights, and governance. The crises we face today are in large part a result of failed governance and undemocratic institutions. ... I will also tighten the analytical link between our work and democracy and human rights and governance and its impact on political freedom, economic opportunities, and social inclusion. Democracies are more resilient to disasters and typically do not go to war with each other. Democracies, human rights, and governance must be at the center of our development agenda if we are going to get ahead of crises and extreme poverty.

The questions I am going to be asking all the nominees, including second panel, is what you have done to advance human rights in your career and how you intend to use the position, if confirmed, to advance our ideals.

America's strength is in its values. Although we do have the strongest military in the world, there is no question about that, and we have very strong commitment to diplomacy and development assistance, it is in promoting these values that give America its strength and stability globally.

We are going to be asking you to make a commitment to work with this committee, to advance those good governance issues in the countries. And the countries that are represented, the three Ambassador nominees here, all are challenged. We need to do a more effective job using your diplomatic skills. And in the next panel, we have countries also that we can do better.

So I look forward to your response, but more importantly, I look forward to working with you to advance America's values so we can get world stability. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thanks to the witnesses. I cannot help but notice that four of the seven on these two panels are Virginians. You can see, Mr. Chair, why I fought so hard to be on this committee. I see more Virginians here than if I was down in Richmond strolling around my neighborhood.

But the Virginia connection with the State Department, nine Secretaries of State and then so many State Department personnel, Foreign Service personnel live in the commonwealth, is something that we really cherish.

It is one of the reasons why Virginians care a lot about these issues. These foreign relations issues are not particularly foreign in a State where one out of nine Virginians was born in another country, and they care deeply about where they are from, and they care deeply about the work that you do.

I also want to thank Mr. Harden. He schlepped me around the West Bank twice. I know in the life of a Foreign Service professional, it is always good to have a codel, but the best day is the day that they leave. [Laughter.]

Senator KAINE. But you are a good sport.

I want to focus on Lebanon. Ms. Richard, I am so glad you pointed out that the Lebanese Embassy, the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, is hallowed ground. Anybody who wonders about the work that we do

and how hard it is, or anybody who wonders about the sacrifice that people like you all make, the need to go to the U.S. Embassy in Beirut.

Senator King and I serve together on the Armed Services Committee. We were there in February 2014, and we walked out on a morning and we went to the memorial there for the victims of the two bombings, the Embassy bombing in 1983 and the Embassy Annex bombing in 1984, as well as a memorial to the Marines who were killed in the barracks bombing, and other State Department and U.S. personnel who were killed in the years to follow during the war. It is a very, very sobering thing, to see the number of Embassy personnel, both U.S.-born and Lebanese, who were killed. It makes the risk so palatable.

We then went upstairs at that weird hotel that they have on the Embassy grounds, and in the middle of a meeting, we were getting ready to go downtown to meet with President Suleiman, we heard an explosion. We walked out on the balcony and we could look into downtown Beirut and see the smoke coming up from a suicide bomb that had been detonated in front of an Iranian cultural center.

Angus and I were sure our meetings were going to get canceled. The Embassy personnel there was used to dealing with it. The Lebanese President was used to dealing with it. And just quickly, for my colleagues, we went ahead and did the meeting, and when we were with President Suleiman, who at that point was 2 months from the end of his term, he was taking calls from everybody trying to deal with the crisis while he was meeting with us.

At one point, he just looked up and said, it was not like he was looking at us, but he just said, I think this is our fault. And Angus and I did not know what he meant. So we said, what do you mean, this is your fault? He said, I think it is Christians' fault. He said, we could have played the role of peacemaker and bridge builder but instead what we have done is we played the role of trying to be with whoever was up at whatever point in time.

Now a statement that is made like that in the heat of emotion, I am a Catholic. I blame myself for everything, too, so I did not necessarily take it as a completely accurate description of the reality, but it was a *cri de coeur* really of despair and a tough circumstance.

Yet here we are, 2 years later, and there is not a President. We have been 2 years without a President.

We had Lebanese parliamentarians visit us 2 weeks ago. Senator Shaheen and I visited with them. They really could not see a particular path forward that they could describe to us.

I have to believe that in any Nation, much less one that is in the midst of a refugee crisis where now one in four of the population of the country are refugees from Syria, in any Nation, the lack of a President would be a challenging governance question. In this Nation, it has to be just devastating.

So what can we do, mindful of the notion that these nations have to figure out their own internal politics themselves? But what can we do? We invest a lot in Lebanese Armed Forces through security cooperation. They deeply appreciate that. We saw that in action.

But what can we do to help them move to a chapter where they are not going to be gridlocked while they are in the midst of such difficulty?

Ms. RICHARD. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, really, for your interest in Lebanon. It is such an important part of the region.

At the end of the day, you are exactly right. The Lebanese have to solve this problem, but we can do a lot, I think in encouraging them and forcing them to face up to the fact that, at the end of the day, what will save Lebanon are institutions and not personal relationships and individuals.

The cabinet does meet from time to time, and they met in November to pass a very important anti-money-laundering law. So they are able to focus and realize things that are in their national interests.

But you are right. We must do a lot more to encourage them and to work with others who have influence in Lebanon—we are not the only ones, the Saudis and others—to help focus the Lebanese leadership on the need for restoration of the institutions.

Senator Kaine. The other thing I would like you to comment on, the parliamentarians were expressing the concern that they feel like they are victims in a big proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

There is an old-fashioned American phrase, they did not use it, but I have heard it before, “When the elephants fight, the fleas get trampled.” They kind of feel like there is a proxy war that is going on, and they are just kind of like the collateral damage, sometimes.

How, diplomatically, can we deal with that issue? I know we have Saudi Arabia and Iran at the table with respect to the ceasefire discussions in Syria. Is there anything we can do with respect to promoting stability in Lebanon that we should be asking while they are there at the table on the Syrian issue, which is so connected to Lebanon, that we should be asking of them?

Ms. RICHARD. Yes, Senator. You are absolutely right. We do have this opportunity in the context of Syria.

We have talked about this with the Saudis, with the Iranians, and with others in the region, about the need to separate Lebanon from the real issues at hand in Syria.

I know that Secretary Kerry and others continue to make that point, the importance of separating Lebanon out.

At the same time, we are talking with Saudi Arabia even now about this issue of withdrawing support of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces.

Senator Kaine. As I understand it, Saudi Arabia has recently delayed indefinitely about \$3 billion worth of military support for the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Ms. RICHARD. Yes, sir. And our point to them is that if the ultimate objective here is to limit the ability of Hezbollah to do what it is doing, the solution is to invest in Lebanese institutions and not to withdraw support from them at this critical time.

Senator Kaine. What is your perception on the Lebanese institution side? This will be my final question. What is your perception of the degree to which the Lebanese Armed Forces are viewed as an inclusive body that is not too slanted toward one of the power factions or another?

Ms. RICHARD. Both the Lebanese Armed Forces, Senator, and the Internal Security Forces, which is the police, are seen to be extremely professional and not very much polluted, let us say, by some of the worst parts of the interconfessional fighting. Very professional, very dedicated, and loyal to the government.

We have high confidence in both institutions. That is why we continue to work with them.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you so much.

And thanks to all the witnesses. I have great respect for the service you provide.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Having been to Lebanon, and certainly with the existing situation that is there and the resilience of these people in light of what is occurring, it is amazing. I appreciate your emphasis, not to in any way diminish the roles that the other three are going to play.

We thank you so much for being here. We hope that you will respond to our written questions promptly. I know that you will. Again, we thank you for your commitment to our country and to what you do on our behalf.

With that, with no fireworks, you are welcome to leave. You are dismissed. Thank you.

Next we will move to the second panel. We will begin with introductions, and we thank all of you for being here.

Ms. Kelly Keiderling, a career member of the Foreign Service, class of minister counselor, is Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the Department of State, a position she has held since 2013. Ms. Keiderling served as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Venezuela from 2011 to 2013, strategic language issues coordinator in the Bureau of Human Services in 2010, and chief of staff in the Office of Iraq Affairs from 2009 to 2010.

Thank you so much for being here.

Next, we have Mr. Mark Sobel to be U.S. executive director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 2 years. Mr. Sobel is a Deputy Assistant Secretary for international monetary and financial policy at the U.S. Department of Treasury. Mr. Sobel has worked for the U.S. Department of Treasury since 1978 in a variety of positions, having served in his current position since 2000.

We welcome you here.

Lastly, we have Mr. Adam Sterling, a career member of the Foreign Service, class of counselor. He currently serves as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy at The Hague in the Netherlands, a position he has held since 2013. He serves concurrently as charge at The Hague from 2013 to 2014. Previously, he served as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan from 2010 to 2013, with service as charge from 2010 to 2011 and during 2012. He also served as director for Central and Eastern European affairs on National Security Council staff from 2006 to 2009.

Again, a very distinguished panel whose service we appreciate deeply, and certainly the support of their family members and others that allow them to do what they do so well.

So with that, Ms. Keiderling, if you would begin, and summarize your comments.

Without objection, for both panels, your written testimony will certainly be entered into the record. Again, we thank you. And you can begin.

**STATEMENT OF KELLY KEIDERLING-FRANZ, OF VIRGINIA,
NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE ORIENTAL REPUBLIC
OF URUGUAY**

Ms. KEIDERLING-FRANZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to all the members of the committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. I deeply appreciate the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me by sending my name to the Senate for your consideration.

My family accompanies me here today, my husband, David Franz, who is also a Foreign Service Officer; my daughter, Katherine; my son, Alex. Yes, we pulled them out of school so that they can learn how our government functions.

Like my kids who have grown up in the Foreign Service, I too am a child of the Foreign Service. My father grew up in the New Jersey of the Great Depression, and he was forever grateful and very proud to represent our country as a Foreign Service Officer. He met my Bolivian mother at his first overseas post in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

I grew up in this bicultural, international environment as an outsider. My parents taught me to consider various points of view and to search for common ground. So since entering the Foreign Service in 1988, I have carried that essential approach with me, building bridges of understanding and of joint endeavor.

Overseas, I have served three tours in the Western Hemisphere, two tours in post-Soviet countries, and three tours in Africa. I believe that the breadth of my career experiences and work on various policy issues would prepare me well to represent the United States, should you vote to confirm me.

The United States and Uruguay cooperate across a broad spectrum of issues. We are partners in making our world more secure. We fight against drug traffickers, human smugglers, illicit financial flows, cybercriminals, and international terrorism. We cooperate in international peacekeeping and the protection of civilians. We seek to increase bilateral trade and investment, to create more jobs and opportunity at home.

With Uruguay, we can reassert our hemisphere's commitment to democratic governance, to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, to freedom from arbitrary detention and arrest, and to independent judiciaries.

Both Uruguay and the United States have a common cause in the equal treatment of people without regard to their race or gender, sexual orientations, social origins, or religion. We believe human rights are universal and intrinsic to each individual.

The United States and Uruguay share these many interests and values. And should you vote to confirm me as U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay, my commitment to you and to my fellow Americans is to do my best to help build a world that is more secure, more prosperous, and more just. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Keiderling-Franz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KELLY KEIDERLING-FRANZ

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. I deeply appreciate the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me by sending my name to the Senate for your consideration.

My family accompanies me today: my husband David Franz, who is also a Foreign Service Officer, my daughter Katherine and my son Alex.

Like my kids who have grown up in this business, I, too, am a child of the Foreign Service. My father grew up in the New Jersey of the Great Depression. He was forever grateful and proud to represent our country as a Foreign Service Officer. He met my Bolivian mother at his first overseas post, in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

I grew up in this bicultural environment, and was always the foreigner, the outsider. Overseas, my father and mother taught me that the people around me would judge the United States based on my own character and actions. I did my best as a kid to be worthy of that responsibility, even though I thought back then that it was an unfair burden. My parents also taught me to look beyond myself and consider various viewpoints and motivations and then to search for common ground.

Since entering the Foreign Service in 1988, I've carried that essential approach with me, building bridges of understanding and of joint, principled endeavor. Overseas, I've served three tours in the Western Hemisphere, two tours in post-Soviet nations, and three tours in Africa. At State Department headquarters, I've worked in a variety of assignments, most recently, in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I believe that the breadth of my career experiences and work on various policy issues would prepare me well to represent the United States, should you vote to confirm me for the position of United States Ambassador to Uruguay.

The United States and Uruguay cooperate across a broad spectrum of common interests. If confirmed, I would continue and strengthen our joint endeavors. The United States and Uruguay are partners in the fight against drug traffickers, illicit financial flows, cyber criminals, human smugglers, and international terrorism.

On the international stage, our countries cooperate in international peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians in conflict areas. Uruguay has a seat on the U.N. Security Council for the next two years; we look forward to engaging Uruguay on the issues that arise before the Council.

Both our countries seek to increase bilateral trade and investment to create more jobs and economic opportunity at home. We prepare our young people with 21st century, global skills so that they might be successful and contribute to our societies. We seek effective responses to climate change and to building resilient communities.

The United States and Uruguay have a common commitment to democratic governance and the defense of human rights. If confirmed, I would work with Uruguayan leaders to reassert our hemisphere's commitment to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, to fair and independent judiciaries, and to responsive legislatures.

Both Uruguay and the United States have a common cause in the equal treatment of people without regard to their race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social origin, or religion. We seek to reintegrate victims of human trafficking back into our societies. We believe human rights are universal and intrinsic to each individual.

The United States and Uruguay share these many interests and values. We believe that the law applies equally to all and that our nations are stronger because of the rule of law. Both our nations have been proponents of creating—and defending—international norms that make our global systems more secure, that increase economic prosperity, and that assert that citizens have a right to determine how they are governed.

Should you confirm me for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay, my commitment to you, members of the committee, and to my fellow Americans is to do my utmost to nurture and strengthen the strong partnership between the United States and Uruguay, and to help build a world that is more secure, more prosperous, and more just.

Senator CARDIN. [Presiding.] Thank you very much.
Mr. Sobel?

**STATEMENT OF MARK SOBEL, OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO
BE U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL
MONETARY FUND**

Mr. SOBEL. Thank you, Chairman Corker. Thank you, Ranking Member Cardin. I thank all the members of the committee. I am greatly honored to have been nominated to serve as U.S. executive director to the IMF. I thank Secretaries Geithner and Lew for their support.

I am delighted to be joined today by my wife, Martha Halperin.

In the interest of brevity, I will shorten my statement, just for the record. Seventy years ago, as our brave soldiers fought in World War II to liberate the globe from tyranny and dictatorship, our Nation's financial diplomats took the lead in creating a new vision for international economic cooperation. Their vision shunned protectionism and beggar-thy-neighbor currency policies, forces that helped catalyze war, and instead trumpeted multilateralism and shared prosperity.

At the center of that vision, they created the IMF. Since its inception, the fund has well-served the world economy and U.S. national security and economic interests, whether it be in helping to mitigate economic crises in Latin America in the 1980s, support the transition of the ex-Soviet States in the 1990s, combat the Asian and emerging-market crises of the latter 1990s, provide concessional support and debt relief for poverty alleviation in low-income countries, or tackle the European crises of the past years.

Without the IMF, these developments had the potential to rock geopolitical stability to a much greater extent, often in countries with strategic significance to our national security. Without the IMF, these developments also had the potential to spread more virulently around the world and seriously harm U.S. growth and jobs through decreased export opportunities, lost foreign investment, and financial shocks.

Throughout my career, I have seen firsthand the IMF's strengths. Its ability to act as the world's first and rapid crisis responder is an unparalleled global public good, as is its excellence in designing and supporting country reform programs. The IMF brings together officials from around the world, creating a culture of shared understanding. It fosters multilateral rules of the road. Its technical assistance helps countries build infrastructure for more robust economic policies. The IMF surveillance can help prevent crises.

But despite the fund's strengths, the organization, like any other, has room for improvement, for example in better analyzing and articulating policies to tackle modest global growth, addressing global rebalancing and exchange-rate issues, strengthening its work on crisis prevention and debt sustainability, supporting pro-poor spending in low-income countries, and helping make financial sectors more resilient.

I firmly believe in tenaciously defending U.S. interests and in advancing multilateralism, as well as in working pragmatically and collegially with analytic rigor in a nonpartisan manner. I also believe in the IMF's mission and that our Nation's leadership of the fund is critical. Those beliefs have guided my career.

If confirmed as U.S. executive director, I will work vigorously to continue to strengthen and improve the IMF consistent with those beliefs. I will dedicate myself to doing my utmost to work with Congress to help forge a stronger consensus in our country in support of the IMF and its critical global role.

And I thank this committee for its strong backing of the fund in securing the recent passage of legislation to implement the 2010 quota and governance reforms.

Again, to have been nominated by the President to represent the United States in the IMF, the very institution at the center of America's post-World War II global economic and financial vision, is a tremendous and humbling honor and a responsibility that I am eager to undertake. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sobel follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARK SOBEL

Thank you Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin and members of the committee. I am honored that President Obama nominated me to serve as Executive Director of the United States to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and I am grateful to Secretary Geithner, Secretary Lew, Under Secretary Nathan Sheets, and former Under Secretary Lael Brainard for their strong support throughout my career. I am delighted to be joined today by my wife, Martha Halperin.

Working with talented Treasury colleagues and senior officials in administrations from both parties in a career spanning over three decades in the civil service, I have had the rare privilege and honor of holding a front row seat in the making of American financial history.

Since 2000, I have served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Monetary and Financial Policy. During the transitions in 2001 and 2009, I had the great honor of being designated as the Acting head of International Affairs and I also served in the past year as the Acting U.S. Executive Director at the IMF. Earlier in my career, I served as an Assistant Financial Attache in Bonn, Germany; Director of Treasury's International Monetary Policy and Transition Economy Offices; and a member of the staff of the U.S. IMF Executive Director.

Over the last decade, I have been particularly proud to play a role in America's leadership in building and establishing the G-20 Finance Ministry and Leaders process and reforming the IMF.

Seventy years ago, as our brave soldiers fought in World War II to liberate the globe from

tyranny and dictatorship, our nation's financial diplomats took the lead in creating a new vision for international economic cooperation. Their vision shunned protectionism and beggar-thy-neighbor currency policies, forces that helped catalyze the war, and instead trumpeted multilateralism and shared prosperity.

At the center of that vision, they created the IMF. Since its inception, the Fund has well served the world economy, and U.S. national security and economic interests—whether it be in helping to mitigate economic crises in Latin America in the 1980s, support the transition of the ex-Soviet states in the 1990s, combat the Asian and emerging market crises of the latter 1990s, provide concessional support and debt relief for poverty alleviation in low income countries, or tackle the European crisis of the past years.

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Throughout my career, I have seen first-hand the IMF's strengths. Its ability to act as the world's first and rapid crisis responder is an unparalleled global public good, as is its excellence in designing and supporting country reform programs. The IMF brings together officials from around the world, creating a culture of shared understanding. It fosters multilateral rules of the road. Its technical assistance helps countries build the infrastructure for more robust economic policies. The IMF's surveillance can help prevent crises.

But despite the Fund's strengths, the organization—like any other—has room for improvement, for example, in better analyzing and articulating policies to tackle modest global growth, addressing global rebalancing and exchange rate issues, strengthening its work on crisis prevention and debt sustainability, supporting pro-poor spending in low income countries, and helping make financial sectors more resilient.

I believe firmly in tenaciously defending U.S. interests and in advancing multilateralism, as well as in working pragmatically and collegially, with analytic rigor, and in a non-partisan manner. I also believe in the IMF's mission and that our nation's leadership of the IMF is critical. Those beliefs have guided my career.

If confirmed as U.S. Executive Director, I will work vigorously to continue to strengthen and improve the IMF, consistent with those beliefs. I will dedicate myself to doing my utmost to work with Congress to help forge a stronger consensus in our country in support of the IMF and its critical global role, and I thank this committee for its strong backing of the Fund in securing the recent passage of legislation to implement the 2010 quota and governance reforms.

Again, to have been nominated by the President to represent the United States in the IMF—the very institution at the center of America's post-WWII global economic and financial vision—is a tremendous and humbling honor and a responsibility that I am eager to undertake.

Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much.
Mr. Sterling?

**STATEMENT OF ADAM H. STERLING, OF VIRGINIA,
NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Mr. STERLING. Ranking Member Cardin, appearing before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to the Slovak Republic is an honor and privilege. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for the trust and confidence they have placed in me.

Mr. Ranking Member, I bring 26 years of Foreign Service experience to this position. For more than 20 of those years, my partner in all aspects of this global life has been my wife, Veerle Coignez. Veerle works to advance global health as an expert consultant to the Global Fund to Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB. Veerle broke away from a mission with the Global Fund to fly here yesterday all the way from India.

Our family diplomatic team includes as well our 17-year-old daughter, Elka, and 15-year-old son, Bram. They broke away from school in our current home in the Netherlands to fly all the way back here from there yesterday. I am exceptionally proud to introduce the three of them to you.

My experience includes leading two U.S. missions overseas and work on the Slovak Republic and its neighbors as director of Central and Eastern European affairs on the National Security Council staff.

Less than a quarter century after the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak Republic has emerged as a trusted NATO ally and stalwart member of the transatlantic community. A democratic and increasingly prosperous Slovakia serves as a powerful example and source of stability in its strategically important region.

The accession of Slovakia and six other countries to the NATO alliance in 2004 strengthened our collective security. Slovak soldiers have participated in a variety of NATO operations, including today in Afghanistan as part of the Resolute Support mission.

Slovakia has also shown a strong willingness to invest in its defense capabilities, committing to ramp up defense spending from approximately 1 percent of GDP to 1.6 percent by 2020. Last year's decision to purchase nine U.S.-made Blackhawk helicopters is tangible evidence of progress. If confirmed, I will seek to build upon this modernization momentum.

Slovakia has also provided significant support to the people of Ukraine by enabling reverse flows of natural gas to Ukraine. If confirmed, I will seek even closer bilateral cooperation on issues affecting Ukraine.

One of the newer members of the eurozone, Slovakia has one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. Our economic partnership also continues to grow with some 140 American companies operating in Slovakia, and trade between our two countries exceeding \$2.5 billion in 2015.

While economic progress continues, Slovakia still continues faces the challenges of fighting corruption and institutionalizing the rule of law. If confirmed, I will make promoting opportunities for U.S. business and improving Slovakia's investment climate one of my top priorities.

We will also continue to advocate for the rights of minorities, for greater inclusion of Roma, and for the human rights and dignity of all refugees and migrants, regardless of background.

Mr. Ranking Member, Slovakia shares our democratic values as well as our goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. If given the opportunity, I will do my utmost to advance our shared aims. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sterling follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ADAM STERLING

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, appearing before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to the Slovak Republic is an honor and a privilege. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for the trust and confidence they have placed in me.

Mr. Chairman, I bring 26 years of Foreign Service experience to this position. For more than 20 of those years, my partner in all aspects of this global life has been my wife, Veerle Coignez, a native of Belgium, whom I am pleased to introduce to you. In addition to representing her adopted country abroad with enthusiasm and finesse, Veerle works to improve global health as an expert consultant to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Our family diplomatic team includes as well our 17-year-old daughter, Elka, and 15-year-old son, Bram. I am exceptionally proud to introduce them to you as well.

My experience includes leading two U.S. missions overseas and advancing U.S. interests across Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. I am now serving for the second time as charge d'affaires in the Netherlands, after serving two periods as charge d'affaires in Azerbaijan. My background with the Slovak Republic and the rest of Central Europe includes more than two years as Director for Central and Eastern European Affairs on the National Security Council staff.

Less than a quarter century after the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, I am happy to report to you that the Slovak Republic has emerged as a trusted NATO ally and stalwart member of the transatlantic community. Located in the heart of Central Europe, a democratic and increasingly prosperous Slovakia serves as a powerful example and source of stability in this strategically important region.

The accession of Slovakia and six other Central and Eastern European countries to the NATO Alliance in 2004 strengthened our collective security. Slovak soldiers have participated in a variety of NATO operations, including in Iraq and in Afghanistan, where they remain today as part of the Resolute Support Mission.

Slovakia has also shown a strong willingness to invest in its defense capabilities, committing to ramp up defense spending from approximately 1 percent of GDP to 1.6 percent by 2020. Last year's decision to purchase nine U.S.-made Black Hawk

helicopters through the Foreign Military Sales program is tangible evidence of Slovak progress in this area. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to build upon this modernization momentum and support Slovakia's transition away from legacy military equipment to modern, NATO-interoperable systems needed to bolster their capacity to secure NATO's eastern flank.

Beyond its growing role within NATO, Slovakia has provided significant support to the people of Ukraine. By enabling reverse flows of natural gas to Ukraine starting in late 2014, Slovakia has helped Ukraine get through the winters and gain negotiating leverage with Russia over future gas supplies. Slovakia also continues to draw from its recent history to advise Ukraine on difficult, but needed reforms. If confirmed, I will seek even closer bilateral cooperation on issues affecting Ukraine, including maintaining unity on sanctions on Russia over its aggression in eastern Ukraine and attempted annexation of Crimea, providing support for Ukraine's choice to integrate with Europe, and opposing Russia's efforts to cut out Ukraine as a gas transit country.

One of the newer members of the EU and the Eurozone, Slovakia has one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. It is not surprising that our economic partnership also continues to grow, with some 140 American companies operating in Slovakia and trade between our two countries exceeding \$2.5 billion in 2015. While economic progress continues, Slovakia, like many former Warsaw Pact countries, continues to face the challenges of fighting corruption and institutionalizing rule of law. If confirmed, I will make promoting opportunities for U.S. business and improving Slovakia's investment climate one of my top priorities. This will include support for conclusion in 2016 of a deep and comprehensive trade agreement under the U.S.-EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

If confirmed, I will continue our long-standing support to the government of Slovakia on judicial reform, where notable progress has been made in recent years but where significant work remains to be done. We will also continue our vigorous dialogue on human rights and advocate for the rights of minorities, for greater inclusion of Roma, and for the human rights and dignity of all refugees and migrants, regardless of background.

People-to-people ties between our countries have strengthened with Slovakia's greater integration into the transatlantic community. If confirmed, I will look for new ways to expand and develop exchange programs that build on ties first created by the waves of Slovak immigrants who came to the United States over a century ago and helped build our country's industry and culture. Slovak-Americans remain today a vital element in the U.S. relationship with Slovakia. I will, if confirmed, pursue a strong partnership with that community.

We have several agencies represented at Embassy Bratislava. Besides the Department of State, there is the Department of Defense and the Department of Commerce, with others like the Department of Homeland Security making frequent visits from neighboring Vienna. If confirmed, I will manage the Embassy as an efficient, effective and secure operation driven by a commitment to advance America's interests.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, Slovakia shares our basic democratic values, as well as our long-term goal of a Europe whole, free and at peace. If given the opportunity, I will do my utmost to further strengthen and leverage our shared aims. I would welcome you to Bratislava to see first-hand our talented Embassy staff, who work tirelessly in pursuit of American interests. I thank you again for your willingness to consider my nomination and would welcome your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Once again, I want to thank all three of our nominees for being willing to come forward.

And to your families who are here, and those who could not make it here, we thank you. As I said earlier, we know it is a shared sacrifice and we very much appreciate that.

Chairman Corker was called to another meeting where he had to vote. The Banking Committee is having a vote on an important position in Treasury dealing with international finance, so that is the reason why he is not here.

As we explained earlier, the seven nominees that are before us today have all been well-vetted from the point of view of their background and their previous commitments to public service. There will be questions asked for the record.

We have a minute or two. Let me, if I might, Uruguay has certainly been one of the leaders in our hemisphere working with President Obama to advance human rights issues, meeting with President Obama, with the Cuban activists. It seems to me there is great promise in that country to see stronger leadership in advancing the good governance in our own hemisphere.

I would be interested in your views as to how we can build on that bilateral relationship to help so many countries in our hemisphere that have significant problems with corruption and good governance.

So let me give you a chance, if I might, to respond, in regards to your thoughts there.

Ms. KEIDERLING-FRANZ. Certainly, thank you, Senator Cardin. It is very true that Uruguay itself has a long tradition of good governance and respect for human rights, and for building its own society that is more equal.

It has for a very long time asked American administrations to improve the relations between the U.S. and Cuba, so you will not be surprised when it welcomed, of course, the opening of embassies in the two countries.

This is an opportunity I think for us together with Uruguay now to use its strong and credible voice when it comes to issues of democratic governance and respect for human rights to make the push now in Cuba and in places like Venezuela to speak out for those who need their human rights respected in those countries and elsewhere, where the equal treatment of people is not as we would all hope it to be.

If confirmed, I would hope to work with Uruguay to make the case for improved democratic governance and respect for human rights, just like Uruguay has at home, as we try to be ourselves across the hemisphere.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. We look forward to working with you on that.

Mr. Sterling, in Slovakia, obviously a close ally of the United States, one of our military allies, a lot of things to be celebrant about. However, they are not where they should be on fighting corruption. They have had serious challenges. Maybe expect more from our allies, to show by example.

How do you see our mission working with the government to advance better standards to deal with governance issues?

Mr. STERLING. Senator Cardin, corruption is, indeed, a serious problem in Slovakia, as it is in many other countries in the region. The United States has been working with Slovakia since it achieved independence in 1993 to build institutions that are well-rooted in the rule of law.

The United States role, as I see it, is twofold. One, it is advocacy for good governance, for promoting the message that governance matters, both to underlie our bilateral relations and the place of Slovakia within the European Union and NATO. And second of all, we give technical assistance in a number of areas. For example, last year, we provided legal assistance to help promulgate a new judicial ethics code. We are now working with prosecutors through expert assistance in promulgating a new prosecution ethics code.

All of these are steps in the right direction. But of course, the ultimate proof of success is how they are implemented. We will follow up to make sure that these new standards are met.

Senator CARDIN. There are certainly institutional changes that have to be made. But you are correct. It is whether there really is a commitment to change some of the longstanding problems, and that takes political leadership. But support from the United States can make that more of a reality, so we will be looking forward to your assessment as to what we can do to strengthen that encouragement and our bilateral relationship.

Mr. Sobel, IMF is a critically important tool for international stability, for international development. If it does not put a priority on good governance, you can put all of the economic resources into a country and it will be wasted. So how are you going to exercise leadership to make sure that the principles of integrity and anticorruption go into the policies at IMF?

Mr. SOBEL. Thank you for the question, Senator. It is a good question. I fully agree with the thrust of your remarks.

The IMF has a macroeconomic and economic reform mandate. Economic reforms can provide a critical foundation for combating corruption.

I remember early in my career, I worked on the Soviet Union when it collapsed. We found there were all types of price controls. That meant that goods were siphoned off to a black market. There were poor privatizations where, shall we say, business people basically took resources away from the people and state.

So I think that there is much that can be done. There is much that can be done in terms of liberalizing prices. There is much that can be done in terms of avoiding export quotas and like that result in rent-seeking behavior.

The fund has emphasized issues such as corporate governance. There is a prominent case now where Madam Lagarde recently spoke about the need to tackle anticorruption far more forcefully in Ukraine, which is a critical program, and was putting elements on the table, such as disclosure by officials of assets, improving corporate governance in state-owned enterprises, looking at privatization, strengthening the prosecutor general's office and the anticorruption agency.

So I think that there is much that the fund can do in this realm to help combat corruption and strengthen governance. I promise you I will work actively to promote those objectives.

Senator CARDIN. I thank you. It is critically important we use all of our opportunities, particularly on countries that are struggling.

Ukraine has incredible challenges, and Russia is the culprit for its instability today. There is no question about that. It is continued interference in the territorial integrity and its intimidations of its political system is pretty clear. But if Ukraine cannot get its governance in order, it is not going to be able to make it.

IMF can play a role, as can the other tools that we have available in our international and bilateral diplomacy toolbox that need to be postponed deployed. So I thank you very much for your response.

As we said earlier, we expect there will be questions for the record that will be asked to each of you. We ask that you would

respond to those questions as promptly as possible so that we can try to take action on these nominations as quickly as possible.

With that, we will keep the record open until close of business on Monday for the purposes of questions to be asked.

Senator CARDIN. With that, the hearing stands adjourned. Again, thank you all very much.

[Whereupon, at 11:48 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF CHRISTINE ELDER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE ELDER'S RESPONSE
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CARDIN

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. A theme throughout my career has been working with countries in transition, whether from communism or civil war. Democracy, rule of law, and human rights are central to the stability and growth of any civil society, and strengthening all three has been at the heart of my 25 year career. While the challenges and opportunities are unique in each country, human rights and democracy are always at the center of U.S. values and how we engage with governments and civil society overseas.

One formative example early in my State Department career was when I worked with the University of Dayton to create a lane for civil society engagement after the 1995 signing of the eponymous Peace Accords. Supporting the efforts of the University-led consortium with high-level, official U.S. participation led to several reunion summits in Dayton where Balkan leaders took stock of progress. The impact of this joint effort was that lasting ties were created between Balkan and Ohio communities in business, education, culture, health, and local governance, which substantially strengthened the political agreement and persist to this day.

Another example of my work in this area comes from when I served as Charge d'Affaires in Maputo, Mozambique. During street riots where excessive and deadly force was used by law enforcement to quell unrest, as Charge d'Affaires I immediately engaged the Foreign Minister to call for restraint, transparency, and public and diplomatic communication. I also worked with my diplomatic counterparts to strengthen and coordinate our response. The result was a clear understanding that the eyes of the world were upon the government, that they owed their citizens better, and they would be judged by their response.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Liberia? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Liberia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. While the government of Liberia generally respects the human rights of its citizens, the country is still confronting serious human rights challenges, including lengthy pre-trial detentions, a weak judiciary, official corruption and impunity, widespread gender-based violence, and continued use of child labor in rubber-producing areas of the country. There are also some reports of discrimination against those on the margins of society based on religious belief or cultural practice. For example, victims of human rights abuses, Ebola survivors, LGBTI individuals, and persons with disabilities all face stigma or some form of harassment in Liberia, such as discrimination against the LGBTI community. In addressing these issues, I would—if confirmed—help Liberia continue to overcome the legacy of 14 years of civil war, work closely with the Liberians to push forward the post-war peace and reconciliation process which has been stalled since the civil war, rebuild its civil society organizations and government institutions central to the protection of human rights, and achieve social and political reconciliation.

I would continue to ensure the U.S. government, through its words and deeds, encourages the protection and promotion of human rights in Liberia. Currently, our programming in Liberia is wide-ranging and collaborative. U.S. Embassy Monrovia is working alongside the Government of Liberia as well as local and international

nongovernmental organizations to improve access to justice, reduce discrimination, fight corruption, and provide victims of human rights abuses with the necessary resources to fully recover.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Liberia in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?

Answer. A lack of government resources, impunity, and corruption pose significant hurdles in strengthening rule of law. Although there is the political will in the Government of Liberia to tackle the human rights issues previously mentioned, government funding for its own human rights institutions, such as the Independent National Commission on Human Rights or the National Commission on Disabilities, is insufficient. This lack of adequate funding will, unfortunately, continue to be a problem since the prospects of Liberia's economy in the short-term are limited and high levels of government corruption persist. Impunity for abuses of authority, including for corrupt practices and for incidents in the security forces, also contributed to lack of accountability and weak rule of law.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I would work alongside our many international partners to encourage the Government of Liberia to fight corruption at all levels, which should have the added benefit of making more efficient use of scarce government funds for other important priorities such as strengthening the public institutions critical in the protection of human rights.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Liberia? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I would meet with a wide range of human rights, civil society, and non-governmental organizations, both in the United States and in Liberia, that work to promote respect for human rights.

As Ambassador, I would make certain the Embassy continues to follow the robust Leahy vetting process to ensure that U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce respect for human rights. In our ongoing security assistance and security cooperation dialogue with the Liberian government, the Embassy consistently emphasizes that this assistance is contingent upon the government, senior officers of the Liberian National Police (LNP) and Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and individuals within the security organizations continuing to uphold applicable human rights standards. The government of Liberia is well aware that we are serious about ensuring security assistance and cooperation activities reinforce human rights, and has periodically asked the Embassy whether individuals under consideration for senior leadership positions in the security sector would be acceptable under Leahy guidelines, or whether their presence would pose an obstacle to cooperation because of Leahy. That kind of early and consistent dialogue has been fruitful. As Ambassador, I would continue to ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation reinforce human rights.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Liberia to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Liberia?

Answer. The Embassy team has excellent relationships with all levels of the Government of Liberia that enable us to deliver hard messages when warranted, including in the case of a political prisoner. Liberia has a lively, free press demonstrated by sometimes strong criticisms of the president, her family, and the government. We have seen some cases in which the person levelling that criticism has been arrested for breaking a law. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would engage with the Government of Liberia at an appropriate level to highlight the potential impact of any heavy-handed government response. I would advocate for speedy consideration of court cases or pursuit of alternative dispute resolution measures. In addition, I would engage with civil society and the press to underscore our support for, and advocacy of, the exercise of freedom of expression. As Ambassador, I would maintain and strengthen the relationships we have at all levels with the Government of Liberia that enable us to have what are sometimes difficult conversations.

Question. Will you engage with Liberia on matters of human rights, civil rights and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador, human rights, good governance, and civil society would be central components of my efforts in Liberia. For example, as Ambassador, I would press for the Government of Liberia to fully implement its Second

National Action Plan as a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). As a global forum where governments work closely with civil society, OGP is a natural fit for Liberian officials to develop specific, practical commitments to improve transparency and good governance. If confirmed, I would ensure the U.S. Embassy continues to monitor and promote respect for human rights and support Liberia's own efforts to foster a vibrant, democratic civil society.

Question. Ms. Elder, if confirmed, you will be going to Liberia at a particularly pivotal time. The United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia is scheduled to drawdown its presence after 13 years. Liberia is just now beginning to recover from the devastating effects of Ebola, and is slated to have general elections next year in which longtime President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is not eligible to run.

What, if confirmed, will be your major priorities in a nation that stands at such a critical crossroad?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador, beyond serving and protecting American citizens, my top policy priorities would be to promote a secure, stable Liberia with enhanced rule of law, foster broad-based economic development, and stabilize the country's human development situation. These priorities will help address the issues raised by UNMIL's drawdown, recovery from Ebola, and a pending presidential election.

The U.S. Embassy's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) programs seek to build government capacity to manage its civilian security responsibilities professionally while maintaining security throughout the country. They also work to strengthen the rule of law by building effective justice sector institutions that follow democratic norms to improve citizens' access to reliable and impartial justice and peaceful dispute resolution. USAID's Access to Justice Activity specifically works to improve overall access in counties outside of Monrovia. If confirmed, I intend to continue these programs and ensure that the improved security and stability in Liberia over the last decade continues throughout UNMIL's transition in 2016, and the 2017 presidential elections. Liberia's high levels of poverty and food insecurity will also not decline without sustainable, inclusive economic growth. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage USAID programs to strengthen health infrastructure, and build Liberia's capacity to prepare and respond to potential future threats. I will also support programming that focuses on preventing and raising awareness of other deadly diseases, such as malaria, as well as improving the availability of a qualified healthcare workforce.

Question. Given the instability that elections can precipitate in fragile and recovering countries are you concerned about the full scale drawdown of the U.N. Mission this year?

Answer. Maintaining security and stability through the 2017 presidential election is an important goal of the United States.

After several years of phased drawdowns, the U.N. peacekeeping mission plans to hand over day-to-day security responsibility to Liberian security services by June 30 of this year. UNMIL will reduce its strength from 3,590 to 1,240 military and its authorized police strength from 1,515 to 606 police personnel. UNMIL residual forces will remain at least until the U.N. Security Council's planned review by December 15, 2016, of Liberia's capacity to ensure security and stability based on conditions on the ground at that time. Only then will a decision be made on the possible withdrawal of UNMIL and the transition to a future United Nations presence. In the most recent elections, in December 2014, UNMIL provided some logistical support to the Elections Commission, while Liberia's civilian security agencies maintained order.

As UNMIL draws down and prepares for a potential transition, the United States is continuing bilateral efforts to promote the Government of Liberia's capability to assume full security responsibility, particularly in the lead-up to the upcoming 2017 presidential elections. We have bilateral police advisors who focus on developing senior Liberia National Police (LNP) leadership to take ownership of training, operations, and logistical support as well as the specialized units of the LNP, which handle civil unrest and emergency response.

If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Embassy team and international partners to closely monitor Liberia's security capacity, especially its ability to maintain security for the elections, and to make appropriate recommendations to ensure that the 2017 elections are unmarred by security issues.

Question. What steps will you take, if confirmed, to help ensure that elections are peaceful, credible and reflect the will of the Liberian people?

Answer. The 2017 general elections will be a critical juncture for Liberia's fragile post-war democracy. It offers the first full, post-war political transition in Liberia,

the first time one president constitutionally turns over to another president since 1944. Our partnership with Liberia encourages this continued progress in democratic governance to help Liberia fully turn the page on its long history of suffering. If confirmed, I will continue our programming on the ground to provide comprehensive support to the Liberian National Elections Commission (NEC), civil society organizations, and media outlets in promoting a participatory and fair democratic governance environment in the run-up to the 2017 elections.

We also support the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) via the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Our support has promoted public input into the on-going constitutional reform process, such as the National Constitutional Conference held in 2015, which brought together delegates from all sectors of Liberian society to provide input and to debate potential constitutional referendum provisions. As Ambassador, if confirmed, I will also personally engage Liberian political leaders, the NEC, civil society and the media in an effort to ensure a fair, transparent, and peaceful election. I will also ensure that after this election, our assistance to strengthen democratic institutions continues apace.

Question. Corruption is a persistent problem in Liberia. Despite leadership, commitment and actions at the highest levels of government to rooting it out, it remains endemic, including in the security sector. According to Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer, police are viewed as the most corrupt institution in the country; 75 percent or more of surveyed Liberian citizens reported paying a bribe to police.

If confirmed, how will you engage the Liberian government on issues of corruption? Do you have adequate funding to help build and support anti-corruption efforts?

Answer. The fight against corruption in Liberia has taken major steps forward in the past years. The United States and other donors are helping the Liberian judicial system build its capacity to prosecute cases of corruption, and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has, on several occasions, taken a public stand against corruption. If confirmed, I would continue U.S. government programs to support the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and associated Government of Liberia entities in their efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict perpetrators of corruption-related crimes while also supporting LACC's mandate to educate the public regarding the fight against corruption. The U.S. Embassy's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) section has a comprehensive law enforcement program that is building institutional capacity by mentoring senior Liberian National Police and Liberian Drug Enforcement Agency officials, training specialized units like the Emergency Response Unit and Police Support Unit, and helping the police to put in place appropriate financial management systems and manage their logistics assets.

INL will continue to incorporate anti-corruption efforts within its law enforcement and justice sector programming as well as explore new opportunities to partner more closely with civil society to counter corruption. Liberia has also joined the United States in the U.S.-Africa Partnership on Illicit Finance, launched during the 2014 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit; if confirmed as Ambassador, I would work with Liberia to realize this partnership's full potential to help Liberia stem illicit finance from corruption and other illegal activities so that Liberia becomes a more attractive investment destination.

Question. What role is there for the United States in helping address police corruption specifically?

Answer. Reforming the Liberian justice system and addressing police corruption are U.S. priorities. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' (INL) programs are building government capacity to manage its civilian security responsibilities professionally while maintaining security throughout the country. They also work to strengthen the rule of law by building effective justice sector institutions that follow democratic norms to improve citizens' access to reliable and impartial justice and peaceful dispute resolution.

Our bilateral police program specifically helps develop senior Liberian National Police (LNP) leadership at multiple levels, so they can take ownership over LNP training, operations, and logistical support. U.S. assistance also focuses on broad reform of the police, the criminal justice sector, and the corrections system, while providing complementary and immediate efforts to bolster basic skills and professionalism capacities through training and equipment. These efforts include a bilateral Senior Police Advisor partnering with the LNP's Professional Standards Division, which is responsible for investigating complaints against police officers. A Police Finance Advisor is also helping the police put in place appropriate financial

management systems and controls to improve accountability and transparency. Additional INL programming includes a Logistics Advisor helping the police to improve management of its logistics assets.

Question. UN Security Council Resolution 2116 calls for UNMIL to strengthen the Liberia National Police's capabilities to manage existing personnel, and improve training programs to expedite the LNP's readiness to assume security responsibilities.

Are any of the U.N.'s activities aimed at countering police corruption? What will you do as Ambassador to see that the training addresses this?

Answer. The U.N. has a robust police mentoring, training, and advisory program, which includes efforts to counter corruption and strengthen professionalization. After June 30, 2016, the U.N. still plans to have 606 police officers working closely with the Government of Liberia on these efforts. Over the past year, the United States has shifted its focus from seconding police officers to the U.N. mission to bilateral police support efforts, while continuing close coordination with the U.N. police component of UNMIL. The U.S. Embassy is expanding current anti-corruption efforts with police training and mentoring as well as exploring new opportunities to partner more closely with civil society to counter corruption. As Ambassador, if confirmed, I pledge to continue the current practice of combining diplomatic pressure with technical programmatic assistance. I would also continue the dialogue with the U.N. on the centrality of anti-corruption efforts within the international community's efforts to reform and support the Liberian National Police.

Question. Liberia is a Tier Two trafficking country according to the most recent TIP report. There seems to be a discrepancy between the steps the government has been willing to take for trafficking of Liberians beyond borders and what they will do to address the problem internally. The report indicates that while penalties for the sex and labor trafficking of children are appropriate, that the penalties for sex and labor trafficking of adults are neither sufficiently stringent, nor commensurate with those prescribed for other serious offenses, such as rape.

What more should the United States do to help Liberia address trafficking in persons domestically?

Answer. We commend the government for its work in facilitating the repatriation of and providing care for 16 Liberian women subjected to forced labor in Lebanon last year. However, the Government of Liberia should do more to address trafficking within its borders, particularly from rural to urban areas. Internal trafficking is more prevalent than transnational trafficking, with the majority of victims of internal trafficking being children. If confirmed, I will encourage the government to ramp up efforts to identify and investigate internal trafficking cases and hold perpetrators to account. Additionally, I will also encourage the government to increase its funding and resources to the Women and Children Protection Section, which had the lead in investigating such crimes. Finally, I will encourage the government to implement its five-year Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan, launched in March 2014, but which remains only partially implemented.

It is also important that Liberia's Trafficking in Persons Task Force, convened by the Minister of Labor, meets regularly and receives sufficient funding; it remains without an operating budget. The U.S. government and the international donor community continue to provide training to Liberian law enforcement on trafficking and support for the protection of victims through shelter care and other means; however, the Liberian government should take greater ownership in building the capacity of its officials to better identify, investigate, and prosecute trafficking cases, as well as increase efforts to provide enhanced protection and services for victims.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to working with Liberian authorities to see that legal penalties for trafficking are appropriate?

Answer. The 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report states that the prescribed penalties for sex and labor trafficking of adults are neither sufficiently stringent nor commensurate with those prescribed for other serious offenses, such as rape. If confirmed, I will encourage the government to prescribe increased penalties for the sex and labor trafficking of adults. I will work to ensure the Government of Liberia works to meet this minimum standard of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, among other minimum standards.

RESPONSES OF R. DAVID HARDIN, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

ADMINISTRATOR-DESIGNATE HARDIN'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CORKER

Question. Since 2010, the USAID Food for Peace office has been relying more and more on International Disaster Assistance funds to provide emergency food in interventions that are critical to U.S. national security. Last year, Food for Peace spent almost a billion dollars from "IDA" on food, representing almost half of total funds spent for emergency food assistance. For example, without IDA, we would not be feeding displaced Syrians since U.S. commodities from the Farm Bill simply cannot reach them. If confirmed, do you agree to work with me and my colleagues to see the Food for Peace program fully reformed to meet today's challenges?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and your colleagues to ensure that we are able to maximize Food for Peace (FFP) program resources for greatest impact and effectiveness around the globe. The world is facing unprecedented levels of humanitarian need, with approximately 60 million people displaced by conflict—the largest amount ever recorded. USAID needs to be flexible, adaptive, and creative to meet the demands presented by the growing complexity and number of humanitarian crises.

USAID carefully evaluates each specific country context to determine which tool to use based on market and security conditions, nutritional impacts, timeliness, etc. Resources provided through the International Disaster Account (IDA) account have been absolutely critical to USAID's food assistance response in numerous countries, including the response in Syria and neighboring refugee-hosting countries where the United States is the largest donor of food assistance thanks to these funds. I also understand that there are times, such as right now in Ethiopia, which is currently suffering from food shortages due to the impacts of El Nino, where in-kind assistance may be the most appropriate response.

I believe that the flexibility provided through IDA, along with the important but modest changes to the Title II program in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (or the "Farm Bill"), have enabled USAID to make important progress in improving the efficiency and flexibility of its Food for Peace development and humanitarian programs. If confirmed, I will build on our past progress and continue to work towards achieving additional flexibility in emergency food assistance as outlined in the administration's FY 2017 Budget Request. I am committed to ensuring that USAID has the most appropriate tool for each circumstance and can best meet the needs of vulnerable populations around the globe.

ADMINISTRATOR-DESIGNATE HARDIN'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CARDIN

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Over nearly two decades, I have led efforts to promote democracy, human rights and good governance in some of the most fragile states in Central and South Asia and the Middle East. I have advised garment workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh; I've met with victims of sex trafficking in Mumbai, India; and I have negotiated with the government of Nepal on how to reduce its trafficking risks. In Central Asia, I have stood face-to-face with local police and Ministry of Interior officials who were seeking to close down our civil society partners in Almaty, Kazakhstan and in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. I have overseen election observation efforts in Bangladesh, Iraq and the West Bank.

For the past decade I have led democracy, human rights, and governance programs in Iraq, Libya and the West Bank—implementing programming with rigorous oversight. We have seen particular success in anti-corruption efforts in health financing in the West Bank and expanded access to justice for women and children in Iraq.

I've also overseen nearly people-to-people activities under reconciliation grants between Israelis and Palestinians for over a decade. My most searing experiences have been negotiating protection space for victims of war in Iraq, Libya, West Bank and Gaza, and Israel.

For nearly two decades, I have advocated for central components of our humanitarian assistance, development and foreign policy goals and, most importantly, our fundamental values as Americans and fought to change conditions on the ground in direct support of democracy, human rights, and good governance.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues today? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in your work at USAID? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. The most pressing human rights issue is closing political space in many countries—what Freedom House refers to as the “democratic recession.” Over the last several years, the crackdown on civil society and political parties, the passage of restrictive NGO and media laws, and the restrictions on foreign funding of democracy and human rights groups pose the greatest threat to the advancement of human rights globally.

If confirmed, I would take several important steps to elevate further USAID’s leadership in addressing this phenomenon. We would improve data collection and analysis, expand the reach of programs to those who are historically excluded, and closely engage public and private sector partners as well as diaspora communities in these efforts. If confirmed, I would also advance USAID leadership on President Obama’s Stand with Civil Society Initiative and lend my voice to ongoing efforts to elevate human rights as part of our broader mission.

First, I would work to enhance USAID’s ability to anticipate the threat of closing space so that the Agency can respond earlier. If confirmed, I’d like to do more to combine external analysis and data with our own field resources and analysis to identify emerging threats and then rapidly mobilize diplomatic and programmatic responses in order to reverse or impede crackdowns and restrictive legislation.

Second, I would support expanding the reach of our programs to those historically excluded from the political system, especially youth, indigenous communities, the rural poor and women. Not only do these citizens have the most to gain from inclusion, they represent new constituencies that can be mobilized for broad impact. For example, USAID has a robust gender inclusion approach, enshrined in our program design and strategic planning process, which has resulted in innovative approaches to empowerment of women across development sectors.

Third, there is an opportunity to seek the support of the private sector, diaspora communities and philanthropists for expanding political space. USAID is promoting the use of technology for migrants and watchdog NGOs to report on unjust labor practices within global supply chains in partnership with private sector innovators.

Finally, if confirmed, I would prioritize using social media to communicate our values and reach out to meet people, especially youth, where they spend time, where they get their news, and where they form their opinions. We have seen the incredible influence social media platforms wield, and in order to effectively promote human rights and democracy in today’s world, we must have a presence in that space.

If confirmed, I hope to lend my voice to the ongoing effort to elevate human rights as part of our broader development mission. This includes bringing greater focus to our efforts to end human slavery, to counter the threat of atrocities and crimes against humanity, and to help societies achieve all of the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?

Answer. A significant obstacle to addressing the increasing number of countries with closing spaces is our limited ability to fundamentally alter the dynamics driving closing space trends. Much broader issues impact this disturbing trend, such as nationalism, counterterrorism policies, questioning of Western power model, and clashes between economic interests and civic activism. Amidst these larger factors, USAID is supporting a number of programs that support, defend, and sustain civil society amid a rising tide of global restrictions, including programs such as Legal Enabling Environment Program, Civil Society Innovation Initiative, The Information Safety and Capacity project, Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index.

Budget constraints, particularly in the Democracy, Rights and Governance (DRG) sector, pose additional challenges. For example, in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) manages the Human Rights Grants Program (HRGP), which provides Missions with resources to respond to urgent or unforeseen challenges. Over the past five years, the HRGP has provided approximately \$10 mil-

lion annually to USAID Missions to address urgent human rights challenges. This past year, we received requests that totaled more than \$40 million, demonstrating both an increase in demand for human rights programs and a lack of core democracy, human rights, and governance funding for human rights in the majority of Missions. If confirmed, I would commit to expanding such creative funding mechanisms, which have rewarded innovative successes in a competitive environment.

USAID has prioritized human rights as a fundamental underpinning of our development approach across sectors. USAID's Mission Statement emphasizes promoting "resilient, democratic societies," which entails promoting free, peaceful, and self-reliant societies with effective and legitimate governments. Human rights such as the freedom of life, liberty and security of the person, freedom of movement, freedom from discrimination, and the right to participate in free elections are fundamental to the vision described in the Agency's Mission Statement. Helping states to respect, protect and fulfill their obligations will remain a key priority for me, if confirmed as Assistant Administrator. I will also ensure we continue to integrate human rights in our work by promoting civil and political rights in our programming, and countering discriminatory practices that hinder countries' development.

If confirmed, I will work to better evaluate the impact of our efforts to improve human rights and democracy. I look forward to sharing the best practices of our evaluation work.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs abroad?

Answer. You have my personal commitment that, if confirmed, I will engage regularly with civil society and other non-governmental organizations at home and abroad.

Our engagement with civil society is critical for a number of reasons. First, these groups are an invaluable source of information and ideas, possessing extensive networks and varied resources that advance our common cause to protect human rights and promote democratic governance. Second, we must demonstrate our shared commitment to getting those under threat the support and protection they need. Civil society groups are on the front lines of delivering development assistance in dangerous contexts and are constantly identifying new solutions to development challenges. Third, engagement with our stakeholders improves the quality of USAID programs and our policies because as a result of our engagement, policies better reflect the reality of those on the front lines.

As part of President Obama's Stand with Civil Society agenda, USAID works in partnership with other governments, the philanthropic community, and multilateral institutions, and will continue to focus on three lines of effort:

- ◆ modeling positive engagement between governments and civil society and creating a supportive environment for civil society;
- ◆ developing new assistance tools and programs, including the civil society "hubs" that the President announced last year; and
- ◆ coordinating bilateral and multilateral diplomatic pressure to push back against restrictions on civil society.

If confirmed, I am committed to the core elements of the Stand with Civil Society agenda, including the commitment to consult with civil society as a matter of course.

Question. Will you engage on matters of human rights, civil rights and governance as part of your bilateral diplomacy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to engage on these issues in my position as Assistant Administrator. It is my experience that USAID programs are most effective when our development assistance is closely aligned with our diplomatic efforts.

Under the President's Stand with Civil Society Agenda, the U.S. government leverages both development assistance and diplomatic engagement to push back against the most restrictive political environments. For example, in Cambodia, our support for civil society has resulted in an expansion of citizen activism and media attention on key land and environmental issues, and increased the accountability of the National Assembly through more public hearings.

If confirmed, I will take every opportunity to support, echo, and enhance key diplomatic messages that respect human rights (including civil and political rights) and democratic governance.

Question. As you know, 2015 was a year of unprecedented humanitarian need. In 2015 we saw an increasing number of refugees fleeing places like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo. Prolonged violent conflict has resulted in ongoing humani-

tarian needs in Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen. And this year we have also had to respond to natural disasters in Nepal, Burma, and Micronesia. My understanding is that The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance responded to an astounding 49 crises in 45 countries.

- ◆ Do you think this is a brief period of unprecedented humanitarian need, which will ebb, or is this degree of widespread humanitarian need the new global norm?
- ◆ How should humanitarian needs be prioritized by DCHA when they exceed the resources available?
- ◆ To what degree are emergency response plans shaped by lessons learned and by data on aid effectiveness? Do you believe the current approach is adequate and sustainable?

Answer. While I cannot state conclusively whether the world is experiencing a new norm for humanitarian assistance given all the variables that cause and prolong conflicts, it is clear that the current global humanitarian needs will persist in the years to come. Today's conflicts are extraordinarily complex in nature, and it will take years before normal government services and development programs can take root in some of the hardest hit areas of Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and many other locations in the throes of war. Humanitarians are being called on to deliver these essential, life-saving services; they will have to keep doing so until the situations allow other actors to start their work.

I believe we should prioritize assistance based fundamentally on need and on the basis of saving lives and alleviating human suffering. USAID funding supports the current and new humanitarian caseloads characterized by acute humanitarian needs and high numbers of vulnerable people. We prioritize our responses based on humanitarian need, which is especially critical when these needs exceed USAID's available humanitarian resources. In these instances-when USAID must prioritize responses because global funding from others is not filling the gap-funding may be reduced for some of our disaster risk reduction programs as well as responses to protracted caseloads in countries where USAID has responded for years and life-saving needs are being met. USAID also uses available data and tools to help inform prioritization of need, like the Famine Early Warning Network (FEWS NET) which is a critical tool in planning and prioritizing food security crisis.

The Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) is working diligently to address humanitarian needs globally, while also supporting efforts to shrink these needs-especially in natural-disaster-prone countries. The Agency's strategic outreach to other donors and our support for public-private partnerships helps USAID meet the first objective of expanding the funding base. Our preparedness, disaster risk reduction, and resilience work serves our second objective of shrinking needs.

As the lead federal coordinator for the US government's international disaster response, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) also constantly seeks opportunities to improve future disaster responses. The After Action Review (AAR) is one method by which DCHA/OFDA captures lessons and identifies recommended changes for institutional implementation. The AAR process starts with DCHA/OFDA gathering lessons from response staff and intra/interagency partners through interviews, surveys, and workshops. During this process, OFDA develops and validates various recommendations for future responses. Through a change control process, recommendations are then incorporated into DCHA/OFDA's disaster response systems, policies, and procedures. AARs have served as the impetus for the development of some of DCHA/OFDA's core systems, including the Disaster Assistance Response Team and Response Management Team structures, and USAID's Field Operations Guide. The AAR process continues to serve DCHA/OFDA's interests as a nimble and adaptive organization that continuously captures and applies real-time organizational learning.

Finally, humanitarian aid effectiveness is also a core area for DCHA as well as the wider international humanitarian system of the United Nations, international and national NGOs, and other donor governments. DCHA works closely with think tanks and organizations that seek to make humanitarian assistance more effective through data-driven studies across the sector, including with the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), Cash Learning Partnership (CALP), and FEWS NET. These types of engagements improve coherence across the broader system, enhance evidence-based decision-making for disaster responses, and allow for any necessary restructuring across the international humanitarian system. DCHA also leads donor engagement through ef-

forts like the Good Humanitarian Donorship group, which seeks to improve aid coherence among donors in order to also improve effectiveness.

Question. At a Syria donors conference in London in February, there appeared to be some shift in emphasis from immediate humanitarian needs to support for longer term needs such as education and job opportunities.

Please discuss the current and planned balance of U.S. humanitarian and development aid to Syria. In your view, at what point should the U.S. leadership on the Syria response shift from DCHA to other development-focused entities within USAID?

Answer. On February 4, 2016, world leaders from 45 countries pledged over \$11 billion in aid for Syrian refugees and host countries at the “Supporting Syria and the Region 2016” conference in London, including \$5.9 billion for 2016. Germany, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Norway, and the United Nations (UN) hosted the conference and advocated a new humanitarian approach that combined financial assistance to refugees with the economic development of host countries in an effort to help refugees find safe haven closer to home, and identify critical steps to ensure protection of civilians in Syria. Secretary Kerry announced the U.S. pledge of \$601 million for humanitarian assistance and more than \$290 million in education funding. The U.S. Government remains the largest single donor of humanitarian assistance to Syria and the region, having contributed over \$5.1 billion since the beginning of the crisis. At the conference, the participants acknowledged the urgency of the refugee crisis and discussed ways to ensure parties to the conflict abide by the U.N. Security Council Resolutions calling for protection of civilians and increasing humanitarian access in Syria.

The Syrian conflict continues to be the largest and most complex humanitarian emergency of our time, driving record levels of displacement. One in five people displaced globally is Syrian. An estimated 13.5 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance. According to the UN, the number of people in need of assistance in Syria has increased, as has the level of need in many categories. To address these needs, the U.N. has requested over \$9 billion in humanitarian assistance to Syria and the region in 2016, an increase over the U.N. 2015 request. The U.S. Government remains committed to responding to the urgent humanitarian needs of the Syrian people and communities hosting them. Given the current insecurity and severe humanitarian needs, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Office of Food for Peace continue to lead in responding to the Syria humanitarian crisis.

Separate from humanitarian assistance, USAID, through the Office of Transition Initiatives and the Middle East Bureau, is supporting moderate opposition communities to ensure they have a role to play in the future of Syria. This includes supporting livelihoods, public services, governance, and other activities to extend the relevance and visibility of moderates. To date, USAID has provided more than \$160 million in non-humanitarian assistance programming to Syria. This type of programming could assume a larger role as opportunities to support a transition emerge.

Question. Some analysts have suggested that the location of DRG within DCHA puts democracy programs at a disadvantage, because they must constantly compete with humanitarian emergencies for attention and resources.

- ◆ Do you think DCHA is the appropriate organization for democracy promotion?
- ◆ How would you prioritize democracy promotion activities in the context of programs aimed at stabilizing economies and ensuring access to food and basic services?

Answer. As I mentioned in my opening statement, the crises we face today are in large part a result of failed governance and undemocratic institutions. The placement of the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) ensures that USAID has a single bureau with all the critical capabilities required to respond to fragile and failing states—from first response and transition assistance to the long-term institutional reforms needed to rebuild societies emerging from conflict.

Through crisis coordination teams and other internal coordination mechanisms, we have been able to ensure that DCHA’s urgent and long-term democracy, human rights, and governance investments are coordinated to maximize impact. As humanitarian crises increasingly are driven by state fragility and conflict, we must integrate longer-term democracy and peacebuilding investments with our shorter-term humanitarian responses to lay the groundwork for quicker post-conflict recovery.

Studies by partners such as Mercy Corps have shown that community-level governance investments can support broader economic development and food security outcomes and enhance post-conflict recovery.

In complex emergencies, we prioritize humanitarian response, but we also find that peace-building and statebuilding are often underway even in moments of crisis. In terms of prioritizing democracy promotion in the context of fragile and failed states, the Agency was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States where these countries themselves identified five peacebuilding and state-building goals: (i) legitimate politics; (ii) economic foundations; (iii) justice; (iv) security; and (v) effective delivery of goods and services.

Question. Please discuss any lessons learned by DCHA in recent years with respect to democracy promotion, particularly regarding the opportunities created during the "Arab Spring."

- ◆ Are certain types of activities consistently more successful than others? Do the challenges of quantifying progress in democracy and good governance make it harder to promote these programs in a USAID environment increasingly focused on performance data?

Answer. DCHA has learned a number of lessons over the years with respect to democracy promotion, particularly with regard to the "Arab Spring."

- ◆ Chief among those lessons is the recognition that this is not a short-term effort or one without risks and trade-offs. USAID must maintain a long view in recognition that real, long-term stability will not come to the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region until there is significant democratic reform, including meaningful participation and inclusion for all citizens.
- ◆ It is critical that we invest in supporting democratic actors and the voices of those with an interest in peaceful transitions and productive reform. That means supporting women and youth, who collectively make up 80 percent of the population in many MENA countries.
- ◆ Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring, is considered its primary success story. USAID's early, critical support for constituent assembly elections paved the way for an elected government. We have also begun to see progress in private sector development, which has generated youth employment.
- ◆ In other countries, democratic gains have proved elusive, as transitions from authoritarian rule have given way to volatility and unrest, and in some cases civil war. These outcomes have necessitated that USAID adjust programs to focus on shorter-term outcomes such as conflict mitigation and stabilization.
- ◆ We need to also bear in mind the limits of USG programs and influence to sustain transformational democratic change in a society. Even with the support of all the world's leading democratic nations and the international community—real and lasting democratic change needs to take root from within. USAID can nurture those opportunities, but the drivers must be indigenous.

Some democracy promotion activities that have proven to be more successful include:

- ◆ Empowering local level/municipal governance structures to improve service delivery, while being more transparent and accessible to their constituents.
- ◆ Strengthening civil society, as it often fills an important space in terms of local governance and service delivery when central power structures are collapsing or weak, particularly in conflict-affected areas.
- ◆ In prioritizing activities, USAID has found that it is most effective to focus efforts on two or three core challenges, rather than attempting to address all issues individually as they arise. The Agency also cultivates and leverages partnerships with governments, civil society, the private sector, and other international donors, where possible.

Quantifying results

- ◆ USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) has formulated a comprehensive Learning Agenda that applies a strategic approach to evidence-based research in priority areas. To implement the agenda, the DRG Center has strengthened the capacity of officers in headquarters and the field to engage in more rigorous learning. The Center has trained hundreds of USAID staff and partners as well as hosted three state-of-the-art Learning Clinics that incorporate training sessions alongside real-time evaluation design.
- ◆ While there are nuances to quantifying democracy and good governance, we have demonstrated that effective measurement and evaluation can be conducted

in the DRG field. In total, the DRG Center has provided technical assistance for 22 performance evaluations, five high-quality public opinion surveys to inform project design, 13 research grants to advance knowledge in key areas, and 26 impact evaluations completed, underway or in design. These impact evaluations range in scope from assessing to what extent different civic education approaches increase student knowledge and participation, to assessing how increased information on parliamentary performance affects legislative output and voter behavior.

- ◆ Within this agenda, USAID intends to organize and disseminate existing or new evidence, and produce conclusions and recommendations through academic research, program evaluations, and multi-method tests of the assumptions and theories of change that guide DRG programming.
- ◆ We believe that progress in both quantitative and qualitative evaluations in the DRG sector supports rather than impedes effective, evidence-based programming.

Question. The administration's FY 2017 budget requests \$2.72 billion to be allocated to democracy and governance assistance, an 18% increase over FY2016, but does not specify which programs or accounts should be expanded.

- ◆ If Congress funds an increase, where do you believe the additional funds would be best spent within the democracy and governance portfolio?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to work with my colleagues in the regional bureaus and the Agency's budget team to take a closer look at bilateral programs based on where assistance is in greatest need, where it can be most effective, and where it best serves our foreign policy. The President's FY 2017 budget request proposes increased funding across all Governing Justly and Democratically program areas, with the biggest increases going to programs that strengthen civil society and improve good governance.

The FY 2017 request broadly supports three U.S. Government policy goals: addressing democratic backsliding and closing political spaces by promoting government accountability, citizen participation, and protecting fundamental human rights; supporting democratic political transitions where U.S. foreign assistance can make an impact; and sustaining our overall aid investments in countries that are making progress.

In terms of allocation within or between DRG programs in a given country, this would be driven by the local context, including an analysis of host country priorities, capacity and political will, programming from other donors, and U.S. foreign policy priorities. In some cases, regional or cross-border programs may be considered as a more effective approach if a problem is transnational in nature.

Question. Last week USAID deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to lead the U.S. Government response to the drought in Ethiopia, which includes the provision of emergency food assistance, drought resistant seeds to plant new crops, safe drinking water, and nutrition treatments. But USAID's Feed the Future program has been in Ethiopia for years working on long term agricultural production and nutrition projects.

- ◆ Please discuss the balance between our immediate emergency food aid needs with our activities to foster long term agricultural development. Do you think we have struck the right balance between the two?
- ◆ As you know, investing in long-term stability ultimately reduces the need for emergency food aid. If we forget about the balance between the two for a moment—do you think we are channeling sufficient resources towards the development side?

Answer. Ethiopia is experiencing an extraordinary drought—the worst drought in fifty years. Triggered by El Nino, the drought follows successive poor rainy seasons and the scale and severity now exceeds many people's ability to cope. Many of the areas affected by this drought are densely populated and not chronically affected by drought in average years. Conditions are expected to worsen in the summer months. An estimated 10.2 million people are in need of relief food assistance—a number that is expected to increase. Another 8 million people are chronically food insecure.

USAID is working to help address urgent needs, sustain the development progress made, and reduce the risk of undermining longer-term food security gains through a combination of joint humanitarian and development action. In the immediate term, USAID is acting quickly, decisively and at-scale through an integrated response to help mitigate the humanitarian, development and economic impact of the drought and speed recovery once drought conditions subside. In the medium-to-long

term, staying the course means sustaining our resilience and development investments in Ethiopia to continue to help accelerate the country's upward development trajectory and further enhance the ability of people, households, communities and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recovery from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth³-USAID's definition of resilience.

The U.S. Government began responding early to the impacts of the drought in mid-2015 through modifying existing development programs and through rapid response programs that were standing at the ready when early warnings, including the USAID-supported Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), projected worsening food security and water situations. When the outlook indicated increased food insecurity, USAID/Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) began shipping more than 28,000 metric tons of relief food assistance to Ethiopia valued at nearly \$24 million between July and September 2015. Since October 2015, USAID/FFP provided nearly 447,000 metric tons of relief food assistance in Ethiopia, valued at over \$267 million, more than double the tonnage provided during all of last fiscal year.

At the same time, USAID is working with partners to prepare for the upcoming rains and summer planting season, which typically feeds 85 percent of Ethiopia's population. By getting seeds into the hands of more than 1.7 million farmers, USAID is helping them plant before the rains fall, in hopes of alleviating some of the food needs in the future. The USAID seed intervention is an integrated response between the humanitarian and development offices that provides emergency seed needs in close coordination with the long-term agriculture development programs.

The balance between emergency assistance and long-term agricultural development is complex, but USAID is making progress toward improving the population's resilience. The development and resilience gains in Ethiopia have saved and sustained lives in a cost-effective manner. The difference between this drought and severe droughts of the past—such as the 1984 drought—is the development investments. Despite drought conditions being worse than 1984, and high population growth, the loss of life is drastically lower. With support from USAID, Ethiopia has worked to build safety nets for their people, invested in agricultural development, and enhanced their resilience to recurrent droughts. This progress is helping Ethiopia respond to emergency needs and protect lives and livelihoods, while safeguarding against the loss of critical development gains from routine shocks. Some shocks overwhelm even the most advanced emergency response and safety net systems, and Ethiopia's current drought is such an example.

Programs under Feed the Future (FtF), the U.S. Government's global food security and hunger initiative, have laid a strong resilience foundation for areas chronically affected by drought, in part by utilizing a multi-sectoral approach through climate smart agriculture, livestock production, and natural resource management. FtF programs in Ethiopia are helping farmers by promoting "best agricultural practices" that sustainably increase agricultural and livestock productivity as well as farmer incomes. FtF has introduced high producing crop varieties that respond better to droughts, flooding, and other stresses; extended improved crop, soil, and water management practices; promoted energy-efficient agricultural technologies; and advocated for innovative practices and policies so that smallholder farmers can cope with adverse conditions.

FtF investments in livelihoods have integrated USAID/FFP-supported development food assistance and agricultural productivity activities. For example, USAID/FFP supports the Government of Ethiopia-led Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), which annually addresses the basic food needs of 5-8 million chronically food insecure people through the seasonal transfer of food and cash resources in exchange for work on natural resource management projects, like terracing and irrigation systems, that generate economic benefit to the community as a whole. The PSNP has lifted 1.5 million people out of poverty, reduced the annual household food gap, improved the land productivity, and helped people protect their assets during times of stress. In the drought-affected highlands, USAID/FFP's investment in the PSNP is complemented by FtF investments in the Graduation for Resilience to Achieve Sustained Development (GRAD) program aimed at assisting poor, rural households currently enrolled in the PSNP to achieve self-sufficiency and 'graduate' from food assistance. The GRAD program has successfully helped around 200,000 people graduate to date and increased annual incomes among GRAD beneficiaries by approximately \$330.

USAID must continue to strengthen the population's ability to cope through long-term FtF investments. While the current drought may result in temporary setbacks, Ethiopia has experienced robust, agriculture-led growth over the past decade. This is exemplified by the 10.3 percent GDP growth rate in 2014. Ethiopia also achieved a 33 percent decline in poverty between 2000 and 2011. FtF is helping to accelerate

this progress in partnership with the Government of Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program and Growth and Transformation Plan.

This progress is matched by steady improvements in health, nutrition and human capital supported and accelerated by FUF and USAID's Global Health initiatives. The prevalence of chronic malnutrition (stunting) was reduced from 57 percent to 44 percent over the last decade and the under-five mortality more than halved from 146 to 68 per 1,000 live births during the same period. As capacity is built, USAID remains committed to respond to extraordinary events—like the current El Nino-induced drought—to save lives, reduce suffering and to mitigate the economic and social impacts of disaster.

The climatic irregularities in East Africa are increasing in frequency and our development and resilience investments are making a substantial difference. However, effectively responding to these new environmental realities will require sustained development investments over time, focused on enhancing the growing population's ability to cope.

Question. The United States is the largest donor of food assistance.

◆ Please discuss the role of other donors and the challenges of burden sharing, particularly any efforts to include emerging donor contributions.

Answer. The United States has a proud 60-year history of providing hope and help to over three billion people across the globe. Currently, the world is facing unprecedented levels of humanitarian need, with approximately 60 million people displaced by conflict—the largest amount ever recorded. International humanitarian organizations are in dire need of increased support from as many donors as possible. If confirmed, I plan to continue USAID efforts to coordinate with other donors on large-scale responses to ensure interventions are appropriate, targeted, and well supported.

Over the past five years, in addition to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the European Commission and Germany were significant donors to the U.N. World Food Program (WFP), the largest multilateral humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. It is my understanding that in February, Germany provided an unprecedented contribution of over \$600 million to WFP's emergency operation in Syria—the largest single contribution in WFP's history. Prior to this the United States had contributed more than all other donors combined to this effort and so greatly welcomed this increased support from Germany. Emerging donors such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have also increasingly stepped up their efforts, with Saudi Arabia providing over \$500 million to WFP in 2014 to respond to food insecurity among conflict-affected populations in Iraq.

In light of the number of emergencies currently being faced by the international community, including the current challenges associated with El Nino, burden sharing must be a priority in order to ensure we are meeting the needs of our world's most vulnerable populations. The United States cannot meet global humanitarian needs alone. If confirmed, I look forward to actively engaging both traditional and non-traditional donors to increase their contributions in order to collectively contribute to effective global humanitarian response efforts.

Question. What is your sense of how well the different offices within DCHA are coordinated? Please explain how they coordinate their activities.

Answer. The Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) systematically coordinates its nine offices within the bureau, other USAID bureaus, and the interagency. For efforts that require significant coordination across the bureau (but do not require an agency-wide task force), DCHA has created crisis coordination teams to manage its effectiveness. These teams are called Crisis and (Political) Opening Action Coordination Teams (COACTs). COACTs help eliminate duplication of efforts, achieve efficient use of resources and ensure strong coordination among DCHA offices and programs—in responding to and addressing crises and political openings. COACTs are established for specific crisis or political openings, such as in advance of the recent elections in Burma or the outbreak of conflict in the Central African Republic.

COACTs integrate DCHA's work with regional and other pillar bureaus by including other bureau personnel on the teams. COACT advisors ensure that Bureau and Agency leadership are briefed regularly on fast moving developments and are equipped to strategically guide resource allocation, programming, and policy decisions. COACTs also ensure effective coordination and information exchange with the National Security Council, Department of State, Department of Defense, relevant embassies, and other agencies.

The COACT does not supersede the authorities of Missions, Response Management Teams, Disaster Assistance Response Teams or offices as outlined in USAID agency policies.

Question. USAID's Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) is an important component of our foreign assistance and international diplomacy efforts. As you noted in your testimony, ASHA supports medical and educational facilities that "provide world-class services and promote American ideas and values." In FY15, ASHA awarded 38 grants totaling \$23 million to US institutions operating in 25 different countries. Awards ranged from \$173,000 to \$1.2 million and targeted institutions in Africa, Asia, Latin and Central America, the Middle East and North Africa and Europe and Eurasia. The President's FY17 budget requests \$5 million for ASHA. This represents a nearly 81 percent decrease from the FY16 enacted level of \$26 million and a 78 percent decrease from the FY15 enacted level of \$23 million.

- ◆ How do you view ASHA's role within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance?
- ◆ With a proposed 81 percent decrease in funding, please discuss how ASHA will continue to promote American ideas and values in a meaningful way.
- ◆ How would ASHA prioritize projects and regions with such limited resources? Would ASHA be able to maintain its geographical diversity?
- ◆ ASHA's investments have enabled us to sustain long-term public-private partnerships dedicated to advancing U.S. values abroad. What impact would a reduced budget have on ASHA's ability to protect and sustain past investments?

Answer. USAID/ASHA is an integral part of the Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) Bureau portfolio and complements the Agency's humanitarian, transition and resilience work. USAID/ASHA supports educational and medical institutions that expand access to quality education and health services and have educated successive generations of global citizens and leaders, deepening their understanding of American ideas and practices. The program is strategically positioned to ensure stability in uncertain times; promote American ideas and values in meaningful ways by providing critically needed advanced medical and trauma care; deliver American style education to the most marginalized populations; and ensure talented young people have a constructive track to realize their future aspirations.

In my current capacity as the Mission Director in the West Bank and Gaza, I have witnessed first-hand the valuable impact of ASHA funding to both the Israelis and Palestinians. This funding and our relationship to partner institutions make us a stronger, better and more efficient Mission. Additionally, these institutions reflect American values and serve as drivers of stability, security, and prosperity in the region.

The funding included in the FY 2017 request, combined with the significant resources appropriated in FY 2016, will help to meet the goals of the USAID/ASHA program. The funding request reflects difficult tradeoffs in this constrained fiscal environment, but will allow USAID/ASHA to continue to contribute to U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives by fostering strong civil society institutions and excellence in higher education and innovation.

USAID/ASHA partners are legitimate, self-sustaining local organizations with historic linkages to the United States. Projects are chosen through a competitive grant process on the basis of program design, potential for impact, and technical merit. This criteria enables the Agency to strategically select ASHA partners in a fiscally constrained budget environment. ASHA does not select projects based on geographical region and does not anticipate a change in funding criteria that would impact geographic diversity.

Over the course of 60 years, USAID/ASHA has awarded nearly \$1 billion to 300 institutions in 80 countries. Although the loss of USAID/ASHA grant funds may impact institutions that use ASHA grants for capital inputs to expand and improve programs, these organizations are not dependent on ASHA funding for continued operations.

RESPONSES OF ELIZABETH RICHARD, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE
LEBANESE REPUBLIC, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE RICHARD'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CARDIN

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Promoting human rights around the world has been an important part of all of my assignments over my 30-year career in the Foreign Service. As Deputy to the Ambassador for War Crimes Issues, I helped oversee our worldwide efforts to hold war criminals accountable for their actions. In setting up the Special Court for Sierra Leone, in improving the functioning of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and in advancing U.S. support for justice in Darfur, I was part of a team dedicated to the protection of human rights. As the director of counter-narcotics, civilian police training and rule of law programs in Afghanistan, I ensured that all our efforts underscored that peace and stability could only come through democratic governance and the protection of every citizen's basic human rights. And in Yemen, at the start of the Arab Spring, the determined efforts of our entire U.S. Embassy team helped to peacefully end the autocratic reign of Ali Abdullah Saleh, support new elections, and ensure that the ensuing National Dialogue Conference included representatives of all constituencies: women, youth, and minorities. While the country has tragically slipped into armed conflict, a precedent for democratic governance that gives voice to all segments of the population has been set.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Lebanon? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Lebanon? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. The most pressing human rights issues in Lebanon include upholding the rights of refugees, improving prison conditions, preserving space for civil society to be active, preserving religious freedoms in areas threatened by extremist groups such as ISIL, enhancing anti-trafficking efforts, raising the profile of domestic abuse (particularly against women) as a human rights issue, and preserving the right of organized labor to advocate for wages and better occupational health and safety standards. If confirmed, I will make the promotion of human rights in Lebanon one of my highest priorities. U.S. leadership on this important issue is key to advancing nearly every aspect of our bilateral relationship, including the fight against ISIL and other extremist groups. If confirmed, I will work closely with key Lebanese leaders, including the heads of the main security services and ministers with oversight responsibilities, in order to highlight alleged human rights abuses and press for prompt and transparent government investigations. The State Department's annual Human Rights Report regularly garners press attention in Lebanon and is studied carefully by NGOs and other groups working on human rights issues in Lebanon and remains one of our most effective tools in highlighting human rights issues around the world.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Lebanon in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?

Answer. The lack of a fully functioning government in Beirut is one of the biggest obstacles, if not the biggest obstacle, to pressing forward on our human rights agenda in Lebanon. This means key legislation on issues ranging from trafficking to domestic abuse cannot be passed promptly into law. The influence of Hizballah in Lebanon, a terrorist organization, is another major obstacle to promoting human rights in every area of Lebanon. If confirmed, promoting human rights throughout Lebanon will be one of my highest priorities.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Lebanon? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing my predecessors' tradition of meeting with human rights advocates, civil society and other non-governmental or-

ganizations in the United States and with human rights NGOs in Lebanon. Lebanon is home to a large community of very active NGOs devoted to human rights issues. Our Embassy in Beirut constantly engages with local NGO leaders to learn about alleged human rights abuses and hear their views on how the United States can be even more effective in promoting our human rights agenda in Lebanon. If confirmed, I will continue our strong compliance with the Leahy Law, including maintaining robust vetting procedures.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Lebanon to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Lebanon?

Answer. If confirmed, I will actively engage with Lebanese leaders on cases involving political prisoners and/or other unjustly detained people.

Question. Will you engage with Lebanon on matters of human rights, civil rights and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make promoting human and civil rights and governance one of my highest priorities. In addition to promoting human rights for its own sake, encouraging Lebanon to uphold its commitments on human rights underpins nearly every pillar of our bilateral relationship, from working with the Lebanese Armed Forces to combating ISIL and other extremist groups to providing assistance to Syrian refugees and the Lebanese communities that host them.

Question. What are the issues at play preventing Lebanese politicians from agreeing on a President or holding elections? As Ambassador, how will you work with the Lebanese officials to address these issues and end the deadlock?

Answer. We share your concern that Lebanon has been without a president for nearly two years. Lebanese parties that are blocking the formation of a parliamentary quorum are undercutting Lebanon's stability and democratic practices, and must be held to account. The country deserves a functioning government that can meet the needs of the people. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Lebanese Parliament to convene and hold a vote on the President, in accordance with Lebanon's constitution and National Pact.

Question. What are the greatest needs facing Syrian refugees in Lebanon now and what Lebanese institutions are facing the greatest strain from the influx of refugees? As Ambassador, how will you work with the Lebanese government and NGO community to coordinate assistance in a way that best serves both Syrian refugees and the Lebanese communities that are hosting them?

Answer. Lebanon hosts more than one million registered Syrian refugees, making it the country with the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world. In addition, there may be up to another 500,000 non-registered Syrians, along with large pre-existing Palestinian and Iraqi refugee populations.

The influx of refugees has presented severe challenges to Lebanon's already weak public infrastructure and services, including overcrowded schools, dilapidated water and wastewater systems, and limited health clinics. Refugees live in Lebanese communities across the country, the majority in rented or previously unoccupied accommodations, including sheds, garages and other substandard housing. As the number of refugees has grown, social tensions—especially in host communities—have also increased. Politicians across the political spectrum have voiced concerns about the destabilizing effects and the economic cost of hosting such a large number of refugees.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will advocate for continued U.S. support for the urgent needs of refugees and the communities that host them. Thanks to the generous support of Congress, we are providing U.S. humanitarian assistance through U.N. agencies and NGOs for urgently needed food, shelter, water, health care, education, and protection for refugees. If confirmed, I will continue addressing the extraordinary needs in Lebanese communities by working on private sector job creation, education, and water and wastewater services.

We encourage the Lebanese government to follow through on its commitments to expand legal residency for Syrian refugees and allow access to education and work opportunities for both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese, with the support of international donors. These commitments were announced at the February 4 London "Supporting Syria and the Region" Conference. Expanding education and work opportunities to refugees is also a central goal of the President's Summit on Refugees that he will host on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly in September.

Question. How will you work with both the administration and the Lebanese government to ensure that both the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces have the tools they need to protect Lebanon?

Answer. Our Embassy in Beirut meets regularly with LAF and ISF partners to assess and address their foreign assistance needs. Our support for the Lebanese military is critical to combatting ISIL and other extremists that threaten the region, and U.S. interests in the region. It is also a key institution of Lebanese statehood and essential to extending the Lebanese state's authority throughout the country's territory. The Lebanese people, across sectarian lines and in numerous polls, regard the Lebanese Armed Forces as the one of the most credible and effective institutions of the state and want it to assume full responsibility for protection of the state. We must also continue our efforts to prepare Lebanon's national police, the Internal Security Forces (ISF), to fulfill their mandate to help build safe, secure communities and extend the rule of law to each of them. Without a strong ISF and LAF, Lebanon's existence as an independent and democratic state will be jeopardized, increasing the risk of instability in Lebanon and the region. That is a risk we cannot afford to take.

In supporting the ISF, the State Department considers all training and equipment requests through the lens of U.S. Department of State policies, priorities, funding levels, and the ISF's needs. The State Department has been responsive to ISF needs, while encouraging sustainable programming. We work closely with the ISF and other international donors to support the ISF's strategic planning process, as well as to provide training to the ISF and other Government of Lebanon partners on long-term planning, end use monitoring, internal inspections, and assessments so the ISF can both marshal its own resources and maximize foreign assistance.

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE RICHARD'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR PERDUE

Question. Please briefly describe your vision for taking on a new role as the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon.

Answer. The Middle East is undergoing a period of unprecedented instability. The roots of this instability are deep and systemic: weak political legitimacy, ineffective institutions, fragile economies, and religious sectarianism. This volatile landscape poses serious threats to U.S. national security and to the security and stability of our friends and allies in the region. If confirmed, my role as ambassador will be to lead our embassy's team to advance U.S. interests in Lebanon. Functioning democratic government, strong institutions, including security institutions, and an economic and business environment that is tied to the global economy are all required for Lebanon's stability and success. If confirmed, I will work to improve Lebanon's position in these core areas.

Additionally, the safety and security all Americans in Lebanon, as well as our Locally Employed Staff, is my highest priority. I will draw from insights I have gained during 30 years in the Foreign Service, including service in some of our most challenging posts overseas. If confirmed, I intend to outline clear objectives, actively seek out alternate points of view, and ensure my team has the right resources to accomplish the mission.

Question. How do you feel your past experience, as well as your current position as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs have prepared you to take on this new role?

Answer. I have had the privilege of serving our country in some of our most challenging posts overseas, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Over the course of my 30 years in the Foreign Service, I have gained valuable insights into how much the world wants and needs U.S. leadership. Throughout my career in government, I have adopted a "whole of mission" approach. Advancing U.S. interests overseas means benefiting from the talents, resources, and insights of all U.S. government agencies operating overseas. In my current role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State responsible for coordinating U.S. assistance to the Middle East, I oversee a team of 105 people and a budget of several billions of dollars in aid to the region. I have worked intensively over the past three years to ensure that U.S. priorities are well thought out and clearly enunciated, and that our foreign assistance resources are properly aligned against those priorities. My current job has given me experience bringing together multiple agencies and bureaus to accomplish shared U.S. objectives across the Middle East.

Question. Since legislators have pushed back an already overdue parliamentary election to 2017, what prospects do you see for the resolution of the presidential vacuum in the coming year?

Answer. We share your concern that Lebanon has been without a president for nearly two years. Lebanon deserves a functioning government that can meet the needs of the people. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Lebanese Parliament to convene and hold a vote on the President, in accordance with Lebanon's constitution and National Pact. Lebanese parties that are blocking the formation of a parliamentary quorum are undercutting Lebanon's stability and democratic practices, and must be held to account.

Question. Municipal elections are coming up in May of 2016. Do you anticipate that these elections will cause local political unrest? If so, what do you recommend Lebanon do to mitigate any outbreaks of violence? What, if anything, is the U.S. doing to assist Lebanon in this task?

Answer. Our Charge d'Affaires in Beirut, Ambassador Richard Jones, met with Lebanese Interior Minister Machnouk on January 29, 2016, to discuss security for the municipal elections, among other important issues. Along with our partners in the international community, we have publicly called on Lebanese leaders to hold municipal elections on schedule. The municipal elections are an important part of Lebanese democracy.

Question. If confirmed, what role do you intend to play in facilitating dialogue and promoting reconciliation among Lebanese factions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will build on my predecessors' work to promote dialogue among the range of Lebanese leaders and with civil society. The United States must stand firmly behind the voices of moderation who share our vision for a Lebanon that is sovereign, independent, free from foreign entanglements, and prosperous.

Question. How do you view Hezbollah's political role in Lebanon at present? Its security role? In your opinion, has the Syrian intervention weakened or strengthened Hezbollah? In what ways?

Answer. Hezbollah is a terrorist organization with a single, unified chain of command. We do not distinguish between the group's so-called military and social/political wings. Supporting Lebanon's legitimate state institutions—as well as the voices of moderation that share our interest in a sovereign, independent, and free Lebanon—is the best way to counter Hezbollah's influence.

On the security front, Hezbollah has continued to build up its arms cache in Lebanon with help from Iran, a flagrant violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 and other international commitments. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 calls upon Lebanon to disarm Lebanon's militias—a goal we support through our training and equipping of the Lebanese military as the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon. We are focused on promoting Lebanon's stability and sovereignty by building up legitimate state institutions and countering extremism. Our support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces supports the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701. Working closely with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon, the Lebanese military has helped contain tensions along the "Blue Line" with Israel.

Hezbollah's intervention in Syria to prop up the Assad regime has weakened the organization in some ways, while strengthening it in others. Since entering the Syria conflict, Hezbollah has expended substantial resources (both financial and human resources) in support of Assad's brutal war against his own people, which is in violation of the Lebanese consensus of dissociation from foreign conflicts enshrined in the 2012 Baabda Declaration. While Hezbollah fighters have gained battlefield skills, we see evidence this intervention has had a negative impact on the group's standing among its supporters in Lebanon who have suffered tremendous human losses on behalf of Hezbollah and its foreign backers.

Hezbollah has exploited the threat posed by ISIL, Nusra, and other extremist organizations to Lebanon to falsely justify its intervention in Syria. Such justifications represent a deliberate distortion of Hezbollah's involvement in a foreign war against the will of the Lebanese people. Lebanon wants to implement a policy of dissociation from the Syrian conflict, but Hezbollah has engaged in the opposite. And its actions, along with those of the Assad regime itself, continue to fuel the growth of violent extremism in Syria and have drawn extremist, terrorist threats to Lebanon. Hezbollah's intervention undermines Lebanon's stability. The United States has frequently publicly called out Hezbollah for its violation of the Lebanese consensus of dissociation from foreign conflicts. In September 2015, then-Counselor of the State

Department Thomas Shannon highlighted Hizballah's intervention in Syria at the International Support Group for Lebanon ministerial-level meeting on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

Question. The Lebanese government publically opposes support of Bashar al Assad. Yet, Hezbollah has intervened on his behalf. What is your assessment of the influence Hezbollah exercises over the Lebanese government? Does it rise to the level of "undue" influence? What more can the government do to counteract Hezbollah's direct contravention of the Lebanese government's public policy? Can the U.S. help the Lebanese government on this front? If so, how?

Answer. Hizballah has a minority stake in the current Lebanese government. Only 2 of 24 Cabinet Ministers are Hizballah members (the Minister of Industry and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs—neither of which are major posts). In the National Assembly Hizballah controls only 12 of 128 seats and is the fourth largest party. Hizballah's influence in the government does not rise to the level of undue influence. A (Sunni) prime minister and a variety of other parties represented in the current Cabinet and Parliament prevent Hizballah from having undue influence. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage Lebanese leaders to speak out against Hizballah's intervention in Syria to prop up the Assad regime.

Question. President Obama signed into law the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015 on December 18, 2015. How do you see this legislation affect Lebanon's economy and financial sector? How might it place new pressure on Hezbollah's finances?

Answer. We are disrupting Hizballah's terrorist capabilities by targeting the group's global financial support infrastructure. Our target is Hizballah—not Lebanon or the Lebanese people. The administration strongly supported the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015 (HIFPA). The Congress has given the administration a valuable tool to help dismantle Hizballah's global financial network.

We do not hesitate to use our authority under HIFPA and other sanctions measures to target financial institutions knowingly facilitating significant transactions or engaged in money-laundering activities on behalf of Hizballah. The State Department and Treasury are constantly looking for solid evidence of such activity. Treasury and State have consistently used our authorities to expose and target Hizballah's financial, commercial, and terrorist activities around the world.

The threat of secondary sanctions for those who knowingly facilitate transactions for Hizballah could lead financial institutions and others to distance themselves from Hizballah. While Hizballah does not maintain accounts in its name, supporters and financiers do manage money on behalf of the organization. We have, and will continue to go after such financiers, and the signing of the bill into law and the subsequent reporting requirements could shine a spotlight on Hizballah, their supporters and financiers, and ties to illicit activities.

Question. What have been the practical effects of the withdrawal of Saudi financial support for Lebanon's security forces? What additional costs does this withdrawal create for the United States? How likely is it that Iran will step in to replace this financial support?

Answer. We are currently reviewing the impact of the suspension of the Saudi funds to the Lebanese security forces to identify gaps in current procurement programs, including light attack aircraft (A-29 aircraft, Cessna). Additionally, we are reviewing how to mitigate the impact on programs the Lebanese Armed Forces had planned for and that we agree are priorities, such as close air support helicopters and protected mobility capabilities.

We believe the Lebanese Armed Forces deserves the continued support of the international community. We cannot leave the field open to Hizballah and its patrons. Assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces and the other legitimate state institutions is essential to help diminish the role of Hizballah and its foreign patrons. Our assistance to the Lebanese military also makes a real difference on the ground against ISIL and other extremists.

So far, we have not seen any immediate effects of the Saudi government's announcement on February 19 of a suspension of security assistance to Lebanon. The Saudi announcement will impact future support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, particularly in procurement of U.S. and French equipment. Our assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces will continue. The Lebanese government has in the past rejected Iranian offers to supplant the Saudi role and support the Lebanese Armed Forces and we have little reason to believe this will change.

Question. What are the prospects for Saudi-Iranian rivalry and animosity to destabilize Lebanon in the near term? What actions or steps might trigger a more confrontational approach by actors inside Lebanon? What, if anything, is the U.S. doing to counteract any confrontations? In your opinion, what should the U.S. be doing?

Answer. Lebanon has preserved its stability in the midst of tremendous instability in the region, but we are fully aware that sectarian tensions could flare up with little warning. The Lebanese consensus position of dissociation from foreign conflict enshrined in the 2012 Baabda Declaration has in some ways tamped down sectarian rhetoric in Lebanon.

Regional tensions have certainly had an impact on Lebanon. The Iranian Cultural Center in Beirut was bombed in February 2014, killing at least five and wounding more than 100 people. There have been reports of threats to the Saudi Embassy in Beirut as well. In addition, the November 2015 execution of Shia dissident cleric Nimr-al Nimr by Saudi Arabia caused heightened tensions between Lebanese Sunnis and Shia and some protests at the Saudi Embassy in Beirut. The United States continues to encourage moderation and dialogue between all Lebanese factions. We also continue to support the cross-confessional Lebanese Armed Forces in its efforts to maintain security in the country.

Question. How stable is the security balance along the Lebanon-Israel border? What effect have Russian military operations in Syria had on Israel's ability to secure its northern border?

Answer. Hizballah's ongoing military presence in southern Lebanon presents a serious threat to the Lebanon-Israel border region, as evidenced by Hizballah's attack on an Israel convoy in January 2016. To help protect Israel against this threat, the United States has invested \$3 billion in the Iron Dome system and other missile defense programs and systems for Israel. Iron Dome batteries and interceptors have saved an untold number of Israeli lives, particularly during the Gaza conflict in 2014. In FY 2016 Israel will receive an additional \$487 million in missile defense support, including \$55 million for Iron Dome. After successful joint tests of David's Sling and Arrow 3 in December 2015, in FY 2016 the United States will fund co-production of these systems for the first time—further deepening our missile defense cooperation with Israel to protect against threats such as Hizballah's rocket and missile arsenal.

Our support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces supports the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1880, and 1701. Working closely with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Lebanese Armed Forces' performance in southern Lebanon has helped contain tensions along the Blue Line with Israel. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 calls upon Lebanon to disarm Lebanon's militias—a goal we support through our training and equipping of the Lebanese military as the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon.

We note reports that Israeli officials want to coordinate with Russia regarding the situation in Syria. Like Israel, we do not want to see Hizballah strengthened by its intervention in Syria, or by Russia's actions in Syria.

Question. Please briefly describe the challenges associated with Lebanon's growing refugee population. How do you intend to engage with the refugee population inside Lebanon if confirmed? What outcomes and policies does the administration wish to see the Lebanese government adopt with regard to Syrians present in Lebanon?

Answer. Lebanon hosts more than one million registered Syrian refugees, making it the country with the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world. In addition, there may be up to another 500,000 non-registered Syrians, along with large pre-existing Palestinian and Iraqi refugee populations.

The influx of refugees has presented severe challenges to Lebanon's already weak public infrastructure and services, including overcrowded schools, dilapidated water and wastewater systems, and limited health clinics. Refugees live in Lebanese communities across the country, the majority in rented or previously unoccupied accommodations, including sheds, garages and other substandard housing. As the number of refugees has grown, social tensions—especially in host communities—have also increased. Politicians across the political spectrum have voiced concerns about the destabilizing effects and the economic cost of hosting such a large number of refugees.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will advocate for continued U.S. support for the urgent needs of refugees and the communities that host them. Thanks to the generous support of Congress, we are providing U.S. humanitarian assistance through U.N. agencies and NGOs for urgently needed food, shelter, water, health care, education,

and protection for refugees. If confirmed, I will continue addressing the extraordinary needs in Lebanese communities by working on private sector job creation, education, and water and wastewater services.

We encourage the Lebanese government to follow through on its commitments to expand legal residency for Syrian refugees and allow access to education and work opportunities for both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese, with the support of international donors. These commitments were announced at the February 4 London "Supporting Syria and the Region" Conference. Expanding education and work opportunities to refugees is also a central goal of the President's Summit on Refugees that he will host on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly in September.

Question. Lebanon is a tier 2 country according to the U.S. Department of State's 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, meaning Lebanon is a "source and destination country for women and children subjected to labor and sex trafficking. . . ." How do you plan to work with the Lebanese government to combat this issue? How has the overarching political paralysis in the country affected the implementation of anti-trafficking efforts or legislative initiatives to extend worker protections?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my strong priorities will be to build on our current efforts and improve the Lebanese government's performance on anti-trafficking measures. Lebanon is both a source and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Lebanon is also a transit country for Eastern European women and children subjected to sex trafficking in other Middle Eastern countries. The Syrian crisis has compounded the challenge, as Syrian refugees are at risk of sex trafficking and forced labor.

Our Embassy in Beirut continues to work with and raise TIP awareness among prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement officials. We have made some progress on this front, but more needs to be done. We have raised the importance of combating TIP as a top U.S. foreign policy priority at the highest levels of the Lebanese government. Unfortunately, Lebanon's ongoing political paralysis prevents the passage of crucial legislative measures to combat TIP, including a National Action Plan and the National Strategy for Combating Trafficking.

If confirmed, I will work to increase our collaboration and programs with the government and NGOs to identify, refer, and protect trafficking victims as well as to improve investigation techniques and victim protection mechanisms among the judiciary, law enforcement officials, and armed forces. We must also continue U.S. efforts to push the government to enact needed legislation, including the National Action Plan and the National Strategy to Combat Trafficking.

Question. In your opinion, does U.S. foreign assistance to Lebanon accurately reflect U.S. priorities in the region? Should the U.S. be providing more military aid? More humanitarian aid?

Answer. U.S. assistance to Lebanon reflects our priorities in the region, including working to counter ISIL and responding to the refugee crisis, both of which are also critical priorities for the Lebanese. For example, with Congress's continued support, the United States is the single largest donor to the Syrian refugee crisis. Given Lebanon's status as the country with the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, the United States has provided nearly \$1.1 billion to support the Syrian refugee response in Lebanon since the start of the crisis. In addition to our humanitarian support, we provide significant bilateral economic assistance that advances our partnership with the Lebanese people and also bolsters communities that are hosting refugees through investments in basic and higher education, water infrastructure, and programs that provide economic opportunity. This support has totaled nearly \$400 million since FY 2011. Our robust security assistance allows us to partner with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces which are critical to achieving our policy objectives. Since FY 2011, the United States has provided nearly \$450 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Lebanon, while Lebanon has also benefited from additional military assistance from the Department of Defense. Recognizing that there are critical needs in Lebanon that continue to grow, the administration has requested an increase in both economic and security assistance for FY 2017.

RESPONSES OF STEPHEN MICHAEL SCHWARTZ, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEEAMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SCHWARTZ'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CORKER

Question. For questions 4-7, please augment with: An accounting of the payments to nations per soldier of a U.N. peacekeeper contributing to a PKO mission and any associated table if there are varying circumstances or valuations in such payments. An accounting of U.S. assistance going to each of the AMISOM troop contributing countries at present and in FY2015 in support of their deployments. A list of U.S. security assistance to these same countries apart from that associated with their AMISOM deployments.

Answer. With regard to payments to U.N. peacekeepers, by resolution 68/218, the U.N. General Assembly decided to establish a single rate of reimbursement to countries contributing contingent personnel to United Nations field operations in the amount of \$1,332 per person per month as from July 1, 2014, increasing to \$1,365 per person per month as from July 1, 2016, and increasing to \$1,410 per person per month as from July 1, 2017, in addition to service premiums (e.g., risk and enabling premiums). It should be noted that all AMISOM troop stipends are currently paid on a voluntary basis by the EU through their Africa Peace Facility, and not the U.N.

Attachment 1 provides an accounting of all voluntary assistance provided to AMISOM troop contributing countries (TCCs) in FY 2015 and to date in FY 2016.

Attachment 2 provides an accounting of all military assistance provided to the same TCCs outside of their assistance for AMISOM during the same time period.

[The material referred to above follows:]

FY 2015 and FY 2016 Assistance to AMISOM Troop Contingents (PKO and 2282)

	Uganda Only	Burundi Only	Djibouti	Kenya	Ethiopia	Uganda and Burundi**	Multinational/ Force HQ Training and Support	None***	Total
FY 2016 2282/CTPF****	\$79,340,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$106,290,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$185,630,000.00
FY 2016 GPOI	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
FY 2015 Somalia OCO	\$11,119,682.00	\$1,650,000.00	\$1,136,184.80	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$15,434,461.75	\$0.00	\$1,357,392.86	\$30,697,721.41
FY 2015 GPOI	\$2,029,244.00	\$0.00	\$500,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,214,393.00	\$0.00	\$3,743,637.00
FY 2015 2282/CTPF	\$21,618,000.00	\$0.00	\$9,089,000.00	\$76,770,000.00	\$23,067,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$130,544,000.00
Total since FY 2011	\$114,106,926.00	\$1,650,000.00	\$10,725,184.80	\$183,060,000.00	\$23,067,000.00	\$15,434,461.75	\$1,214,393.00	\$1,357,392.86	\$350,615,358.41

*Equipment originally procured for Sierra Leone has been transferred to Kenyan troops operating in its former sector.

**Includes advisors working on the ground in Mogadishu and surrounding environs with both UPDF and FDN contingents, as well as resupply flight contract costs servicing the Mogadishu-based contingents.

***Program Management and Oversight costs (Somalia, Nairobi, and DC), as well as State Acquisition Office Surcharges.

****Uganda program notified and approved, Kenya program notified, but not yet approved.

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**FY 2015 and FY 2016
Non-AMISOM Military Assistance**

FY 2015 Actuals

	Burundi	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Kenya	Uganda
FY 2015 FMF	\$0	\$710	\$700	\$1,810	\$450
FY 2015 IMET	\$411	\$398	\$559	\$747	\$603
FY 2015 PKO*	\$475	\$350	\$18,261	\$240	\$0
<i>SGI</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$240	\$0
<i>PREACT</i>	\$0	\$0	\$2,066	\$0	\$0
<i>GPOI</i>	\$0	\$0	\$1,195	\$0	\$0
<i>APRRP</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>AMEP</i>	\$475	\$350	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>APRRP PKO**</i>	\$0	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$0
FY 2015 GSCF (APRRP)**	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$33,292
Totals	\$886	\$1,458	\$19,520	\$2,797	\$34,345

*PKO figures exclude all AMISOM-related figures noted in the other chart - Somalia PKO and GPOI PKO

**Does not include multiple-country program management/shipping funds

All figures in thousands

FY 2016 Request

	Burundi	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Kenya	Uganda
FY 2016 FMF	\$0	\$700	\$700	\$1,000	\$200
FY 2016 IMET	\$425	\$400	\$570	\$800	\$520
FY 2016 PKO	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

All figures in thousands

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SCHWARTZ'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CARDIN

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. The promotion of human rights and democracy has been a fundamental and prominent part of my career. I was responsible for human rights on my first tour in Ethiopia, and worked aggressively to understand the situation and advocated for important cases and causes, among them the justification for and the

treatment of political prisoners, independence of the labor federation, and an inclusive electoral process. These interventions demonstrated to the Ethiopian public and government that the United States cared about and would speak out about human rights cases.

As the sole desk officer for Sudan from 1996-1998, I incorporated growing concerns about religious freedom and slavery into the mainstream of our policy on Sudan. In Cuba from 1999-2001, I confronted an authoritarian government by developing a wide range of Cuban contacts. A trip to a provincial city revealed hitherto obscure civil society organizations, which provided the United States with new insights into Cuban society as well as vehicles to support civil society.

I have been very involved in reporting on and promoting United States support for credible and peaceful elections in many countries but the two most recent, in Zambia in 2011 and Nigeria in 2015, were the most consequential. Opposition candidates won both elections, empowering the public and holding leaders accountable. In both cases, the winning and losing candidates publicly credited the United States for leveling the playing field to make the race fair and competitive. In Zambia, I directed the Embassy's interagency team, liaised with the leadership of the National Democratic Institute, met regularly with the electoral commissioner, and ensured regular high quality reporting on the electoral process. On Nigeria, as office director, I coordinated the United States government effort from Washington, DC, which included sending a top **anti-election violence expert to Nigeria repeatedly, coordinating with the United Kingdom, and supporting Secretary Kerry's key visit to Nigeria before the election.**

If confirmed, I look forward to applying the experience gained throughout my career to the very real human rights and democracy challenges facing Somalia.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Somalia? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Somalia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. If confirmed, working with the African Union, the Federal Government of Somalia, and Somali civil society to improve protection of civilians will be central to my engagement. **Violence against women and girls, including rape, and forced evictions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), remains a pervasive problem. If confirmed, I will work with Somali and international counterparts, including the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and humanitarian and development actors to improve protection efforts, ensuring that women can access the vital services they need and perpetrators are held accountable.**

Women continue to be marginalized within political processes and underrepresented at all levels of government. If confirmed, I will promote the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Somalia and will advocate for the participation of women in government and in politics. Specifically, I will support the Federal Government of Somalia's proposed 2016 electoral plan mandating 30 percent of the seats in the Somali parliament to be allocated to women.

IDPs continue to constitute the large majority of the food insecure population in Somalia, and represent nearly 10 percent of the Somali population. The U.N. Humanitarian Country Team is currently drafting a Somalia IDP durable solutions strategy. If confirmed, I will support humanitarian and development planning and ensure that humanitarian assistance and longer-term development action is sustainably addressing the protection issues impacting IDPs.

I am also deeply concerned about the situation of media freedom in Somalia. The country remains one of the most dangerous places to be a journalist. I will regularly discuss protection concerns with Somali journalists themselves, speak out against abuses against journalists, and strongly encourage the Somali government to fully respect freedom of expression. In addition, I will work with Somalia and the United Nations to further implementation of Somalia's action plan to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers and standardize operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Somalia in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?

Answer. Key challenges to addressing human rights concerns include continued insecurity in al-Shabaab-controlled portions of the country. This limits not only U.S. government access to much of the country, but also access by international and local partners who could provide information that is vital to addressing human rights

concerns. Improving civilian protection while conflict continues is extremely challenging, but it will be central to my efforts.

Somali women and girls experience systematic marginalization, which makes it difficult to address gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. Women are reluctant to report abuse due to possible reprisals, and police are reluctant to investigate. Improving protection for journalists is challenging due to the continued insecurity and presence of al-Shabaab. For example, in the past four years, Al-Shabaab harassed and threatened numerous reporters and killed 23 Somali journalists. The Government of Somalia and regional authorities continue to arrest, detain, and prosecute journalists as well. Additionally, in regard to child soldiers, the government has taken additional, though limited steps, to implement its action plan with the U.N. In 2015, the federal government reiterated its commitment to eliminating the use of child soldiers among the ranks of the Somali National Army (SNA), and Somalia became signatory to the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, more also needs to be done to improve demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration efforts for children separated from armed groups.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Somalia? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my most important goals will be improving respect for human rights in the country, so that all Somalis have the opportunity to exercise their fundamental freedoms and live their lives without fear. My efforts will include those focused on improving civilian protection, strengthening efforts to address rape, building respect for media freedom, and ensuring that children are not used as soldiers. Human rights organizations and other NGOs are critical to this work, and I look forward to meeting with them.

The Leahy laws are based on a basic principle: a government security apparatus' respect for human rights bolsters its legitimacy and trustworthiness in the eyes of the people it is supposed to protect, and enhances its ability to protect. Moreover, holding violators accountable fortifies the rule of law, which will be key in our efforts to improve governance in Somalia. If confirmed, my staff and I will convey this message diligently and consistently to the Somali government at all levels. The Department vets all assistance to Somali security forces in accordance with the Leahy Law, without exception. If confirmed, I will ensure that our vetting continues to be comprehensive, thorough, and in full compliance with the Leahy laws, and that those who violate human rights are restricted from receiving any training or other assistance until the responsible actors are brought to justice. Furthermore, I will strongly urge the Somali government to hold all violators accountable for their actions.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Somalia to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Somalia?

Answer. The ability of citizens to freely exchange information and their views is essential to the development of legitimate, fully functioning democratic governance in Somalia. The detention and prosecution by federal and regional government authorities of journalists critical of authorities has been a problem throughout Somalia. Somaliland authorities also have arrested, detained, and denied a fair trial to those expressing support or working directly for the Mogadishu-based Federal Government of Somalia for political reasons. If confirmed, my staff and I will consistently raise our concerns about these practices with Somali authorities at all levels of government and seek the release of any political prisoners.

Question. Will you engage with Somalia on matters of human rights, civil rights and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. If confirmed, these issues will be at the forefront of my engagement with Somali authorities at all levels of government. Human rights, including civil rights and governance, are fundamental to advancing our overarching policy goals in Somalia. Legitimate governance that can provide security and other services to all Somali people, regardless of gender or clan affiliation, is fundamental to achieving lasting peace and stability, and a government's respect for human rights, including civil rights, is in turn inextricably linked to its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens.

Question. Given the current political environment and the number of obstacles to achieving the Vision 2016 objectives, which of these objectives can the international community realistically expect the Somalis to achieve this year?

Answer. Since the United States formally recognized the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in 2013, Somalia has made significant gains in its political process and emerged from state failure. The United States is working closely with the U.N., AU, and other key partners to enable the Somalis to conduct an on-schedule election this year. During the February 23-24 High Level Partnership Forum Ministerial for Somalia, the Somali government affirmed its commitment to pursue elections in 2016, with strong support from the international community. The FGS endorsed an election model on January 27, more representative than the 2012 process by holding country-wide consultations.

Additionally, Somalia's state formation is nearly complete. The reconciliation conference to form the final of four interim administrations for Middle Shabelle and Hiraa is underway, and the government has committed to completing this process by year's end.

Question. If confirmed, upon which objectives will you place the most diplomatic effort and U.S. resources?

Answer. During his historic visit to Mogadishu, Secretary Kerry announced that the Department was beginning the planning process to re-establish formal diplomatic premises in Mogadishu. As a first step, the Department of State launched the transition of its Somalia Unit to U.S. Mission to Somalia, co-located in Embassy Nairobi, on September 8, 2015.

If confirmed, during my tenure it will be my top priority to establish a safe, secure, and functional embassy platform from which Mission Somalia may operate in Mogadishu. The United States has considerable national security interests in Somalia, which necessitates a permanent and fully-functioning diplomatic facility. Somalia's political process and security sector are fragile. Forging the relationships necessary to support Somalia's state-building enterprise will require our diplomats to have a functioning facility, security, and mobility necessary to engage.

Question. Are our international partners providing adequate assistance to address the significant governance challenges in Somalia? Is there a diplomatic role for you, if confirmed, for putting the need for improved governance on the agenda of the Somalis and other donors?

Answer. Through the New Deal Compact for Somalia, the international community has prioritized good governance as a pillar of Somalia's political process. As Somalia's Compact is set to expire this year, the United States is committed to the next phase of international engagement in Somalia, based on a shared set of principles and joint partnership, and will work through the Compact's successor—the Federal Government of Somalia's three-year (2017-2019) National Development Plan (NDP)—to continue to prioritize strengthening Somali governance. As Secretary Kerry said during his May 2015 visit to Mogadishu, "we all have a stake in Somalia's success and the world cannot afford to have places on the map that are essentially ungoverned." The United States has an over-arching interest in helping the people of Somalia build a peaceful nation with a stable democratic government that can provide security and services for its citizens.

If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside the international community and Somali government in support of the NDP. I will work diligently to promote the governance agenda.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to ensure that there is a strong focus on good governance in our U.S. assistance to Somalia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be sure to continue diplomatic support for governance programs to help develop institutional capacity and service delivery, improve transparency, and establish the rule-of-law; stabilization assistance to help with community needs; employment initiatives and education programs, particularly aimed at youth; and food aid and other life-saving assistance to address immediate humanitarian needs.

Additionally, strong and transparent public financial management is key for Somalia's stability and future growth. For this reason, in particular, we are very concerned about allegations of corruption and fiscal mismanagement in Somalia. As the government of Somalia takes steps to ensure that public funds are spent responsibly and transparently, it will earn the trust and confidence of the Somali people and the international community. If confirmed, I will continue our support of the Somali government's efforts to tackle these challenges and to provide significant resources for technical assistance on public financial management and financial governance initiatives.

Question. What portion of the funding for either of those programs has been channeled towards ensuring there are proper accountability structures and institutions in the police and military to investigate allegations of wrongdoing?

Answer. With regard to Danab and the broader Somali military, our efforts to ensure accountability start with our defense institution building (DIB) programs. Building an effective and professional Ministry of Defense is critical to ensuring that there are capable civilian oversight and accountability structures over Danab and the rest of the Somali military. The Department of State has already begun putting in place programming to build the Ministry of Defense through the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account to fund technical advisory support. We have obligated \$1.8 million in FY 2015 PKO OCO funds for this purpose, and are working with our colleagues in the Department of Defense to design and put in place additional DIB programming for FY 2016. The low absorptive capacity of these institutions has forced us to carefully calibrate our programming, and we are also working to ensure our programs are fully coordinated with donor partners working in this area, such as the EU and UK. Nonetheless, DIB and the creation of effective oversight structures remains a high priority for both DOS and DOD.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has obligated \$8.5 million in FY 2012 and FY 2013 International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) assistance to build the capacity of the Criminal Investigative Division (CID) of the Somali Police Force (SPF). In FY 2013 and FY 2014, INL has obligated approximately \$1.1 million in INCLE-OCO to investigate serious crimes. INL has obligated approximately \$1.1 million in FY 2013 and FY 2014 in INCLE-OCO to provide technical assistance to the SPF on a variety of issues, such as CID structure, organization and training priorities, through a Senior Law enforcement Advisor based in Mogadishu. At this time, there is no functioning internal police accountability structure in Somalia, and allegations of police abuse of power currently fall under the CID to investigate. As such, any increase in the capacity of the CID to investigate crimes, will support increased accountability for police. INL coordinates closely with other donors who are working in the civilian security space, including the EU, UK, UN, and AMISOM.

Question. What will you do, if confirmed as Ambassador, to ensure that we are promoting and supporting accountability for police and military abuses, especially with the units we are training?

Answer. Respect for human rights and protection of civilians is a core component of all peacekeeping and military training conducted by the United States for the security forces operating in Somalia. We have engaged the governments of troop contributing countries regarding the allegations of abuse and misconduct by security forces serving in AMISOM, and continue to provide training to enhance their professionalism. If confirmed, I will continue this ongoing dialogue with Somali and AMISOM government officials to urge greater attention to protection of civilians and respect for human rights. In addition, I will continue to advocate for investigations into and accountability for actions related to abuse or sexual exploitation.

Question. Have either the African Union or troop contributing countries adequately investigated and held accountable those accused? If confirmed, what will be your role in ensuring accountability for abuses carried out by troops funded and supported by the United States?

Answer. The United States takes allegations of human rights abuses against AMISOM extremely seriously, and the Department condemns such acts unequivocally. The United States immediately engaged with the African Union and the Governments of Uganda and Burundi to undertake a credible and transparent investigation into the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse reported by Human Rights Watch in 2014. The United States supported the AU and Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) in conducting a full investigation, and we are aware of at least two trials and convictions by the Ugandan Patriotic Defense Force. We were also deeply concerned about incidents on July 31, 2015, in which AMISOM forces killed civilians in Marka. AMISOM apologized for the deaths and announced the indictment of three soldiers on August 21, 2015.

If confirmed, working with the African Union, Government of Somalia, and Somali civil society to improve protection of civilians will be central to my engagement. I will work to hold the AU accountable to its AMISOM Protection, Human Rights and Gender Working Group that is responsible for monitoring TCC investigations, and developing training modules.

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SHWARTZ'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR PERDUE

Question. Please briefly describe your vision for taking on a new role as the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia. What are your goals and priorities? What challenges do you foresee?

Answer. If confirmed to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia, I plan to elevate the level and intensity of U.S. engagement with the Somali government, public, and international community; bring greater coordination and direction to U.S. policy and programs; and provide a secure and productive environment for the American and Somali staff working at the U.S. Mission.

My specific priorities are to help fulfill the Secretary's pledge to open a U.S. diplomatic premise in Mogadishu; help Somalia with its state formation, constitutional development, and national elections; and bring greater security to the Somali people by degrading the capability of the terrorist group al-Shabaab while building the capacity of the Somali National Army and the Somali National Police.

Somalia has made tangible progress recovering from its period as a failed state, but this progress is fragile. Efforts by Somali authorities, the United States, and international partners are conducted in an unpredictable and sometimes threatening environment due to attacks by Al-Shabaab. The effectiveness of U.S. engagement is reduced by the lack of a facility allowing us to work continually in Mogadishu.

Question. How do you feel your past experience, as well as your current position as Director of Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island Affairs at the Department of State have prepared you to take on this new role?

Answer. My career has prepared me well for the significant responsibilities and challenges attendant serving as the U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, I acquired a grass roots understanding of Africa through my service as a Peace Corps Volunteer, followed by three years in the Africa Bureau in Washington, DC, of which six months was spent working in Mali and Chad, two poor fragile Sahelian countries. I also earned a Master's degree in African Studies and worked on a conflict resolution project at the Brookings Institution. Immediately before joining the Foreign Service, from 1990-1991, I was one of the earliest hires at the Citizens Democracy Corps, a non-governmental organization launched by the United States government to facilitate assistance to people and governments in the newly liberated Central and Eastern Europe.

After joining the Foreign Service I spent my first seven years working in or with the Greater Horn of Africa region, which includes Somalia. I worked in Ethiopia from 1992-1994, during Operation Restore Hope. I understand the politics, history, and cultures of East Africa. I have spent six years as a Deputy Chief of Mission, two years of which were leading the embassy as Charge d'Affaires. I believe both missions under my leadership were characterized by high productivity and high morale, a goal I have set for every office or institution that I lead. In Zambia, the Ambassador and I formed an excellent leadership team and, if confirmed, I will try assiduously to apply the experiences gained in Zambia to my new responsibilities. If confirmed, my two most recent assignments in Washington, DC have enabled me to work on a wide range of policy issues, which will enable me to engage more successfully with interagency policymakers and Congress while assigned overseas as the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia.

Question. As Ambassador to Somalia, you will be charged with changing the nature of the bilateral relationship. What are your benchmarks for re-establishing a U.S. embassy in Mogadishu? What are the challenges under the current system for U.S. diplomats and USAID personnel traveling back and forth from Kenya?

Answer. During his visit to Mogadishu, Secretary Kerry announced that the Department was beginning the planning process to re-establish formal diplomatic premises in Mogadishu. As a first step, the Department of State launched the transition of its Somalia Unit to U.S. Mission to Somalia, co-located in Embassy Nairobi, on September 8, 2015. Ensuring that a diplomatic facility in Mogadishu is as secure and efficient a platform as possible is a high priority for the Department. The planning process is moving forward, and the Department is considering its options for facility designations at the Mogadishu International Airport (MIA).

If confirmed, during my tenure it will be my top priority to establish a safe, secure, and functional embassy platform from which Mission Somalia may operate inside of Somalia. To date, Mission Somalia staff maintains a rotational presence in Mogadishu, and travel sporadically to other regional capitals and sites in Somalia, when the security situation permits. The United States has considerable national

security interests in Somalia, which necessitate a permanent and fully-functioning diplomatic facility. Somalia's political process and security sector are fragile. Forging the relationships necessary to support Somalia's state-building enterprise will require our diplomats to have a functioning facility, security, and mobility necessary to engage.

Question. The FY16 Foreign Operations request includes a substantial increase in development assistance for Somalia—what are the priorities for that aid? Would you change any of those prioritizations? How do the State Department, USAID, and DOD ensure sufficient oversight and direction for that support given security restrictions on U.S. government personnel movement within the country?

Answer. The primary goal of U.S. assistance to Somalia is to promote security and support the development of a unified, peaceful Somalia. The increase in U.S. development resources requested in FY 2016 is commensurate with and complementary to security sector and humanitarian investments in Somalia. Somalia's issues require long-term development initiatives that will address the underlying human development, governance, and economic challenges facing a country emerging from more than two decades of conflict.

Increased U.S. development resources will prioritize community stabilization and recovery; consolidation of representative governing institutions and critical state-building processes; the establishment of responsive and legitimate local governance; and the expansion of the delivery of critical basic services. Additional resources will support Somalia's economic recovery by engaging with the recently revived agro-pastoral sector, the return of a vibrant, entrepreneurial diaspora, and the sustainable management of natural resources. I do not see a need for any changes to the FY 2016 development funding priorities at this time.

The State Department and USAID have third party monitoring mechanisms to conduct consistent, on-the-ground performance monitoring and verification visits, and report to technical staff regularly on their findings to enable effective and efficient management of projects in Somalia. The Department of Defense directly implements, monitors, and provides administrative oversight of its training and assistance to AMISOM and Somali forces through U.S. forces on the ground in Somalia, supplemented by frequent visits by the U.S. Defense Attache to Somalia.

Question. What role should the United States play in supporting the Somali electoral process in 2016? How might donors facilitate more transparency to support free and fair elections given widespread allegations of bribery in Somali politics?

Answer. The United States has an over-arching interest in helping the people of Somalia to build a peaceful nation with a stable democratic government that can provide security and services for its citizens. The holding of an electoral process in 2016 that is more inclusive and transparent than the 2012 clan elders selection process will be a key step toward that broader goal. The FGS endorsed an election model on January 27 that offers the prospect of an improved process and a more representative government. During the February 23-24 High Level Partnership Forum Ministerial for Somalia, the Somali government affirmed its commitment to hold elections in 2016 based on this model, with strong support from the international community. We are currently focused on helping the FGS secure the Puntland regional government's support for the model.

The United States is also working closely with the UN, AU, and other key partners to encourage the Somalis to address as soon as possible the remaining issues necessary to implement the January 27 model, including to help ensure that it is more transparent and less susceptible to bribery or manipulation than the 2012 clan elders process. The formation of electoral colleges that are larger and more inclusive than the 2012 process will be particularly important, along with voter education and secure ballot procedures.

Question. What are your expectations for the constitutional review process? If confirmed, how will you engage with groups involved?

Answer. Somalia's constitutional review is behind schedule, having missed a 2015 deadline for holding a referendum on a revised constitution. However, the review process is underway and significant progress has been made on technical aspects of the constitution. Larger political issues, including the delineation of federal relationships and authorities among levels of government, have yet to be tackled. A broad public education campaign and inclusive dialogue process is necessary help ensure the referendum's credibility and legitimacy. The government also needs to develop a plan for how voting on the referendum will take place. We and our international partners are encouraging the Somalis to complete the review process and conduct a public awareness campaign to enable a referendum in 2017. If confirmed, I will engage proactively with government, parliament, and civil society actors, in-

cluding women's groups and minorities, to encourage parties to play an active role and to promote transparency and dialogue throughout the process.

Question. Al Shabaab continues to seek recruits in the United States and issue public threats against American targets. To what extent does Al Shabaab pose a direct threat to U.S. citizens? To U.S. national security?

Answer. Al-Shabaab continues to pose a continuing and imminent threat to U.S. persons and interests in East Africa. It seeks to delegitimize the Federal Government of Somalia by terrorizing and targeting civilians, Somali government officials, African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) forces, and international partners operating in Somalia and elsewhere in the region. Our commitment to assisting the Somali government and people makes us and our partners prime targets of al-Shabaab. We have no credible evidence to suggest that al-Shabaab has the capability to conduct attacks in the United States, but we consider it a threat to U.S. national security given its efforts to destabilize the region through brutal, asymmetric attacks and continued targeting of U.S. persons and interests.

Question. How would you characterize Al Shabaab's relationship with Al Qaeda and affiliates? With the Islamic State? How does the Obama administration assess the impact of Ahmed Godane's death on the organization?

Answer. Al-Shabaab is an affiliate of al-Qaeda, an organization to which it pledged allegiance in 2012 and from which it receives funding, weapons, and other resources via al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula based in Yemen. Al-Shabaab senior leaders appear to remain loyal to al-Qaeda, which has also been known to train al-Shabaab operatives and fighters. We are aware of reports that indicate that ISIL is openly and actively challenging al-Shabaab's affiliation with al-Qaeda through videos posted on social media. At this time, we are not aware of credible evidence to suggest that ISIL has established a branch or affiliate in Somalia. Al-Shabaab senior leaders reportedly view the prospect of ISIL's presence in Somalia as a threat to its influence and ideology in East Africa. We are watching these developments closely with the understanding that the threat environment in Somalia is dynamic.

The death of the former emir Godane in September 2014 dealt a significant blow to al-Shabaab. Godane was one of the architects of al-Shabaab's strategy to expand its operations to the region and target AMISOM troop contributing countries such as Uganda, Kenya, and Djibouti. As in other cases, al-Shabaab chose another emir shortly after Godane's death and continued to conduct attacks within Somalia and elsewhere in the region. The new emir appears intent on continuing Godane's legacy of conducting deadly attacks throughout Somalia and Kenya, and apparently has a strategy to increase pressure on AMISOM. Godane's death created a temporary disruption in al-Shabaab's ability to operate, but the group remains a resilient and potent threat to stability in East Africa.

Question. What are Al Shabaab's primary sources of revenue today? To what extent does diversion of humanitarian aid by Al Shabaab continue to be a problem?

Answer. Since losing control of major seaports such as Kismayo and Baraawe, al-Shabaab no longer has access to vast amounts of charcoal to generate revenue. We are aware of reports indicating that the group continues to benefit indirectly from illicit charcoal trade in southern Somalia, but it is far less than previous estimates that suggested that al-Shabaab received tens of millions of dollars annually from charcoal shipments. Al-Shabaab continues to accumulate revenue from illegal tax collection, checkpoints, and extortion from local communities. The group also benefits from smuggling operations that involve sugar, livestock, and other commodities throughout the region.

While there is always a risk of diversion as long as al-Shabaab remains active, we do not have evidence of substantial diversion of humanitarian resources. USAID and its implementing partners have due diligence procedures in place to carefully track and account for their assistance and to ensure it reaches the intended beneficiaries.

Question. What are your security concerns for your post? How can we be of assistance?

Answer. (SBU) Mogadishu is a dangerous place, and the Department has taken several critical steps needed to enhance our security posture. For example, the facility used for temporarily housing our staff has been erected with enhanced physical security features. The Department has put in place regulations meant to safeguard our diplomats: while in Mogadishu, we remain within the confines of the Mogadishu International Airport (MIA), two Regional Security Officers accompany staff when traveling, Chief of Mission personnel only utilize chartered flights into Somalia and

are not permitted to transit MIA's commercial terminal, and staff are issued security tracking technologies to capture real-time whereabouts.

As MIA is the hub of engagement for the international community in Mogadishu, the Department is identifying resources to help strengthen MIA perimeter and operational security. Bolstering security at MIA will enhance the safety and security of our staff when they are on the ground in Mogadishu. Additional resources to shore-up security, facility, and airport upgrades would provide the Department with an enhanced and more secure platform from which to work at MIA, until conditions permit a fully functional long-term diplomatic facility in the future.

Question. Please describe the respective roles of AFRICOM, State Department security contractors, and AMISOM troop contributing countries in implementing U.S. security assistance to the Somali military.

Answer. Currently, State Department contractors and grantees funded under the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account are implementing a range of activities, to include provision of equipment and supplies, stipends, and training for SNA forces. The Danab Advanced Infantry Battalion, which received basic training and equipment through State contract personnel, has been selected to take part in additional advanced training implemented by U.S. military personnel, as well as receive more advanced equipment. This more advanced assistance is funded under Section 2282 of the National Defense Authorization Act. U.S. military personnel are also implementing improvements to the training camp for Danab, which is funded through the PKO account. We expect DoD to continue to play a significant role in implementation of assistance for the SNA, both through Section 2282 and under the PKO account. State and DoD policy and program staff coordinate closely on all security assistance programming for Somalia, both through weekly video teleconferences and bi-monthly in-person synchronization meetings. These meetings are designed to ensure that all parties have full visibility on each other's projects, and that efforts are fully synchronized and complementary.

Question. How is the United States engaging with other donors on security assistance and how is it coordinated and overseen?

Answer. The primary mechanism for U.S. engagement on security sector reform with key partners has been through the New Deal Compact for Somalia. Mission Somalia co-leads the New Deal Working Group on Security (PSG 2), in conjunction with the Governments of Turkey and Somalia. PSG 2 largely focuses on coordinating assistance and support to build a cohesive, unified Somali National Army (SNA). PSG 2 regularly convenes at the technical level to identify key areas of support for donor assistance.

A top security sector priority for the United States has been the integration of clan militias into a national army structure as the state formation began to formalize. The United States works closely with the UK, AMISOM Troop Contributing Countries, Turkey, and recently the UAE, through small group meetings to streamline support to SNA. Additionally, through the Department of Defense's Military Coordination Cell, the United States maintains a five-person staff at MIA to advise and assist AMISOM and SNA; they also engage daily with donor country military liaisons.

During the February 23-24 High Level Partnership Forum-the New Deal's ministerial-level conference-the international community made a strong plea for the FGS to provide an overarching security architecture plan to streamline and coordinate donor assistance to rebuild Somalia security forces. This master plan is a key component that will lay the foundation for Somalia's security services and better coordinate assistance from the international community.

Question. The President has provided a full waiver for Somalia from sanctions under the Child Soldiers Protection Act of 2008. Do you agree with the President's decision? What is the Somali government doing to ensure that its forces do not include child soldiers?

Answer. I agree with the President's determination that it is in the national interest to grant a full waiver of CSPA restrictions to Somalia. The full waiver for Somalia is intended to allow the United States to assist counterterrorism efforts and support the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) as it works to build a more stable and secure future for Somalis.

The FGS has taken limited but continued steps towards implementing its UN-backed child soldier action plan, including the establishment of a dedicated Child Protection Unit (CPU), which is partially funded by the United States. The CPU is operational and conducts training on prevention and participating in screening efforts. If confirmed, I will work with the FGS and the U.N. to urge additional actions to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to demobilize, rehabilitate,

and reintegrate children identified in the Somali National Army or associated groups, or children previously associated with al-Shabaab.

Question. In 2014, AMISOM soldiers from Uganda and Burundi were accused of sexually exploiting and abusing Somali women in Mogadishu. What steps have been taken to investigate and discipline those responsible? Has this led to the suspension of U.S. assistance to any units under human rights vetting procedures?

Answer. The United States takes allegations of human rights abuses against AMISOM extremely seriously, and the Department condemns such acts unequivocally wherever they take place. The United States immediately engaged with the African Union and the Governments of Uganda and Burundi to encourage them to undertake a credible and transparent investigation into the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. The United States supported the AU and Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) in conducting a full investigation of those implicated. We have not suspended U.S. assistance to TCCs based on sexual exploitation or abuse allegations. In cases where we have found credible evidence of sexual exploitation or abuse, the units in question had already rotated out of AMISOM and were no longer receiving U.S. assistance.

Question. Human rights groups suggest that civilian casualties due to AMISOM operations have increased recently. Does the State Department consider these allegations to be valid? How does the State Department go about validating or invalidating such reports? How is the AU responding?

Answer. We are deeply concerned regarding reports of civilian casualties. While we would be hesitant to support a generalized statement that civilian casualties have increased recently, and would prefer to comment on specific alleged incidents when discussing validity, there are credible reports of civilian casualties caused by AMISOM. We take all such claims very seriously, and seek to validate them to the best of our ability. Sources used to establish the validity of such reports include NGO reporting, media sources, Somali officials and interlocutors, sensitive internal U.S. government reporting, discussions with African Union leadership, and discussions with our AMISOM partners themselves.

We saw AMISOM take positive steps in regard to accountability in reaction to the killing of civilians by AU forces in the town of Merka on July 31, 2015. AMISOM engaged in an investigatory process that resulted in the indictment of three Ugandan AMISOM personnel for these killings. We will continue to urge the AU and TCCs to investigate all reported civilian deaths, and to hold perpetrators accountable for human rights and international humanitarian law violations.

RESPONSES OF KELLY KEIDERLING-FRANZ, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE ORIENTAL REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEIDERLING-FRANZ'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CARDIN

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have advocated for democratic institutions, for freedom of speech, of opinion, of assembly and of religion, and have defended human rights. During my assignment in recently independent Kyrgyzstan, for example, we organized exchanges to highlight good governance, the workings of a free press, and the relationship between the state and organized religion. In Cuba, we explained U.S. elections and specifically the value of free, responsible media work. In Venezuela, my team and I met regularly with pro-democracy activists, independent media, and human rights workers to understand and give voice to their concerns, and to advocate in favor of the universality of political-civil rights and equal treatment for all people.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Uruguay? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Uruguay? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. Uruguay is one of the most ardent supporters of human rights in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, Uruguay is consistently ranked as the top country in the region for the protection of LGBT, civil, and political rights. Uruguay has held

the top spot in social inclusion for three years running in the Americas Quarterly Social Inclusion Index. Impressive as Uruguay's human rights record is, there is still work to be done. Human trafficking in and through Uruguay continues to be a concern, as is discrimination against Afro-Uruguayans.

If confirmed, I would continue to support the Uruguayan government's efforts to combat human trafficking and racial discrimination. I would encourage the Government of Uruguay to vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict human traffickers; to pass and enact a comprehensive anti-trafficking law; to increase funding for and the provision of protection and specialized services for all victims of trafficking, especially shelters; and to improve data collection on anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. I would engage the Afro-Uruguayan population, seek way to develop civil society structures, and work with the Government of Uruguay to address discrimination.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Uruguay in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?

Answer. I understand there are several obstacles in overcoming human trafficking and discrimination in Uruguay. Although upgraded to Tier 2 from Tier 2 Watch List in the 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Uruguay still faces significant national hurdles in curtailing human trafficking and does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The Uruguayan government is making significant efforts to comply with these standards. The lack of accurate data on trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and convictions makes it difficult to assess the government's overall anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. Government funding for victim services, particularly housing, continues to be inadequate. The Government of Uruguay could continue to improve its anti-trafficking efforts through more accurate data collection and the expansion of government funding for and provision of victim services.

Despite the Government of Uruguay's efforts to combat racial intolerance, Afro-Uruguayans continue to face discrimination. Uruguay's Afro-Uruguayan minority, estimated to be eight percent of the population, has historically faced discrimination and is underrepresented in government, academia, and in the middle and upper echelons of the private sector. If confirmed, I would continue to advance U.S. Embassy Montevideo's social inclusion programs, including targeted outreach to the Afro-Uruguayan community and helping the community gain 21st century skills for economic advancement.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs in Uruguay? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. Creating relationships with leaders in human rights, civil society, and NGOs is necessary for any diplomat to be truly effective. If confirmed, I would engage both U.S. and Uruguayan civil society leaders and make the advancement of human rights and social justice a pillar of our bilateral relationship. I would also commit to applying the Leahy Law to our security assistance and cooperation activities.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Uruguay to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Uruguay?

Answer. Since return to civilian rule in 1984, Uruguay has accomplished one of Latin America's most successful transitions to democracy. Uruguay ranks high in good governance, openness, and the rule of law. Freedom House gave Uruguay a 98 out of a 100 score in their 2016 Freedom in the World Report. Uruguay does not have political prisoners. If confirmed, I would lead the embassy team in working with Uruguay on regional human rights issues, including political prisoners.

Question. Will you engage with Uruguay on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. Uruguay plays a leadership role in regional and international institutions and has been a vocal advocate for democratic governance in the Western Hemisphere. If confirmed, I would further engage Uruguay to protect human rights in the region and advocate on behalf of democratic governance.

Question. President Vazquez and his administration have shown important leadership on issues of human rights and democracy in the region. He joined President Obama at the Summit of the Americas in a meeting with Cuban activists. And, his administration has expressed its concern about the political, economic, and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. What steps will you take to work with President Vazquez and his government on these critically important issues?

Answer. Uruguay willingly plays a leadership role in regional and international institutions and is a vocal advocate for democratic governance in Latin America. Uruguay's former foreign minister, Luis Almagro, is currently Secretary General of the OAS and is outspoken in defending the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and universal human rights in OAS member states, most notably Venezuela. Acting in its current role as President pro tempore of UNASUR, Uruguay negotiated and implemented the sole electoral "accompaniment" mission sanctioned by the Venezuelan government for its December 6 legislative elections. If confirmed, I would continue to work with the Uruguayan government to address issues of human rights and democratic governance throughout the hemisphere.

Question. Now that Uruguay has a temporary seat on the U.N. Security Council, how can the United States better cooperate with Uruguay on these issues?

Answer. In January 2016, Uruguay assumed a non-permanent, two-year seat on the U.N. Security Council for the first time in 50 years. During this term, Uruguay represents the Latin America and Caribbean Group. Uruguay simultaneously became Chair of the UNSC for the month of January. Uruguay's priorities for its 2016-2017 term include peacekeeping issues—particularly protection of civilians (PoC)—conflict prevention, and issues affecting Uruguay's geographic region, like supporting Colombia and Haiti. As UNSC chair, Uruguay has hosted open debates on the PoC theme and on the Middle East. Uruguay continues to play an outsized leadership role in U.N. peacekeeping as the largest contributor of peacekeeping forces in Latin America and host of the regional U.N. peacekeeping conference in May 2015. These priorities coincide with American values and policies and present an opportunity to work with Uruguay on issues of mutual interest. If confirmed, I would work with Uruguay on these and other issues on the global agenda, especially on multilateral efforts to prevent and resolve international conflicts and oversee peacekeeping initiatives.

Question. As you know, Uruguayan contributions to U.N. peacekeeping missions such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti have been of tremendous value within the international community. In your view, how else can the United States and Uruguay continue to cooperate on foreign policy issues of mutual interest?

Answer. The United States appreciates the significant contribution Uruguay makes to global peacekeeping operations. With over 1,400 peacekeepers deployed, Uruguay is the second-largest Latin American contributor to peacekeeping operations. Uruguay's leadership in the region includes joint-deployment agreements with other countries and leadership training at its national peacekeeping school. If confirmed, I hope to work with the Uruguayan government in facilitating U.N. peacekeeping missions. Uruguay also hosted a regional peacekeeping preparatory conference in May 2015 and President Vazquez co-hosted with President Obama a Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping at UNGA in September 2015. If confirmed, I would seek opportunities to advance these global conversations, as well as continue current U.S. efforts to support the Uruguayan military in peacekeeping operations.

Question. Since taking office for a second term, President Vazquez has expressed his desire to continue forging closer relations with the United States by strengthening and building upon the various bilateral cooperation mechanisms that are currently in place. If confirmed, what do you consider to be key priorities to strengthen the bilateral relationship with Uruguay?

Answer. Our bilateral relations with Uruguay are strong and rooted in common values. In recent years, we have made great progress deepening the relationship through cooperation on political, economic, and defense issues, as well as through educational and cultural exchanges. With its strong democratic processes and respect for fundamental freedoms, Uruguay is a model for the region and the world. If confirmed, I would look to strengthen our already robust bilateral relationship with Uruguay.

Peacekeeping operations is one priority of the bilateral relationship. The United States appreciates the significant contribution Uruguay makes to global peacekeeping operations. Uruguay is the second-largest Latin American contributor of peacekeepers to U.N. missions and co-hosted the U.N. Summit on Peacekeeping in

September 2015. If confirmed, I would continue our close cooperation with Uruguay on U.N. mission support for peacekeeping and protection-of-civilians issues.

Bilateral trade with Uruguay is steadily expanding, totaling over \$2 billion in 2014, with U.S. exports to Uruguay reaching \$1.6 billion. There are approximately 130 U.S. companies operating in Uruguay with more than 20,000 employees. The United States is the fourth largest investor in Uruguay and U.S. investment increased significantly in the past decade to its current \$1.3 billion total. If confirmed, I would ensure a level playing field for U.S. corporations conducting business in Uruguay. I will also look to identify new opportunities for trade and investment for U.S. companies in Uruguay.

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEIDERLING-FRANZ'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR RUBIO

Question. El Pais newspaper has reported that radical Islam in Uruguay is a "growing problem." According to news reports there have been threats to the Israeli embassy in Montevideo. There was also a confirmed case of a Jewish individual who was stabbed by an Islamic radical. If confirmed, how would you address this growing problem in Uruguay?

Answer. Uruguayan security services investigated several suspicious packages found in the vicinity of the office building in which the Israeli embassy is located in Montevideo. Uruguayan authorities are also investigating the recent stabbing of a member of Uruguay's Jewish community, including working to determine whether the stabbing was a terrorist attack or a hate crime. These cases are disturbing, merit attention, and are contrary to Uruguay's long-standing tradition of tolerance. If confirmed, I will work with the Uruguayan government to address any instances of violent extremism and hate crimes, including through law enforcement information-sharing and training.

Question. Multiple Senators have requested information concerning the six former Guantanamo Bay detainees who were transferred to Uruguay. Despite repeated briefings the administration has yet to provide the requested information in writing on the specific commitments the Government of Uruguay made concerning the monitoring of the former detainees.

- ◆ Please provide all requested information on what specific agreements were made between the United States Government and Government of Uruguay on monitoring the former detainees.
- ◆ Also, when will the former Guantanamo Bay detainees be eligible for documents that will allow them to travel outside of Uruguay and beyond Mercosur?

Answer. The Department appreciates Congress's important oversight responsibilities on these transfers and is committed to providing information to enable the Foreign Relations Committee to perform that function. We would be happy to brief you and your staff on any outstanding questions you may have. That said, the Department across two administrations has consistently informed Congress, and represented to U.S. courts, that disclosing these diplomatic assurances would have a chilling effect on foreign governments' willingness to cooperate on detainee transfers.

Accordingly, these sensitive diplomatic communications, containing foreign government information, are kept to a limited Executive branch dissemination. Indeed, foreign governments have noted that disclosure outside of this limited dissemination could endanger future cooperation related to detainee transfers, which would harm cooperative efforts to mitigate any threat posed by transferred detainees. I understand that the Department and Embassy Montevideo are working closely with the Uruguayan government on security and other issues surrounding these detainees. If confirmed, I would continue to work with the Government of Uruguay to ensure the long-term success of these efforts. I would also work with the Department to keep your office informed of developments regarding the detainees.

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEIDERLING-FRANZ'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR PERDUE

Question. Please briefly describe your vision for taking on a new role as the U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay. What are your priorities and goals? What challenges do you foresee?

Answer. Our bilateral relations with Uruguay are strong and rooted in common values. In recent years, we have made great progress in deepening the relationship through cooperation on political, economic, law enforcement, and defense issues, as well as through educational and professional exchanges. With its strong democratic processes and respect for fundamental freedoms, Uruguay is a good model for the region and the world.

If confirmed, I would increase economic prosperity for U.S. citizens and Uruguayans through trade and investment, the promotion of renewable energy technologies, educational exchanges, and 21st century skills such as entrepreneurship, English language, and scientific research to provide opportunities for our youth.

If confirmed, I would expand global security in partnership with Uruguay, supporting Uruguayan international peacekeeping operations and our joint law enforcement and rule-of-law goals in fighting drug smuggling and human trafficking, countering violent extremism, stopping illicit financial flows, sharing information on international criminal networks, and working together on cyber issues.

In seeking to defend human rights and advance democratic governance, I would work together with Uruguay to defend international, democratic norms; advocate for universal freedoms; and advance social justice in our hemisphere and globally.

Question. How do you feel your past experience, as well as your current position as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs have prepared you to take on this new role?

As a Foreign Service Officer since 1988, with a sub-specialty in public diplomacy, I have successfully promoted U.S. interests and values on three continents, helped shape decisions and policies in various offices at the State Department, advocated U.S. policies to foreign audiences, built and led diverse embassy teams, and, in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, managed a team of almost 500 people and a budget of almost \$600 million. I have served as deputy chief of mission twice, including as charge d'affaires during a complicated time in Venezuela. With previous service in eight embassies, I have experience on a range of foreign policy issues, from defending human rights and explaining the role of the free press, to creating a level playing field for U.S. companies and advocating for environmentally sustainable economic policies.

Question. Uruguay was the first Latin American country to offer full resettlement to Syrian refugees, and they accepted 42 Syrians in late 2014. However, due to the extremely small Muslim population in Uruguay, some say these refugees have struggled to successfully integrate despite receiving housing, healthcare, education, and financial support. If confirmed, would you engage with the refugee population? If so, how? How do you recommend the government improve relations with its refugee population?

Answer. We appreciate Uruguay's commitment to accept five Syrian families, 42 people in total, for resettlement in October 2014. While the Uruguayan government has faced challenges meeting the needs of these families, it pledged to provide these families two years of housing, health and educational assistance, and Spanish courses. Additionally, in 2015, the Embassy supported an International Visitor Leadership Program for Uruguayan officials on the topic of refugee resettlement. If confirmed, I would look for additional ways to support the integration of the refugees into the Uruguayan population and make the case for assistance to support the very large, global population of refugees and displaced persons.

Question. In its 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, the U.S. State Department rated Uruguay a Tier 2 country, stating that the Uruguayan government "does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking." Do you agree with the State Department's assessment? How would you recommend engaging with the government to influence change on this front?

Answer. Uruguay was ranked Tier 2 in the 2015 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, which means that the Government of Uruguay does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but it is making significant efforts to do so. The State Department's assessment reflects that while the Government of Uruguay has taken important steps to combat human trafficking, including identifying and assisting an increased number of potential foreign sex trafficking victims and achieving the country's first reported conviction for labor trafficking, much work remains to be done.

If confirmed, I would encourage the Government of Uruguay to vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers; to pass and enact a comprehensive anti-trafficking law; to increase funding for protection and specialized services for all victims of trafficking; and to improve data collection on anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

I would also carefully oversee the implementation of a new, three-year State Department counter-trafficking project. This project would create three regional counter-trafficking committees outside the Uruguayan capital. These committees would work to promote political will and boost the commitment to counter trafficking from local governmental authorities—including strengthening the knowledge and skills of key stakeholders on how to screen, identify, refer and assist victims of trafficking. The project would also establish a network among representatives of these committees to coordinate efforts nationally.

Question. Uruguay suffered serious economic crisis between 1999 and 2002 due to spillover economic problems in Argentina and Brazil. Those same nations again are facing economic hardship this year. To what extent does the Uruguayan economy remain vulnerable to regional economic instability? What is your assessment of the Vazquez administration's efforts to address Uruguay's slowing economic growth?

Answer. Since the economic crisis from 1999 until 2002, Uruguay has taken steps to diversify its economy. Uruguay avoided a recession in the wake of the global financial crisis. Strong commodity prices played a large role in Uruguay's economic success, but its economy also benefits from transparency and a strong legal framework.

However, Uruguay remains vulnerable to regional instability as Argentina and Brazil remain major investment and trading partners. Following the 2002 crisis, Uruguay implemented numerous measures to reduce exposure to its neighbors. It greatly improved its debt management, significantly strengthened its banking sector, diversified its exports markets, and expanded its service sector to further diversify the economy.

Uruguay's economy has cooled significantly, with estimated growth of about 1 percent for 2015 and 2016. The IMF expects Uruguay to perform better than its neighbors in the coming year. The Vazquez administration has developed a significant cushion of international reserves and is pursuing policies to boost trade and investment, implementing a major public investment plan and trimming government spending. It has also made advancing trade and commercial discussions with Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico a priority, with an eye toward integration with the Pacific Alliance and other trade blocs.

President Vazquez is interested in expanding trade and investment with the United States. Uruguay's strategic geographic location and business-friendly trade regimes, including free trade zones, make it a good distribution center for U.S. exports into the region. Within the framework of the National Export Initiative (NEI), Uruguay can play an important role in assisting and facilitating U.S. exports to the much larger surrounding markets of Argentina and Brazil. Moving forward, Uruguay represents a significant opportunity in diverse areas such as petroleum and natural gas, renewable energy, tourism, education, and other services for U.S. companies.

Question. Do the six men formerly detained at Guantanamo Bay who were granted refugee status by Uruguay pose any threat to the United States or its citizens? Are there any mechanisms in place to monitor the former detainees or prevent their travel outside of Uruguay?

Answer. In 2009-2010, a rigorous interagency process reviewed all reasonably available information concerning the detainees at Guantanamo Bay and determined that some detainees—including the six transferred to Uruguay—should be transferred subject to appropriate security measures. An interagency Task Force assembled large volumes of information from across the government relevant to determining the proper disposition of each detainee. Task Force members examined this information critically, giving careful consideration to the threat posed by the detainees, the reliability of the underlying information, and the interests of national security.

U.S. government officials undertook detailed, specific conversations with Uruguay about the potential threat that each detainee under consideration for transfer to Uruguay may pose after transfer and the measures that Uruguay would take in order to sufficiently mitigate that threat, and to ensure humane treatment. After receiving assurances from the Government of Uruguay, representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence unanimously concurred in the transfer of the six detainees to Uruguay. This decision reflected the best predictive judgment of senior government officials that any threat that may be posed by the detainee could be sufficiently mitigated through feasible and appropriate security measures in Uruguay.

Now that the detainees are in Uruguay, I understand that the Department and Embassy Montevideo work closely with the Uruguayan government on a range of issues surrounding the detainees, including matters related to the security of the United States. If confirmed, I would continue that close cooperation with the Government of Uruguay to ensure the long-term success of these efforts. I would also work with the Department to keep Congress informed of developments regarding the detainees. As has been the Department's practice, we would be happy to brief you and your staff on any outstanding questions you may have.

RESPONSES OF MARK SOBEL, NOMINATED TO BE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND FOR A TERM OF TWO YEARS, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

DIRECTOR-DESIGNATE SOBEL'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CORKER

Question. The IMF Executive Board recently approved a rule change that appears to allow for exceptional access loans when debt is not sustainable with high probability under the meaning of the original exceptional access program and there is no contagion risk, if the Board finds there is re-profiling of a borrower's debt. The new policy further allows, in "tail event cases," the ability to forgo reprofiling if the risk of contagion is high and other official creditors' terms are sufficiently flexible. Presumably, under the new policy, those creditors might not even be required to make any concessions. For example, the IMF notes that:

In these rare cases, the IMF could still provide large-scale financing without a debt operation, but would require that its official partners also provide financing on terms sufficiently favorable to backstop debt sustainability and safeguard IMF resources. This could be done through assurances that the terms of the financing provided by other official creditors could be modified in the future if needed.

While flexibility is important, please explain how the new policy for exceptional access lending upholds the intent of the second exceptional access criterion (high probability of debt sustainability), particularly in "tail event" cases. What kinds of "assurances" would be acceptable so as to allow for lending to occur and how would those assurances be enforced?

Answer. In mid-January of this year, the IMF Executive Board adopted Managing Director Lagarde's proposed reforms to the IMF provisions for exceptional access to Fund resources. A key aspect of these reforms was the elimination of the "systemic exemption" by which exceptional access could be provided when there was a high risk of international systemic spillovers despite significant doubts regarding the prospects for debt sustainability. Subsequent to the repeal of the systemic exemption, the United States consented to the 2010 IMF quota and governance reforms, doubling IMF quota resources and confirming our commitment to the IMF.

In putting forward the proposal, the Fund was concerned that requiring a debt restructuring in the case of a country with debt that was not sustainable with a high probability could be highly disruptive to the member and its creditors. In such cases, the Fund indicated it could stand ready to provide exceptional access if the country secured participation from its creditors on terms that would improve its debt sustainability and enhance safeguards for Fund resources through, for example, market borrowing if the country still had market access, debt reprofiling, agreements by creditors to maintain exposures, or the extension of bilateral assistance.

This is a clear departure from the systemic exemption which did not address debt sustainability concerns or provide safeguards for IMF lending. If I am confirmed as Executive Director, I will look closely at any such loans to ensure they do not prolong an unsustainable debt situation in a country and ensure the safety of the U.S. investment in the IMF. I will also work with Treasury to provide Congress timely notification and justification of our position on proposed exceptional access loans consistent with legislation.

As you note, the Management's policy proposal allows the IMF some flexibility, particularly in the case of a tail-risk event. In these rare cases, exceptional access loans could be provided by the IMF only if accompanied by financing from other official creditors. Moreover, financing from these other creditors must be provided on terms sufficient to backstop debt sustainability and safeguard IMF resources.

DIRECTOR-DESIGNATE SOBEL'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CARDIN

Question. IMF Reform: The United States championed the 2010 IMF quota and governance reforms, but Congress didn't approve them until December of last year. Last year we heard from IMF Managing Director Lagarde that the delay was seriously affecting the IMF.

- ◆ Has this had any lingering effect on U.S. leadership in the IMF?
- ◆ Can you explain how increasing emerging market representation at the IMF serves U.S. interests?

Answer. Emerging markets are playing an increasingly prominent role in the global economic and financial landscape. Their weight in the global economy has increased substantially to near or over half (depending on the measure), and they have accounted for the bulk of growth in the last decade.

The IMF provides a multilateral framework for the global economy. Regionalism will always exist—the United States trades heavily with Mexico and Canada due to their proximity. But it is clearly in the U.S. interest to bind all countries in the world into the multilateral framework, of which the IMF is at the center, especially as the United States helped to create the Fund and establish its values. In that regard, the Fund has consistently from its inception supported U.S. economic and strategic interests.

We cannot bind countries into the multilateralist framework if the Fund is not modernized to reflect the evolution of the world economy. If we are unable to modernize the Fund and accord emerging markets a stronger voice, they will drift away from multilateralism and instead emphasize regional solutions which could be detrimental to U.S. interests. While there is no dearth of infrastructure needs in the world, we saw such drift to some extent reflected in the creation of the AIIB, Silk Road, and the BRICs Bank.

For the past decade, the United States has consistently supported the emerging markets carrying a greater weight in the IMF. The United States spearheaded the launch of quota and governance reforms in 2006-2008 under the Bush administration, and the Obama administration continued to do so in 2009 at the G20 Pittsburgh Summit and then in finalizing the 2010 reforms. The United States garnered tremendous goodwill in the IMF from the emerging markets for these policies. However, the long delays in implementing the 2010 reforms meant that the United States lost much of this goodwill and created doubts about America's willingness to lead the IMF. The United States is working to earn back this trust. On the positive side, U.S. financial diplomats no longer have to attend international economic and financial meetings with this cloud hanging over their heads, and are able to speak more forthrightly about a positive U.S. agenda. However, this goodwill cannot be regained overnight. Earning it back will require strong and consistent cooperation in the coming years between the Executive and Legislative branches.

Question. EU Financial Crisis and IMF Reforms: Since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2009, eleven European countries have entered into financial assistance programs with the IMF, with commitments over \$150 billion.

- ◆ How has this affected the IMF's resources and capacity to respond to other crises?
- ◆ Where is the IMF confronting its most serious challenges among those countries?
- ◆ If confirmed, are there any aspects in particular of the IMF's mandate and/or procedures that you believe merit review and possible reform?

Answer. The Fund's actions in addressing the key European crisis countries, such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal—even as Europe assumed the lion's share of the financing—were indispensable for restoring stability to the global economic and financial system, including preventing potentially serious contagion from reaching U.S. shores.

The Fund's actions did put pressure on the IMF's quota resources, which were substantially drawn down. However, given the expansion of the New Arrangements to Borrow (NAB) decided at the April 2009 G20 London Economic Summit, the IMF was also able to draw down resources from the NAB to readily backstop these commitments. Following Congressional approval of the 2010 IMF quota and governance reforms, IMF quota resources have doubled and the NAB has returned to its role as an emergency backstop.

Countries such as Ireland and Cyprus are now on the road to recovery, and Cyprus is benefitting from IMF technical assistance as the leaders of the two commu-

nities on the island negotiate a potential reunification of the island. Iceland and Latvia are notable success stories. Hungary is no longer in need of Fund support, as is the case with other Central and Eastern European countries. Spain strengthened its banking system with European funds and IMF technical support. Portugal continues to face large debt and slow growth, but has adopted numerous reforms and is not facing market stresses. Notably, both Ireland and Portugal have made payments ahead of schedule on their exceptional access loans from the Fund.

Obviously, the situation in Greece remains the most challenging, both for Europe and the IMF. Europe and the IMF are seeking to design an economic program for Greece that established a road to sustainability and growth, built on Greek reforms, appropriate conditionality and necessary debt relief from Europe. Working out the scope and magnitude of the policy reforms and debt relief involves trade-offs, which are still being discussed. The United States continues to urge Greece to stay on the path of reform as well as the Europeans and IMF to work closely together in designing a reform path with strong European debt relief, in order to help restore growth and jobs in the Greek economy.

Throughout my career, I have seen first-hand the IMF's strengths. Its ability to act as the world's first and rapid crisis responder is an unparalleled global public good, as is its excellence in designing and supporting country reform programs. The IMF brings together officials from around the world, creating a culture of shared understanding. It fosters multilateral rules of the road. Its technical assistance helps countries build the infrastructure for more robust economic policies. The IMF's surveillance can help prevent crises.

But despite the Fund's strengths, the organization—like any other—has room for improvement, for example, in better analyzing and articulating policies to tackle modest global growth, addressing global rebalancing and exchange rate issues, strengthening its work on crisis prevention and debt sustainability, supporting pro-poor spending in low income countries, and helping make financial sectors more resilient. In addition, corruption can be extremely corrosive to societies and economies—the Fund should strengthen its engagement, consistent with its mandate, in combating corruption.

Question. China and the IMF: With the yuan set to become part of the SDR basket of currencies, what are the advantages and costs to China of that new status?

Answer. For inclusion in the SDR basket, China needed to meet the criteria of being a large exporter (which it met handily) and a country whose currency was widely used and traded in principal global exchange markets. On the financial criteria, the RMB's international financial role is still very modest, but it is rising off of a low base. As part of the process of entry into the SDR basket, China put forward a number of helpful reforms—it joined the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS), began to provide data on cross-border financial activities to the Bank for International Settlements and report the currency breakdown of its reserve holdings to the IMF, started weekly T-bill auctions to establish a market-determined interest rate, opened the onshore market to global central banks, and expanded the hours for RMB trading to allow the RMB to be more widely traded worldwide.

As such, China's entry into the SDR basket helped spur financial reform in China. Its entry is reflective of the broader need for reforms to liberalize the Chinese economic and financial system, and shift resources from a heavily driven investment economy, which emphasizes the role of state owned enterprises, to an economy driven by consumers and services. Many of the strongest advocates for economic liberalization in China saw the RMB's entry into the SDR basket as a means of spurring reform.

The financial reforms China undertook to join the SDR basket, as well as the reforms it is implementing more generally, will help integrate China more closely into the global economic and financial system—and its multilateral rules—going forward. Further, these reforms will create pressures for more liberalization and reform, as well as integration into the global economy. These are positive developments. However, as much as one hopes financial liberalization will proceed seamlessly and smoothly, bouts of volatility and spillovers to the rest of the global economy can be expected.

DIRECTOR-DESIGNATE SOBEL'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR PERDUE

Question. Please briefly describe your vision for taking on a new role as the U.S. Executive Director to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Answer. Throughout my career, I have seen first-hand the IMF's strengths. Its ability to act as the world's first and rapid economic and financial crisis responder is an unparalleled global public good, as is its excellence in designing and supporting country economic reform programs. The IMF brings together officials from around the world, creating a culture of shared understanding and responsibility. It fosters multilateral rules of the road. Its technical assistance helps countries build the infrastructure for more robust economic policies. The IMF's surveillance can help prevent crises.

But despite the Fund's strengths, the organization—like any other—has room for improvement, for example, in better analyzing and articulating policies to tackle modest global growth, addressing global rebalancing and exchange rate issues, strengthening its work on crisis prevention and debt sustainability, supporting pro-poor spending in low income countries, and helping make financial sectors more resilient. I also believe that the IMF, consistent with its mandate, should aggressively tackle corruption and promote good governance.

I believe firmly in tenaciously defending U.S. interests and in advancing multilateralism, as well as in working pragmatically and collegially, with analytic rigor, and in a non-partisan manner. I also believe in the IMF's mission and that our nation's leadership of the IMF is critical. Those beliefs have guided my career.

If confirmed as U.S. Executive Director, I will work vigorously to continue to strengthen and improve the IMF, consistent with those beliefs. I will dedicate myself to doing my utmost to work with Congress to help forge a stronger consensus in our country in support of the IMF and its critical global role.

Question. How do you feel your current position as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Monetary and Financial Policy has prepared you to take on this new role?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have worked on issues directly or indirectly relating to U.S. participation in the IMF, be it IMF policy and financing issues or country programs. I did so earlier in my career as the Director of the Treasury International Monetary Policy Office and the Transition Economy Office, and as the senior staff member of the U.S. Executive Director's Office at the IMF.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for the International Monetary and Financial Policy, I played a pivotal staff role in overseeing U.S. relations with the IMF. Further, during the 2001 and 2009 transitions, I was designated to be the Acting head of Treasury's International Affairs Department, and in periods where senior officials left government, I also stepped in, frequently representing the United States at critical international gatherings, such as those of the G-7 and G20 Deputies. I was also the principal G-20 financial negotiator on communiques for the United States, both for the White House and Treasury.

These experiences gave me a strong background in understanding the technical functioning of the IMF and how to be a forceful advocate for the United States and effectively advance U.S. interests in the Fund. In all of these capacities, especially as DAS, I have worked in a nonpartisan manner with very senior Republican and Democratic officials, including Secretaries of Treasury. In particular, I worked closely with Secretaries Summers, O'Neill, Snow, Paulson, Geithner and Lew.

Question. What is your assessment of the 2010 IMF reforms? Do these changes adequately address likely future risks, especially as the IMF may be considering large programs from commodity exporters dealing with the decline in oil prices?

Answer. I believe that the 2010 IMF reforms were not only vital for the health and future of the organization, but also reaffirming the U.S. commitment to being a leader in the global financial system. The reforms helped put the Fund's finances on a more permanent footing, while also helping to modernize the institution to better reflect the realities of countries' weights in today's global economy. These reforms will help sustain the legitimacy of the Fund as they will give dynamic emerging markets, in particular, a greater stake and voice in the Fund, which should bind these countries more strongly into the IMF's multilateral framework, thus reducing tendencies to drift into regionalism.

The global economy faces a number of risks, be it from slow global growth, a slowing Chinese economy, the fall in the price of oil and other commodity prices, financial volatility and stresses, as well as inadequate policy responses. These factors may result in added demands for Fund programs and resources in the future.

The Fund's financial footing is strong and should allow it to effectively meet likely challenges facing the global economy.

Question. Do you believe these reforms have benefitted the institution? If so, how? In your opinion, are other reforms needed? If so, which reforms? Please be specific.

Answer. As discussed above in question 3, I do believe that the reforms have benefitted the institution for the reasons put forward.

The Fund is a dynamic organization. It needs to reflect the realities of the global economic and financial system, especially the growing weight of dynamic emerging markets in the international monetary and financial systems. As the world economy evolves, there will be in time a need for further future evolution in the Fund's governance structure. In addition, as noted in question #1, there are a number of policy areas where I believe the Fund should intensify its focus in order to strengthen its performance. These include better analyzing and articulating policies to tackle modest global growth, addressing global rebalancing and exchange rate issues, strengthening its work on crisis prevention and debt sustainability, supporting pro-poor spending in low income countries, and helping make financial sectors more resilient. I also believe that the IMF, consistent with its mandate, should aggressively tackle corruption and promote good governance.

Question. Some analysts argue that the U.S.'s delayed action on the reform package has damaged U.S. leadership in the institution. Do you agree? How can the U.S. maximize its leverage in the IMF?

Answer. The IMF provides a multilateral framework for the global economy that promotes stronger economic policies, supports trade, rejects competitive devaluations, and enhances standards for transparency. Regionalism will always exist—the United States trades heavily with Mexico and Canada due to their proximity. But it is clearly in the U.S. interest to bind all countries in the world into the multilateral framework, of which the IMF is at the center, especially as the United States helped create the Fund and establish its values. In that regard, the Fund has consistently from its inception supported U.S. economic and strategic interests.

As noted in my response to question 4, we cannot bind countries into the multilateralist framework if the Fund is not modernized to reflect the evolution of the world economy. Rather, if we are unable to modernize the Fund and accord emerging markets a stronger voice, they will drift away from multilateralism and instead emphasize regional solutions, with lower standards, which could be detrimental to U.S. interests. While there is no dearth of infrastructure needs in the world, we saw such drift to some extent reflected in the creation of the AIB, Silk Road, and the BRICs Bank.

The United States has for the past decade consistently supported giving emerging markets greater weight in the IMF. The United States spearheaded the launch of quota and governance reforms in 2006-2008 under the Bush administration, and the Obama administration continued to do so in 2009 at the G20 Pittsburgh Summit and then in finalizing the 2010 reforms. The United States garnered tremendous goodwill in the IMF from the emerging markets for these policies.

However, the long delays in implementing the 2010 reforms meant that we lost much of this goodwill and created doubts about the United States's willingness to lead the IMF. The United States is working to earn back this goodwill. On the positive side, U.S. financial diplomats no longer have to attend international economic and financial meetings with this cloud hanging over their heads, and are able to speak more forthrightly about a positive U.S. agenda. However, this goodwill cannot be regained overnight. Earning it back will require strong and consistent cooperation in the coming years between the Executive and Legislative branches.

Question. Oil prices have fallen by over 70% since mid-2014, straining the public financial sectors of major oil-exporting countries whose budgets depend on oil revenues. In your own words, please describe the IMF's approach to the drop in global oil prices.

Answer. The Fund can play a critical role in helping countries address financial strains through its technical assistance, policy advice (surveillance) and conditional lending programs.

The oil-export countries are not a homogeneous group. For example, some are countries with relatively small populations and large financial buffers; others are lower-income, more populated and more diverse economies. Obviously, the Fund's analysis and responses will need to be tailored to individual country circumstances.

That said, the Fund has pursued several paths:

- ◆ It has urged oil exporters—especially those countries with sizable buffers that have relied heavily on oil revenues—to diversify their economies and to develop more robust private sectors, capable of creating jobs for relatively young populations (especially as in the past, much of the demand for job-seekers would have been reflected in rising governmental payrolls).
- ◆ It is offering its general macroeconomic policy advice—how to manage fiscal, monetary, and exchange rate policies given country circumstances.

- ◆ It has strongly urged countries to take advantage of low oil prices and reduce energy subsidization, which often places costly strains on budgets, while providing targeted support to the neediest to mitigate the impact of reduced subsidization.
- ◆ In all countries, but especially in those cases where countries are drawing down heavily on financial buffers (central bank reserves, sovereign wealth funds) to finance budget deficits, the Fund is encouraging comprehensive budgetary reviews to find scope for saving and efficiencies, while protecting social safety nets.
- ◆ For countries needing technical support in managing their economies in light of lower oil prices, the IMF is extending its capacity building.
- ◆ Of course, if countries need financial support, the Fund stands ready to design economic reform programs, backed by the IMF's resources.

Question. Some oil-exporters, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Russia, have been able to float the market downturn due to sizable buffers in their economies. However, other smaller or less stable nations such as Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Venezuela, and Iraq face more immediate and difficult financial decisions. Does the IMF's approach to the global oil market downturn differ for nations in different economic circumstances relating to oil prices? If so, how? If not, should the approach differ?

Answer. Oil exporting country circumstances do indeed vary considerably, and the IMF's approach to oil exporters does take into account the individual circumstances of countries, as it should. My response to question 6 addresses these issues.

Question. Some low-income oil exporters had negative experiences with IMF programs since the 1980's and 1990's. Likewise, to date, few oil-exporters have turned to the IMF for financial assistance. Are they now hesitant to turn to the IMF, and does this pose a threat to economic stability in the global economy? Is it problematic if countries like Angola and Nigeria turn to the World Bank for budgetary support, as a way to potentially circumvent an IMF program? Or is the World Bank able to address these types of circumstances?

Answer. So far, low-income oil exporting countries have not turned to the IMF. The reasons may differ per country, but many have chosen to draw down on buffers, implement budgetary measures at home, and/or rely on currency flexibility to act as a shock absorber. There may be concerns about "stigma"—tapping the IMF—but it may also be that countries do not wish to implement the robust reform measures that the IMF might seek as part of a financial program.

The efficacy of budget support depends in part on the health of the macroeconomic environment and proper economic incentives. Budget support should not serve to delay economic reform, though it can provide breathing space to cushion the impact of the adjustment. In these circumstances, strong IMF and World Bank collaboration is essential to ensure that where budget support is being extended, a satisfactory macroeconomic environment is in place. This is an area of core IMF expertise, and the IMF clearly assesses the adequacy of a macroeconomic environment for the efficacy of World Bank assistance.

Question. In January 2016, the IMF's Executive Board removed the "systemic exemption", which allowed approval of large scale loans despite debt sustainability if there was a high risk that not providing financial assistance would have spillover effects. This exemption was effectively replaced by a "reprofiling" of countries' existing debts in order to keep existing creditors on board by extending debt maturities with little loss in market value. Do you feel this is an adequate replacement for addressing global economic emergencies?

Answer. Europe appropriately provided the lion's share of the financing to Greece, Portugal and Ireland, but the use of the systemic exemption was extremely important in 2010. The situations in those countries could have created far greater and more widespread spillover and contagion effects to the global economy, including hurting the U.S. economy at the very time it was coming out of the financial crisis. Hence, exceptional support to quell possible global market pressures was warranted.

By 2012, Europe had begun to build up firewalls to support EU members and guard against the further spreading of the crisis. The United States supported strong debt relief for Greece in 2012, and continues to urge Europe to do so now as well.

Pursuant to the proposal put forward by IMF Management as part of the package eliminating the systemic exemption, there was concern that for a country whose debt was not sustainable with a high probability, requiring a debt restructuring could impose unnecessary costs on the member and its creditors. But the Fund also

did not wish to be in a position in which it would carry a disproportionate financial burden, especially in the case that the country's debt sustainability subsequently deteriorated.

Accordingly, Managing Director Lagarde's proposal required that in cases where debt was not sustainable with a high probability, the country should secure participation from its creditors on terms that would improve its debt sustainability and enhance safeguards for Fund resources. The Fund posited that these goals could be achieved through a number of means, including market borrowing if the country still had market access; debt reprofiling; maintenance of exposure/rollover arrangements; or the extension of official bilateral assistance.

The proposals represent a significant tightening of the IMF's overall lending framework, aimed at reducing the role of discretion in the provision of exceptional access. The United States supported the entirety of the Managing Director's proposals.

Question. Are you concerned about recent "exceptional access" at the IMF in which countries such as Greece and Ireland were able to receive loans significantly in excess of their financial contributions to the IMF? What justifies providing financing programs this large? How would you quantify the credit risk to the IMF of these programs? Does Congress adequately consider this risk when approving U.S. contributions to the Fund?

Answer. My response to question 9 addresses the thinking behind exceptional access in 2010. In terms of the IMF and credit risk, it is worth noting that the Fund's balance sheet is rock solid and our claims on the IMF are fully secure. The Fund has demonstrated a good track record in designing programs, which safeguard the use of the Fund's resources. The Fund is regarded as the world's de facto preferred creditor. When the IMF draws resources from a creditor country to lend to a borrower, the creditor is not exposed to the borrower, but rather to the Fund's balance sheet. In addition to the above factors, the Fund has a capital cushion of over \$20 billion, and it also has substantial gold holdings. Both Ireland and Portugal successfully completed their programs and have significantly reduced their outstanding obligations to the IMF through payments ahead of schedule.

Question. As part of the 2010 reforms, the IMF Board of Governors agreed that the representation of emerging and developing economies at the IMF did not reflect their growing importance in the global economy, and 6% of total quotas and voting power will now be shifted to these emerging and developing market economies. Do you feel that an additional 6% in quotas is commensurate with the spirit of the reform? Should emerging and developing economies be responsible for a larger share of quotas, since they make up a large share of those countries receiving IMF assistance? How does this increase in the representation of emerging markets at the IMF serve U.S. interests?

Answer. As I noted in my responses to questions 3 and 4, I believe that the 2010 IMF reforms were vital for the health and future of the organization. The reforms helped put the Fund's finances on a more permanent footing, while also helping to modernize the institution to better reflect the realities of countries' weights in the global economy.

These reforms will help sustain the legitimacy of the Fund. They will give dynamic emerging markets, in particular, a greater stake and voice in the Fund, which should bind these countries more strongly into the IMF's multilateral framework, thus reducing tendencies to drift into regionalism. While there is no dearth of infrastructure needs in the world, we saw such drift to some extent reflected in the creation of the AIIB, Silk Road, and the BRICs Bank.

Going forward, the Fund needs to remain a dynamic organization. It needs to reflect the realities of the global economic and financial system, especially the growing weight of dynamic emerging markets in the international monetary and financial systems. As the world economy evolves, there will be in time a need for further future evolution in the Fund's governance structure.

Question. The 2010 reforms also changed the means by which countries choose IMF Executive Directors, with a new requirement that all Executive Directors be elected rather than appointed. This opens up the possibility that European nations could choose to consolidate their representation on the Executive Board. In your opinion, is this a positive or negative change for Board organization? What would the impact of consolidated representation mean for the IMF Executive Board? Might this threaten U.S. influence on the Board? Could other countries elect to join the United States' representative on the Executive Board and form a group constituency?

Answer. The United States supported the proposal to allow “elected” rather than “appointed” chairs in the IMF, precisely to create greater scope for consolidation of Board chairs—especially in Europe. Virtually all observers agree that Europe is overrepresented in the Fund, both in terms of chairs and shares. With regard to chairs, Europeans now lead eight of the IMF Board’s 24 seats.

Greater consolidation of European representation would not threaten U.S. leadership of the organization. The United States remains the Fund’s largest shareholder and is able to present its views forcefully in the IMF Board. Europe already plays a critical role in the Fund and will continue to do so.

The United States will retain its single seat. In fact, given the large U.S. share in the Fund, Board seating rules preclude the U.S. from having other countries join the U.S. chair.

Question. One of the IMF’s main duties is to monitor the economic and financial policies of its member countries. To what extent has the IMF, as it claims, increased transparency and accountability to both shareholders and loan-recipients?

Answer. When I first worked on the staff of the U.S. Executive Director in the late 1990s, the IMF was a very opaque organization and virtually no documentation was shared outside the IMF. That is no longer the case.

While publication of the bulk of IMF documents is on a “voluntary but presumed” basis, the overwhelming bulk of IMF documents are published. In recent years, more than 90 percent of member countries published the Article IV report, including a comprehensive summary of the Board discussion. Ninety-six percent of countries with an IMF program allowed publication of the program documents, and all exceptional access programs in the last decade have been published.

The IMF also releases policy papers, typically immediately after a board meeting. In 2014, the Executive Board decided to reduce the lag for public access to most board meeting minutes from five to three years, while retaining the five-year lag only for discussions that involve IMF lending or a Policy Support Instrument. The minutes include verbatim transcripts of the board meeting. These trends are discussed in the following IMF report on Transparency, published August 25, 2015—<http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=4981>.

The Fund has also done a better job in recent years in reaching out to the media, civil society, and national parliaments. These are positive developments that the United States strongly encourages.

Question. Some analysts assert that IMF surveillance, especially of advanced economies, is largely meaningless since the IMF has no means of acting on its analysis when a country is not an IMF borrower. Do you agree with this assertion? If so, do you think the IMF should have this power?

Answer. IMF surveillance is one of the core mandates of the Fund. Pursuant to it, the Fund conducts an economic review of each of its members, mainly on an annual basis.

The Fund’s surveillance can provide useful analysis and insights and highlight risks to national policymakers on their domestic situations and policy choices, especially bringing to bear the Fund’s global perspective and cross-country experiences. Indeed, often other Fund members have faced similar fiscal, monetary policy, and other challenges as the country undergoing a surveillance review, and developed policies to tackle such difficulties which might provide useful background for policymakers in the country being reviewed. Similarly, the surveillance reviews allow national policymakers to exchange views with the Fund and explain the reasoning behind various policies.

While a country undergoing a surveillance review is sovereign and may choose not to follow the Fund’s advice for any number of political or economic reasons, the surveillance process is invaluable nevertheless. The Executive Board meeting held to discuss the surveillance review provides additional scrutiny and peer pressure on member countries.

Question. How might the IMF make its surveillance more effective in promoting better economic policies within member countries?

Answer. Despite the Fund’s strengths, the IMF has room for improvement. In particular, I believe the Fund’s surveillance can be strengthened in terms of better analyzing and articulating policies to tackle modest global growth, addressing global rebalancing and exchange rate issues, strengthening its work on crisis prevention and debt sustainability, supporting pro-poor spending in low income countries, and helping make financial sectors more resilient. I also believe that the IMF can better tackle corruption and promote good governance.

Question. The IMF proceeded with its 2010 bailout of Greece despite major concerns within the Fund over whether this loan would work. The United States supported this program. Does the IMF expect to participate in the third program for Greece, spearheaded by the Europeans?

Answer. Europe and the IMF are now seeking to design and negotiate an economic program for Greece, combining Greek reforms and needed debt relief from Europe. Working out the scope and magnitude of the policy reforms and debt relief involves trade-offs, which are still being discussed by all parties. These discussions are ongoing, and whether and how they will be concluded is not now clear.

Secretary Lew continues to urge Greece to stay on the path of reform, and the Europeans and IMF to work closely together in designing a reform path which both could support. The Secretary has further called for Europe to provide the lion's share of the financing and offer strong debt relief for Greece.

Question. What are your views on China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank? How should the U.S. government engage with China and other emerging donors?

Answer. There is no dearth of infrastructure needs facing the world economy and the AIIB can play a positive role in this regard. However, in doing so, it is critical that the AIIB meet the high quality multilateral standards that have been established in other multilateral development institutions.

There are parallels with how China should engage the IMF and vice versa. The IMF is the world's leading multilateral institution, and the United States helped create the Fund and establish its values. In this regard, the Fund since its inception has supported U.S. economic and strategic interests.

But for China and other emerging donors to feel as if they are part of the multilateral system, they must feel that the system is recognizing their growing role and weight. Otherwise, they may drift toward regionalist solutions, undermining multilateralism and the global institutions. This is one of the main reasons why Congressional passage of the 2010 reforms was so important and welcome.

Question. Members of the IMF have committed to refraining from manipulating their exchange rates to gain an unfair trade advantage. However, the IMF has never publically cited a country for currency manipulation. Some argue this is because the IMF defines currency manipulation inaccurately. Others argue currency manipulation should not be the purview of the IMF. Do you think currency manipulation is a problem? What role do you think the IMF should play in addressing currency manipulation?

Answer. The IMF was created against the backdrop of protectionism and beggar-thy-neighbor currency policies in the 1930s to promote growth and international monetary cooperation and avoid such disastrous policies.

The President has clearly and often stated that no country should be allowed to grow its exports on the basis of a persistently undervalued currency. Much progress has been made through U.S. bilateral diplomacy and through our leadership in multilateral fora such as the G-20 and IMF.

With respect to the Fund, its technical analysis on exchange markets and global imbalances has improved in recent years. For example, its World Economic Outlook has increasingly covered the pattern of global payments developments, and the staff has developed an annual External Sector Report which delves into and assesses exchange rate valuations and underlying policies. External issues are increasingly covered in annual surveillance reports. These are helpful developments.

Nonetheless, the IMF offers its staff and Management an important bully pulpit to speak out publicly and forcefully for currency flexibility and policies to reduce large current account surpluses. The Fund does so, but it could do a far better job in rendering crisp judgments on currency policies and using its voice and influence with far greater force.

RESPONSES OF ADAM H. STERLING, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO
THE SLOVAC REPUBLIC, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE STERLING'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CARDIN

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. During my career, I have consistently and ardently promoted human rights and democracy as a pillar of U.S. interests, several times serving in countries

where these basic values were under threat or respect for them was going from bad to worse. I have also maintained professional contacts over the past two decades with representatives of leading international and U.S. human rights organizations, as well as with the Helsinki Commission.

As the Human Rights Officer at one of my first postings, my reporting on a series of election-related abuses led to public expressions of concern from Washington that likely curbed some further abuses. My work won awards from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor as well as from my Embassy. The attention my work drew to election and other human rights abuses also buoyed the morale of, and perhaps gave a measure of protection to, local democracy and human rights advocates, some of whom praised my actions as evidence that the United States placed a higher priority on human rights than did any other country. My participation in reviewing draft legislation in this country, the preparation of which was not publicized, also enabled international scrutiny of a law that would have curbed religious freedom. My early warning about two such pieces of legislation gave senior officials in Washington and OSCE representatives a chance to weigh in against the legislation, and ultimately have both draft laws withdrawn before a vote in parliament. I have served as an OSCE election observer in two countries and was credited by OSCE in one country with having "saved" a hastily organized observer mission by recruiting several dozen observers on short notice.

As I moved into more senior roles at subsequent postings, I regularly met with dissidents and civil society activists, signaling U.S. interest in both their concerns and their personal welfare. In one country, I hosted meetings for them with visiting senior officials from the Department. I also worked with pro-democracy civil society groups and a U.S.-based democracy NGO to help secure their legal status within the country and freedom to operate without harassment. More broadly, my meetings with activists enriched my human rights and democracy advocacy with host government officials.

In these and other instances, both overseas and in Washington, I have never forgotten that the promotion of human rights and democracy around the world is an unending effort requiring constant attention from every level and branch of our government. It is also one of the singularly most rewarding missions a public servant could have the honor to take part in.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Slovakia? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Slovakia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. The most pressing human rights issues in Slovakia include corruption; a weak judiciary; and discrimination against ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities, particularly Roma, refugees, Muslims, and the LGBTI community. If confirmed, I will continue our long-standing support to the government of Slovakia on judicial reform, where notable progress has been made in recent years but where significant work remains to be done. We also will continue our vigorous dialogue on human rights and advocate for the rights of all minorities.

Promoting Rule of Law continues to be a major focus of our efforts in Slovakia. Domestic polls show that 90 percent of Slovaks perceive corruption—particularly in public procurement and the use of EU funds—as widespread. The media regularly report on alleged corruption, but almost no high-level officials have been prosecuted since independence. Critics blame political influence over the police and prosecution services for blocking or hampering investigations. Rule of law reform is a long-term, multifaceted, and challenging process. Slovakia has demonstrated recent commitment to reform by adopting an anti-corruption action plan in consultation with the business community's Rule of Law initiative, a second National Action Plan under the Open Government Partnership, and a new judicial ethics code. These measures are steps in the right direction, but we continue to stress the need both for their full implementation and to hold corrupt actors accountable in a court of law. If confirmed, I will continue to work on strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, reinforcing the point that accountability and transparency are necessary to modern democracy and that corruption is inimical to democratic values and stable governments. We also will continue to support efforts to promote these values, including by providing grants to NGOs and individuals working in the field and bringing in experts to offer training and cooperation to Slovak judges, police, prosecutors, and other officials.

Marginalization of the Romani minority remains among the most pressing human rights concerns in Slovakia, and promoting the human rights of Roma is a top priority for the U.S. government. Reports estimate Slovakia's Roma minority to be seven to eight percent of the population (roughly 450,000 people), and many Roma

live in impoverished, isolated settlements where discrimination is high and, in some areas, unemployment nears 100 percent. If confirmed, I will continue to urge Slovakia to improve the socio-economic and security situation of its Roma citizens and to ensure accountability for discrimination or violence directed at them and other minority groups. I will advocate for equal access to education for Romani children and work with partners to eradicate segregation in the education sector in any form. I also will promote Roma inclusion and ensure our Embassy stands firmly against derogatory remarks about the Roma or any other minority in Slovakia.

Under my leadership, the Embassy will continue to play an active role in promoting Roma rights. The Embassy has been supporting the efforts of a Roma NGO to work with school inspectors to develop and implement a new methodology for recognizing illegal segregation in Slovak schools. Additionally, the U.S. government has encouraged the political engagement of the Roma community in Slovakia, and the Embassy has engaged young Roma leaders, including mayors and municipal officials, and has sent them on study tours to the United States. We will continue our support for the community by providing grants to Romani organizations and NGOs and raising public awareness about minority rights and the positive contributions made by Roma to Slovak society.

To date, Slovakia has been largely unaffected by the European migration crisis, as the main refugee routes do not pass through its territory. Nevertheless, the Slovak government has strongly opposed mandatory refugee quotas under an EU-wide refugee distribution system, filing suit against the measure with the European Court of Justice in December 2015, and Slovak officials and politicians across the political spectrum engaged in anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric ahead of March 5 parliamentary elections. If confirmed, I will continue to stress to Slovak officials that such statements are inconsistent with the values on which our bilateral relations are based, impede practical approaches to the crisis, and play into the hands of far-right extremists who have exploited the crisis to expand their support. I will urge the government to continue the positive steps it has taken on refugees, including additional financial contributions to alleviate the migrant crisis and sending Slovak police to support EU border control missions. Slovakia has temporarily accommodated 500 refugees currently applying for asylum in Austria and recently accepted 200 Iraqi Christian refugees for permanent resettlement.

Slovakia's religious minorities, particularly the Muslim community, continue to face discrimination. Restrictive legal registration procedures for religious dominations—which require at least 20,000 adherents for registration—prevent smaller religious groups, including the Muslim community, from attaining the legal status to perform economic and certain public religious functions. For example, Slovakia's Muslim community, which numbers between two and five thousand individuals, has been unable to legally establish a Mosque in Slovakia, instead relying on smaller prayer rooms. Not being able to register has blocked the Muslim community from legally employing imams. If confirmed, I will continue the Embassy's practice of regularly meeting with government officials and registered and unregistered religious organizations to discuss religious freedom issues, including the treatment of minority religious groups and ways to combat anti-Muslim sentiment. I will also share our successful efforts at integrating religious groups in the United States as a means of promoting the full inclusion of minority religions.

LGBTI rights are human rights, which all nations have a responsibility to respect. The United States is known in Slovakia as a staunch advocate of LGBTI rights and consistently has advocated for the human rights of LGBTI persons. If confirmed, I will ensure that this support continues, via grants to NGOs focused on promoting greater public awareness of LGBTI rights and our Embassy's participation in annual Pride activities.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Slovakia in advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?

Answer. Obstacles to promoting human rights in Slovakia include weak institutions susceptible to political influence; social prejudice; the growth of far-right movements; and a lack of resources for civil society, NGOs, and activists.

Slovakia's judiciary remains one of its most troubled institutions, hampering anti-corruption efforts and discouraging foreign investment. Public trust in the judiciary stands at about 25 percent, the second-lowest level in the EU. While Slovakia's current legal structure—most of which was updated after Slovakia became an independent state in 1993—is adequate, democracies need an independent, impartial, and accountable judiciary and broader legal system whose first obligation is to uphold the law. Slovakia's self-governing judiciary needs to hold all judges accountable

to certain standards, and we believe that the new enforceable judicial ethics code is a step in the right direction. We also need to see Slovakia hold all corrupt actors, including high-level officials, accountable in a court of law to serve as a credible public example and deterrent. Ultimately, Slovakia will need political will for reform; strong, effective, well managed institutions free from political influence; fearless public servants, including judges, prosecutors, and police investigators; and enhanced public accountability, in which civil society and the media play an important role. Our Embassy will continue to be active in all of these areas if I am confirmed.

Social prejudices are another challenge to reform. For example, there is little public support for efforts to promote Roma inclusion, with even many educated Slovaks claiming, inaccurately, that the government already invests too much money in such efforts. As a result, Slovak political leaders and officials have little incentive to prioritize minority rights. Despite the difficult environment, if confirmed, I will have the Embassy continue its focus on raising public awareness of the universality and importance of minority rights and the success of integration efforts in other countries. We will stress the significant long-term economic costs of a lack of educational and economic opportunities for Roma versus the economic benefits of policies that promote greater inclusion.

The growth of extremist movements is a problem not limited to Slovakia, but a phenomenon we are seeing throughout Europe. Like many in Slovakia, I am concerned by the increasing popularity of far-right extremists in the country. If confirmed, I will ensure we continue to provide the Slovak government with training on how to monitor and combat the spread of extremism and that our Embassy continues to do all it can to counter extremist rhetoric through public messaging and events.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society and other nongovernmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Slovakia? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. Our Embassy has well-established relations with human rights activists, civil society representatives, and NGOs in both the United States and Slovakia, and I will work to expand and deepen these key relationships if confirmed.

Our Embassy fully complies with the Leahy laws and, if confirmed, I will continue to uphold our legislative commitment to ensure that no U.S. assistance is provided to any unit or individual that has committed a gross violation of human rights. I will continue to support this and similar efforts to ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation reinforce human rights and accountability. Additionally, the Embassy has leveraged security and defense cooperation to promote human rights, a practice that I will continue if confirmed. For example, in cooperation with the FBI and DOJ experts, the Embassy organized tailor-made training for Slovak investigators and prosecutors dealing with corruption, and more such training is planned for this year. We can also send Slovak police to the International Law Enforcement Academy program in Budapest, where they receive training from U.S. federal law enforcement agencies on topics related to strengthening rule of law, including anti-corruption, ethics, and countering trafficking in persons.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Slovakia to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Slovakia?

Answer. As reported in the annual U.S. State Department Human Rights Report chapter on Slovakia, there are no political prisoners in Slovakia or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by the government of Slovakia. If confirmed, I will ensure full Embassy engagement with the Slovak government on this issue should that situation change.

Question. Will you engage with Slovakia on matters of human rights, civil rights and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. Our Embassy has long has been engaged on human rights and good governance in Slovakia, and, if confirmed, I will ensure these important efforts will continue and be expanded.

Question. While the Slovak Republic is a member of the EU and NATO and cooperates with the U.S. on a range of security issues, the Slovak Republic is not immune from Russian influence given its status as a transit hub for Russian gas going to Europe and the pervasive nature of Russian propaganda in the country. How would you characterize Slovakia's relations with Russia and the extent of Russian

influence in the country? As U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, how would you work to counter Russian influence there?

Answer. Slovakia is a valued NATO Ally and EU partner. Slovakia has stood with us in implementing sanctions against Russian aggression in Ukraine, and Slovakia supports our efforts to increase Europe's energy security. I will, if confirmed, work to help build its capacity to act forcefully in concert with us in Europe and beyond. This commitment includes ensuring Slovakia has the resources needed to be less dependent on Russia.

During the Cold War, Russia exercised influence over Slovakia, which Russia argued was a natural outgrowth of linguistic and cultural ties and the Soviet Union's role in ending Nazi occupation of Slovak territory in World War II. A significant number of Slovaks studied in a school system strongly influenced by the Soviet Union or studied in the Soviet Union itself. Today, Russia is Slovakia's fourth most important trade partner, and Slovakia is almost completely dependent on Russia for its oil, natural gas, and nuclear fuel supply.

If confirmed, I will strongly advocate for Slovakia to build a well-resourced military less dependent on Russia. I also will work with my counterparts across the region to reduce Slovakia's dependence on Russian energy sources. The United States is committed to helping advance European energy security through an integrated European energy market and diversification—of fuel types, supply source countries, and delivery routes. Strengthened Slovak energy security would present opportunities to foster increased energy cooperation across the region. We will continue to encourage Slovakia to work within EU structures to promote greater integration within the EU's own internal energy market. If confirmed, I will also focus on promoting and strengthening growing U.S.-Slovakia cultural and trade ties to counter Russian influence. Slovaks tend to hold very positive views of the United States and are proud members of NATO and the EU. Great programs like Summer Work and Travel enable thousands of Slovaks (2,700 in calendar year 2015) to visit the United States and reinforce Slovakia's strong commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration. The Embassy actively works to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation, which is one of its Mission goals. Last year, the Embassy sponsored a public panel discussion of conspiracy theories in the media, many of which are spread by Russian media outlets. The U.S. government narrative in Slovakia focuses on the strengths of America and the transatlantic alliance to inspire confidence in the future, which counters the focus of Russian propaganda on instilling fear and uncertainty.

Question. The Slovak Republic routinely ranks on the bottom of EU countries for institutionalization of the rule of law and corruption. In parliamentary elections last weekend, far-right and extremist parties made unprecedented gains, bringing instability to the domestic political situation as Prime Minister Fico is now seeking to form a coalition government with a larger number of coalition partners. Should the U.S. be concerned about the state of democracy in Slovakia? How should the U.S. respond to help reinforce democratic institutions in the country?

Answer. Slovakia's March 5 parliamentary elections saw eight parties qualify for seats in Parliament, including several previously unrepresented parties. The incumbent ruling party, Smer, which had enjoyed an outright majority in Parliament since 2012, again garnered the most votes. However, several parties rode a wave of anti-establishment sentiment to deny Smer a renewed majority, necessitating a coalition government. The election itself was smooth, with an open and fair campaign, good voter turnout, and all parties quickly accepting the results. The process for forming the new government has been procedurally smooth, with President Kiska dutifully discharging his constitutional responsibilities to guide the process, in the first instance by granting Smer until March 18 to form a coalition majority. Democratic hallmarks such as independent media and respect for the constitutional process have been unchallenged in both the pre- and post-election environment.

That said, the fact that the far-right extremist party LS-NS won eight percent of the popular vote and 14 seats in the new Parliament has caused concern in Slovakia, across Europe, and in the United States. The positions espoused by the party and its leadership stand in direct contrast to the values shared by the United States and the vast majority of Slovak people. I am heartened that President Kiska did not invite LS-NS to join his post-election meeting with all the other parties elected to Parliament and that the other parties have expressed unwillingness to consider a coalition with LS-NS. LS-NS's success reflects the wrong-headed rise in xenophobic rhetoric expressed or tolerated by mainstream parties as well as voter dissatisfaction with corruption and weak public services, which the Slovak government has ignored for too long.

One of the principal reasons for Smer's underperformance in the final stages of the campaign centered around perceptions of endemic government corruption. While

Slovakia has come a long way since independence in terms of strengthening the rule of law, more remains to be done. The country has made progress with the recent adoption of several anti-corruption measures, but implementation is key and high-level prosecutions remain rare. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, reinforcing that accountability and transparency are necessary to modern democracy and stressing that corruption undermines democratic values and effective, stable government. Our Embassy has been a close partner with government and civil society in encouraging needed reforms, including by providing training opportunities for prosecutors and law enforcement. I plan to continue to build upon these efforts if given the opportunity, as I believe the Slovak people share our goal to strengthen and deepen the rule of law and democracy within the country, and to cement the progress Slovakia made in its first two decades of independence.

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE STERLING'S RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR PERDUE

Question. Please briefly describe your vision for taking on a new role as the U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia. What are your top priorities? What challenges do you foresee?

Answer. No U.S. ambassador has a higher priority than the protection of our citizens from ensuring the safety of individual American travelers, to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

Slovakia is a valued NATO Ally and EU partner. If confirmed, I will work to build Slovakia's capacity—including a resourced military less dependent on Russia—to act in the region and around the globe in concert with the United States and other allies. If confirmed, I will also focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment, including by increasing opportunities for U.S. companies in the Slovak market and for Slovak companies that want to invest in the United States. I will also promote U.S. exports, fight for transparency and the rule of law as Slovakia improves its business environment, advocate for strong intellectual property rights enforcement, and press for greater energy diversity and efficiency that will further Slovakia's, and Europe's, energy security. Finally, if confirmed, I will emphasize with Slovak leaders and ordinary citizens that our countries' partnership is grounded in our shared democratic values, which include respect for the human rights and dignity of all people, notably including, in the case of Slovakia, its Romani minority and Muslims.

An immediate challenge I will confront will be forging a strong working relationship with the new Slovak government. Slovakia's March 5 parliamentary elections saw eight parties qualify for seats in Parliament, including several previously unrepresented parties. The incumbent ruling party, Smer, which had enjoyed an outright majority in Parliament since 2012, again garnered the most votes. However, several parties rode a wave of anti-establishment sentiment to deny Smer a renewed majority, necessitating a coalition government. Whatever the outcome of the ongoing coalition negotiations, several key ministry positions will change hands and the new coalition's platform may have different priorities than the current government.

If confirmed, I will immediately seek to preserve and build on the current momentum in the bilateral relationship with the new government, in part by establishing strong ties to existing and new leaders to help facilitate more effective communication and build trust.

Question. How do you feel your past experience, as well as your current position as Deputy Chief of Mission with the U.S. Embassy at The Hague, have prepared you to take on this new role?

Answer. I have more than 25 years of experience in the Foreign Service. I am currently leading the U.S. mission in the Netherlands as Charge d'Affaires for the second time after leading our embassy in Azerbaijan for two long periods as Charge d'Affaires. In total, I have served as Charge for over two years of my career. In my capacity as Deputy Chief of Mission at both missions, I was responsible for internal Embassy operations and mentoring new officers. Beyond prior postings in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America, I have had the privilege to work in Washington, both in the State Department and at the National Security Council, where I was the Director responsible for 17 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including Slovakia. These experiences have given me both the Washington and the field perspective for what is necessary in modern diplomacy, and what is expected of me by the White House as the President's personal representative.

Question. How would you describe the role and contributions of Slovakia as a NATO ally? While leaders in Poland and Baltic countries have suggested the establishment of NATO bases in their countries as a deterrent to Russian aggression in the region, Slovak Prime Minister Fico has rejected the notion that Slovakia could host a NATO base. What is the U.S. view on his position? Do you believe this has to do with Slovakia's sympathies toward Russia?

Answer. Slovakia is a strong NATO Ally. A member since 2004, Slovakia has shown a strong willingness to support NATO missions within Europe and throughout the world, to include operations in the Balkans, as well as U.N. Missions in Africa and the Levant. Slovakia has sent troops to—and taken casualties in—both Iraq and Afghanistan. Slovakia currently has 36 troops serving in Afghanistan as part of Resolute Support Mission. Slovakia is an active participant in NATO training exercises and has hosted several multinational exercises with its NATO Allies. Slovakia understands burden sharing and has announced its intent to increase defense spending from 1 percent to 1.6 percent of GDP by 2020, with 20 percent of that dedicated to force modernization.

Slovakia has committed to host a NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU). These small headquarters are valuable contributions to NATO's plan to adapt to emerging security concerns in and around Europe. NFIUs facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the eastern part of the Alliance, support collective defense planning, and assist in coordinating training and exercises.

Question. How would you characterize Slovakia's relations with Russia? Why has Slovakia been skeptical of EU sanctions against Russia over its aggression in Ukraine? How does Slovakia's perception compare to that of its neighbors? What is the extent of Russian influence on the Slovak government? How do the Slovakian people view Russia?

Answer. Slovakia is a valued NATO Ally and EU partner. Slovakia supported the EU consensus to impose and subsequently roll over the sanctions, most recently in January 2016. Slovakia supports U.S. and EU efforts to strengthen Europe's energy security and has played a critical role in strengthening Ukraine's energy security by enabling the reverse flow of natural gas to Ukraine starting in 2014. This step allowed Ukraine to get through the last two winters without any major gas shortages and gain bargaining leverage with Russia over future gas supply and transit contracts.

Russian influence in Slovakia is partly a remnant of the former Czechoslovakia's place in the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. Russia then exercised influence over Slovakia, which Russia argued was a natural outgrowth of linguistic and cultural ties and the Soviet Union's role in ending Nazi occupation of Slovak territory in World War II. A significant number of Slovaks studied in a school system strongly influenced by the Soviet Union or studied in the Soviet Union itself. Today, Russia is Slovakia's fourth-most-important trade partner, and Slovakia is almost completely dependent on Russia for its oil, natural gas, and nuclear fuel supply.

Question. In your opinion, can the U.S. do anything to mitigate Russian influence with the Slovakian government? With the Slovak people? If so, what specifically?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to help build Slovakia's capacity to act in concert with us in Europe and beyond. This commitment includes ensuring Slovakia has the resources needed to be less dependent on Russia. Specifically, I will strongly advocate for Slovakia to build a well-resourced military less dependent on Russia. I will also work with my counterparts across the region to reduce Slovakia's dependence on Russian energy sources.

Additionally, if confirmed, I will also focus on promoting and strengthening growing U.S.-Slovakia cultural and trade ties to counter Russian influence. Slovaks tend to hold very positive views of the United States and are proud members of NATO and the EU. Great programs like Summer Work and Travel enable thousands of Slovaks (2,700 in calendar year 2015) to visit the United States and reinforce Slovakia's strong commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration. The Embassy actively works to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation, which is one of its Mission goals. Last year, the Embassy sponsored a public panel discussion of conspiracy theories in the media, many of which are spread by Russian media outlets. The U.S. government narrative in Slovakia focuses on the strengths of America and the transatlantic alliance to inspire confidence in the future, which counters the focus of Russian propaganda on instilling fear and uncertainty.

Question. There are differing assessments of corruption inside Slovakia. In your opinion, to what extent is corruption a problem for Slovakia? How does corruption affect life in Slovakia? How can the U.S. government help to reduce the influence of corruption in the country?

Answer. Corruption continues to be a significant problem in Slovakia. Public confidence in the judicial system is among the lowest in the EU, an example of how corruption affects society. Statistics show that most corruption cases prosecuted in Slovakia involve small sums and that high-level prosecutions are rare. Strengthening the rule of law is a long-term, ongoing, and complex challenge. While Slovakia has come a long way since independence, more remains to be done. Our Embassy has been a close partner in developing Slovak institutions and will continue to work hard to strengthen rule of law in Slovakia.

If confirmed, I will work to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, reinforcing that accountability and transparency are necessary to modern democracy and stressing that corruption undermines democratic values and effective, stable government. Our Embassy has been a close partner with government and civil society in encouraging needed reforms, including by providing training opportunities for prosecutors and law enforcement. I plan to continue building upon these efforts if given the opportunity. The recent Slovak elections clearly showed that the Slovak people place a top priority on fighting corruption in their country, which requires strengthening and deepening the rule of law and democracy in the country.

Question. What can the United States do to help strengthen energy security and increase supply diversification for Slovakia and its neighbors?

Answer. The United States and Slovakia are partnering closely on the issue of energy security, as Slovakia is almost completely dependent on Russia for its oil, natural gas, and nuclear fuel supply. Diversification of energy routes and sources is particularly important for countries like Slovakia that are heavily reliant on single sources of supply. The United States is committed to advancing European energy security through an integrated European energy market and diversification—of fuel types, supply source countries, and delivery routes. One of our highest priorities is maintaining Ukraine, and thus Slovakia, as a gas transit country.

Enhanced Slovak energy security is also an opportunity to foster increased energy cooperation across the region. We continue to encourage Slovakia to work within EU structures to promote greater integration within the EU's own internal energy market. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across the region to promote this type of regional collaboration.

Our energy security policy is a pro-Europe policy, not an anti-Russia policy. Russian supplies can and should remain an important source of energy for Europe. But suppliers must follow Europe's rules. We believe comprehensive gas diversification—fuel type, supply source country, and transit route—and adherence to EU rules to ensure a transparent, liquid and competitive market best guarantee energy security for the region's people.

Question. How would you promote the expansion of U.S.-Slovakia trade and investment ties? Do you believe the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership would benefit Slovakia? Why or why not?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs as well as the U.S. Department of Commerce to ensure the full resources of the U.S. government are used to advocate for U.S. businesses in Slovakia. I will also pursue aggressive U.S. investment and export promotion efforts to maximize the many commercial opportunities in the Slovak market. I will work with my staff to promote joint ventures and other opportunities for Slovak firms seeking to invest in the United States.

As someone who has served for the past six years on the boards of directors for the American Chambers of Commerce (AmCham) in the Netherlands and Azerbaijan, I will continue, if confirmed, as a partner with the AmCham in Slovakia to improve Slovakia's business climate, with a focus on continuing to increase transparency, predictability, stability, and the transfer of best practices from the United States. One way Slovakia can enhance its appeal to U.S. businesses is by better institutionalizing rule of law, particularly anti-corruption efforts. A level playing field would benefit not only U.S. firms, but Slovakia as a whole.

As a market-oriented, export-led economy, Slovakia supports T-TIP. If confirmed, I will work with the Slovak government to promote the expected benefits that T-TIP and increased trade with the United States will bring to Slovakia and the region, particularly during Slovakia's inaugural presidency of the European Council during the second half of this year.