

**NOMINATIONS OF THE 112TH  
CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION**

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**HEARINGS**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

—  
FEBRUARY 7 THROUGH NOVEMBER 28, 2012  
—

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
112TH CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION

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**NOMINATIONS OF GENE A. CRETZ, DEBORAH  
R. MALAC, DAVID B. WHARTON, ALEXANDER  
M. LASKARIS**

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THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2012

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

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Hon. Gene Allan Cretz, of New York, to be Ambassador to the  
Republic of Ghana  
Deborah Ruth Malac, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic  
of Liberia  
David Bruce Wharton, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Repub-  
lic of Zimbabwe  
Alexander Mark Laskaris, of Maryland, to be Ambassador to the  
Republic of Guinea

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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:05 p.m., in room  
SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher A.  
Coons, presiding.

Present: Senator Coons.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER A. COONS,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE**

Senator COONS. I am pleased to call to order this nomination hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the Ambassadors for Ghana, Zimbabwe, Liberia, and Guinea. As always, I am grateful for the supportive service of my good friend and ranking member, Senator Isakson of Georgia, as well as other members of the committee. Senator Isakson and I were just on the floor together where we had a series of three votes, and he wanted me to express his apologies. He hopes to join us briefly, but he may well not be able to join us here for this hearing today. He has been a diligent and reliable partner and has attended literally every single hearing from beginning to end we have had so far. So he wanted me to make those apologies at the outset given the exigencies of trying to make his flight home.

I want to welcome and thank our distinguished nominees, Ambassador Cretz, the nominee for Ghana, David Wharton, who is the nominee for Zimbabwe, Deborah Malac, who is the nominee for Liberia, and Alexander Laskaris, the nominee to serve in Guinea. All four of you bring to the table a vast array of relevant experi-

ence in Africa and around the world, and I look forward to hearing your vision for how to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives in these countries.

Last year, Senator Isakson and I traveled to Ghana, which has experienced remarkable growth and has placed it amongst the top 10 fastest-growing economies in the world. Despite the persistent challenge of widespread poverty, Ghana is largely seen as a regional model for good governance, democracy, stability, and economic success. And I look forward to hearing from you about how we will continue to utilize our resources to encourage greater U.S. trade investment in Ghana, which presents, I think, great opportunities for American business.

As I mentioned at our last subcommittee hearing, I am disappointed that the U.S. Department of Commerce chose not to replace the U.S. commercial service officer, formerly posted in Accra. And I believe it is one of many examples why the administration needs to be better coordinate its strategy for promoting economic engagement with Africa among the many agencies responsible for this task.

Zimbabwe is sadly at the other end of the spectrum from Ghana when it comes to democracy and good governance as demonstrated by the fact President Mugabe has been in power more than 32 years. Since 2009, a transitional coalition government has worked toward reform and power-sharing, mediated by SADC, which is proven to be one of the more effective regional organizations in Africa. While Zimbabwe's political environment remains volatile, the GPA has led to a period of stability and recovery, relatively speaking, after many years of violence and collapse.

I look forward to hearing about how the international community can encourage the constitutional reform process and progress that SADC has made with the Global Political Agreement. I am hopeful all political parties will soon agree on a draft constitution that can pave the way toward successful future elections.

Since its historical elections in June 2010, Guinea has begun to emerge from decades of authoritarianism toward a more open and democratic system, but there are very significant challenges which remain. Legislative elections have been delayed due to disagreements about elections management and distrust. Tensions that escalated during the 2010 elections remain central today, but there also has to be accountability for abuses carried out by the military and government. And Guinea must implement economic reforms to reduce corruption, including in its mining sector where increased transparency and certainty could open the door to increased investment and trade.

Finally, we turn to Liberia, which has experienced economic growth, improved rule of law, and increase stability since the civil war there ended in 2003. In my view, much of Liberia's progress can be attributed to strong leadership, and I am hopeful President Johnson Sirleaf will continue to build on gains made combating corruption and strengthening governance in her second term. I was honored to join the Secretary of State at her second inaugural.

As the U.N. Peacekeeping Force continues its drawdown, Liberia must continue to focus on building its security and justice sectors,

especially the police. Increased recent violence on the border with Cote d'Ivoire underscores the importance of security sector reform.

As I mentioned, in all four countries, we have before us four strong nominees. Since 2008, Ambassador Gene Cretz has served as the United States Ambassador to Libya. He is the current nominee to serve in Ghana. He has previously overseen the closing and reopening of the U.S. Embassy and significant transition that followed the fall of Gadhafi. Previously, Ambassador Cretz served as DAS in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in addition to posts in Tel Aviv, Damascus, Beijing, and New Delhi.

David Wharton is the nominee to be Ambassador to Zimbabwe. He is currently serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of African Affairs following posts in Guatemala, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Kenya.

Alexander Laskaris is the nominee to be Ambassador to Guinea, who most recently served as counsel general at the U.S. consulate in Erbil, Iraq. He has previously served as DCM at Embassies in Kosovo and Burundi, as well as postings in Angola, Botswana, and Liberia.

Finally, last but not least, Deborah Malac is the nominee to serve as our next Ambassador to Liberia, currently serving as Director of the Office of East African Affairs. I have a lot I want to talk to you about. Previously Ms. Malac served as DCM at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, as well as important posts in Senegal and Bangkok and South Africa and Laos and in Cameroon.

I am very pleased to welcome all four of today's distinguished nominees and look forward to your opening statements.

Senator COONS. I would, in the absence of Senator Isakson—do we expect Senator Isakson? We're not sure.

VOICE. The latest I heard was he was going to try to join us later.

Senator COONS. OK. If at some point Senator Isakson's evolving schedule allows him to drive by, please let me know and we will interrupt wherever we are.

I would like to invite, in turn, each of the four nominees to introduce your family, your supporters, your friends, anyone you would like to recognize who might be watching us by Webcast, which is increasingly common. And after that, in order, we will then turn to your opening statements. If we might just simply go in order from right to left.

Ambassador Cretz.

Ambassador CRETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce my wife, Annette, my daughter, Gabrielle, my son, Captain Jeffrey Cretz of the Air Force National Guard Unit, you will be pleased to know, out of Newcastle, DE.

Senator COONS. Wonderful. I look forward to talking with you.

Ambassador CRETZ. My daughter-in-law, Meghan, and my daughter's fiancé, Justin, as well as friends, the Ludwig family, who recently came from Tunisia, and they will be heading to Cambodia.

Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Ambassador.

Ms. Malac.

Ms. MALAC. I would like to introduce my husband, Ron Olson, my daughter, Katharine, my oldest son, Nicholas, and my younger son, Gregory, who are here today.

Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Ms. Malac.

Mr. Wharton.

Mr. WHARTON. Thank you, Senator. I am honored to introduce my wife, Julia, and my son, Sam, who I believe has the proxy vote for our other two children, Sarah and Turner, who could not be here today, but they wanted to be. And to my parents if they are watching on Webcast from North Carolina.

Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Wharton.

Mr. Laskaris.

Mr. LASKARIS. Senator, I was in Iraq until Saturday of last week, so this is kind of in a hurry, so my family is watching on the Web throughout the United States and in the old country.

Senator COONS. Thank you so much for joining us today. I am grateful for your willingness to serve. And just at the outset, I would like to thank your families, both the parents or extended families, that made possible your personal commitments to public service in what, in many cases, have been difficult or challenging posts, which are exactly the sorts of places where American values are shown most clearly. And to your families who are with you today or who are watching by Web. I am just grateful for their support for your service. None of you serve alone. You are all sustained by a network of family and friends. And so I just join, I know, with my ranking minority member, who always also makes this comment, to express our gratitude for your careers of public service and for your families who support you.

I would like to now invite each of you to make an opening statement to the extent you would like to.

Ambassador Cretz.

**STATEMENT OF HON. GENE ALLAN CRETZ, OF NEW YORK, TO  
BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

Ambassador CRETZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I am honored to appear before you today and grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana.

As I mentioned, I am joined today by my wife, Annette, my son, Jeffrey Cretz, and my daughter, Gabrielle, whose love and support have carried me throughout my 31 years in the Foreign Service. Without them I would not be here today.

In addition, I would note that my son has honorably served his country through three deployments to Afghanistan and the Middle East.

My journey began as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Kabul, Afghanistan, before joining the Foreign Service in 1981. I have served in Islamabad, Damascus twice, New Delhi, Tel Aviv twice, Beijing, Cairo, and most recently as United States Ambassador to Libya. If confirmed as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana, I will draw upon these experiences to advance U.S. interests in Africa.



I am very proud of the role the United States played to help the courageous people of Libya gain their freedom from the 42-year dictatorial rule of Muammar Gadhafi. One only has to visit Libya today to witness a people breathing freedom for the first time to realize how important our efforts were.

Ghana is a good news country as President Obama stated in his remarks during President Mills' March visit to the Oval Office. A democracy since 1992 and an economic success story with GDP growth rates reaching a historic high of over 13.5 percent in 2011, and sustaining a growth rate of at least 8 percent in 2012, Ghana's record of achievements speaks for itself.

Having successfully completed its first \$547 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact in February, Ghana is eligible to receive its second compact focused on improving access to reliable power. We have seen the Ghanaian people benefit from improved schools, health services, roads, and basic infrastructure as a result of sound macroeconomic policy and debt relief. If confirmed, I will maximize the talents and skills of Embassy personnel, advance existing USAID programs, and implement a second MCC Compact, if approved.

United States exports to Ghana have grown 186 percent over the past 5 years, and two-way trade is expected to reach an all-time high, surpassing the \$2 billion mark in 2012 as Ghana continues its impressive economic development. Companies such as GE, IBM, Baker Hughes, Cargill, Archer-Daniels-Midland Company, and others are investing in Ghana precisely because Ghana is a model for economic development in West Africa. I look forward to ensuring that the promotion of U.S. commercial interests remains an integral part of our statecraft.

Home to a lively, free media, an apolitical military, and blessed with cocoa, gold, mineral reserves, and natural resources, Ghana is setting the standard for democracy and economic development on the continent of Africa. If confirmed, I will explore new and innovative approaches to expand commercial ties between the United States and Ghana.

Ghana has held five free and fair national elections since 1992, and witnessed two peaceful transitions from one political party to another in 2000 and 2008. National and legislative elections are scheduled for this December. And if confirmed, I expect to witness Ghana achieve its sixth consecutive peaceful and transparent democratic election.

The people-to-people links made strong through more than 50 years of a continuous and vibrant Peace Corps presence, Fulbright, Humphrey, Community College Initiative, and Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study student exchange programs, and military cooperation through our International Military Education and Training Program, the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program, the State Partnership Program with the North Dakota National Guard, and Africa Command's Africa Partnership Station are among the initiatives I will continue to advance if confirmed.

Ghana and the United States share an interest in countering terrorism and promoting regional stability. It is one of Africa's premier peacekeeping partners. If confirmed, I will support Ghana's

capacity to promote regional and global stability. This includes combating escalating drug trafficking and human trafficking. Protecting the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens will be a top priority.

Political power in Ghana remains highly centralized, and Ghana faces challenges in managing its oil resources. With a GDP per capita of \$1,286 in 2010, Ghana is a lower middle-income country. The Government is committed to a path of reducing Ghana's aid dependency in the medium to long term. U.S. developments are focused on maintaining sustainable, broad-based economic growth through initiatives such as Feed the Future and the Partnership for Growth.

President Obama chose Ghana as the site for his historic speech in 2009 about a new moment of promise for Africa. Ghana is living up to that promise, and our continued cooperation will enhance the partnership further.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee for the opportunity to address you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in representing the interests of the American people in Ghana. And I am happy, of course, to answer any questions you have.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Cretz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GENE ALLAN CRETZ

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana.

I am joined today by my wife, Annette, my son, U.S. Air Force Captain Jeffrey Cretz, and my daughter, Gabrielle, whose love and support have carried me throughout my 31 years in the Foreign Service. Without them I would not be here today. In addition, I would note that my son has honorably served his country through three deployments to Afghanistan and the Middle East.

My journey began as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Kabul, Afghanistan, before joining the Foreign Service in 1981. I have served in Islamabad, Damascus (twice), New Delhi, Tel Aviv (twice), Beijing, Cairo, and most recently as United States Ambassador to Libya. If confirmed as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana, I will draw upon these experiences to advance U.S. interests in Africa. I am very proud of the role the United States played to help the courageous people of Libya gain their freedom from the 42-year dictatorial rule of Muammar Qadhafi. One only has to visit Libya today to witness a people breathing freedom for the first time to realize how important our efforts were.

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development on the continent of Africa. If confirmed, I will explore new and innovative approaches to expand commercial ties between the United States and Ghana.

Ghana has held five free and fair national elections since 1992, and witnessed two peaceful transitions from one political party to another in 2000 and 2008. National and legislative elections are scheduled for this December, and if confirmed, I expect to witness Ghana achieve its sixth consecutive peaceful and transparent democratic election. The people-to-people links made strong through more than 50 years of a continuous and vibrant Peace Corps presence; Fulbright, Humphrey, Community College Initiative (CCI) and Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) student exchange programs; and military cooperation through our International Military Education and Training Program, the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program, the State Partnership Program with the North Dakota National Guard, and Africa Command's Africa Partnership Station are among the initiatives I will continue to advance if confirmed.

Ghana and the United States share an interest in countering terrorism and promoting regional stability. Ghana is one of Africa's premier peacekeeping partners. If confirmed, I will support Ghana's capacity to promote regional and global stability. This includes combating escalating drug trafficking and human trafficking. Protecting the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens will be a top priority.

Political power in Ghana remains highly centralized and Ghana faces challenges in managing its oil resources. With a GDP per capita of \$1,286 in 2010, Ghana is a lower middle-income country. The Government is committed to a path of reducing Ghana's aid dependency in the medium to long term. U.S. development efforts are focused on maintaining sustainable, broad-based economic growth through initiatives such as Feed the Future and the Partnership for Growth. The G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, announced by President Obama under the U.S. G8 Presidency, strongly supports private sector investment in agricultural development and nutrition; and Ghana is one of the first three countries where the New Alliance will be launched. If confirmed, my priority will be to work with the Government of Ghana to enhance Ghana's economic vitality and to promote U.S. commercial opportunities in Ghana.

President Obama chose Ghana as the site for his historic speech in 2009 about "a new moment of promise for Africa." Ghana is living up to that promise, and our continued cooperation will enhance the partnership further. As one of only four countries in the world selected for the Partnership for Growth, I intend to work closely with our Ghanaian partners to support Ghana's development efforts, not only in the areas of power and credit as highlighted in the Joint Country Action Plan, but also in areas such as food security and health.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to address you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in representing the interests of the American people in Ghana. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Senator Coons. Thank you very much, Ambassador Cretz.

And thank you for your service and for Jeffrey's service. And I look forward to further questions.

Ms. Malac.

**STATEMENT OF DEBORAH RUTH MALAC, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

Ms. MALAC. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I am honored and pleased to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia. I would like to thank the President and Secretary Clinton for the confidence and trust they have placed in me by nominating me for this position.

As I mentioned earlier, I would like to recognize the presence of my husband, Ron Olson, and my three children, Nicholas and Gregory and Katharine. I am deeply grateful for their unstinting love and support, and without it, I certainly would not be sitting here today.

Mr. Chairman, I have been privileged to spend the last 31 years representing the United States as a member of the Foreign Service.

The majority of my career has been spent working in Africa and on African issues, starting with an assignment to Cameroon in 1981. That assignment was followed by assignments to South Africa, Senegal, and Ethiopia, interspersed with time in Washington to work on issues, such as South Africa's transition to democracy, East African issues, agricultural trade and development, and food security.

Mr. Chairman, the United States and Liberia share a strong relationship rooted in our historical ties and preserved through our mutual commitment to democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity. We have always been a friend to the Liberian people, and our commitment is demonstrated through our robust foreign assistance. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen our bilateral relationship and leverage our resources to help Liberia overcome its challenges to development.

Mr. Chairman, it has been 9 years since the end of Liberia's 14-year civil war, and Liberia has taken significant steps to develop democratically and economically.

Last fall, Liberia held its second free, fair, and transparent national election since 2003. The success of these elections demonstrated Liberia's strong commitment to democracy. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was reelected to her second and final term, and she has laid out an ambitious agenda to move Liberia forward. If confirmed, I will work to pursue key shared priorities that include improving the investment climate, increasing access to education, reducing the unemployment rate, and encouraging reconciliation.

Liberia has made progress, but it still faces many challenges. It remains one of the most impoverished countries in the world, with most Liberians having limited access to health care, education, or other government services. There is, however, growing investor interest in Liberia, and over the past several years, Liberia has negotiated nearly \$16 billion in foreign investment. If confirmed, I will leverage our existing resources, most notably our robust USAID programming, to help the Government of Liberia ensure that all Liberians have access to basic rights and services.

I will also encourage the Government of Liberia to continue to create an environment that is conducive to business and investment because sustained economic growth is essential to reducing poverty and stabilizing the country.

Preserving security in Liberia is a priority of both the Liberian and U.S. Governments. The United States has been a major player in security sector reform, and we will continue this role even as a reconfiguration of United Nations Mission in Liberia Forces takes place. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Liberia to encourage it to take the necessary steps to continue to build the capacity of its security sector.

Addressing reconciliation is also important to the future stability of Liberia. President Sirleaf is committed to reconciliation, and has appointed fellow Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee to lead Liberia's new national reconciliation initiative. As this process moves ahead, it will be important that all Liberians participate actively and have their voices heard.

As a partner, the United States can play a supportive role, offering technical or logistical support to the Government of Liberia's efforts. We understand, however, that this process must be Liberian-led and Liberian-owned.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to represent the interests of the American people in Liberia. And I am happy, of course, to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Malac follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DEBORAH RUTH MALAC

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Isakson, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored and pleased to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia. I would like to thank the President and Secretary Clinton for the confidence and trust they have placed in me by nominating me for this position.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize my husband, Ron Olson, and my three children, sons, Nicholas and Gregory, and daughter, Katharine. I am deeply grateful for their strong and unstinting support; without it, I would not be seated here today.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I have been privileged to spend the past 31 years as a member of the Foreign Service, working abroad and here in Washington. The majority of my Foreign Service career has been spent working in Africa and on African issues, although I started my career expecting to focus on issues such as the former Soviet Bloc and missile throw-weights. Instead, the Department of State, in its infinite wisdom, sent me to Cameroon, and I was hooked. That first assignment was followed by assignments to South Africa, Senegal and Ethiopia interspersed with time in Washington to work on South Africa's transition to democracy, East African issues, agricultural trade and development and food security. For the past year, I have served as the Director of the Office of East African Affairs. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to return to West Africa.

Mr. Chairman, the United States and Liberia share a strong relationship rooted in our historical ties and preserved through our commitment to democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity. We have always been a friend to the Liberian people and our commitment is demonstrated through our robust foreign assistance. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen our bilateral relationship and leverage our resources to help Liberia overcome its challenges to development.

Mr. Chairman, it has been 9 years since the end of Liberia's 14-year civil war and Liberia has taken significant steps to develop democratically and economically. Last fall, Liberia held its second free, fair, and transparent national election since 2003. The success of these elections demonstrated Liberia's strong commitment to democracy. As a result, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was reelected to her second and final term, and has laid out an ambitious agenda to move Liberia forward. If confirmed, I will work to address the key U.S. priorities, which also are priorities of the Government of Liberia, and include improving the investment climate, increasing access to education, reducing the unemployment rate, and encouraging reconciliation.

Through a \$15 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Threshold program, Liberia is taking the right steps to advance development and economic growth. Liberia's Threshold Program focuses on improving land rights and access, increasing girls' primary education enrollment and retention, and improving Liberia's trade policy and practices. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Government of Liberia to encourage progress on its MCC Scorecard indicators so that Liberia can be eligible for a MCC Compact in the near future.

Though significant progress has been made, Liberia still faces many challenges. Liberia remains one of the most impoverished countries in the world, with most Liberians having limited access to health care, education, or other government services. There is, however, growing investor interest in Liberia and over the past several years Liberia has negotiated nearly \$16 billion in foreign investment. If confirmed, I will leverage our existing resources, most notably our robust USAID programming, to help the Government of Liberia ensure that all Liberians have access to basic rights and services. I will also encourage the Government of Liberia to con-

tinue to create an environment conducive to business and investment, as sustained economic growth is key to reducing poverty and stabilizing the country.

Preserving security in Liberia is a priority of both the Liberian and U.S. Governments. The U.N. Secretary General has recommended reducing the United Nations Mission in Liberia's (UNMIL) troop levels from 7,900 to 3,750 over 3 years while increasing the U.N. police levels by up to three Formed Police Units. The United States has been a major player in security sector reform and will continue this role when UNMIL's reconfiguration takes place. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Liberia to encourage it to take the necessary steps to continue to build the capacity of its security sector. It will be important that the United States, Liberia, and UNMIL and other donor countries work closely together so that when a reconfiguration does occur, the gradual handover of security responsibility from UNMIL to Liberia will be handled properly.

Addressing reconciliation will also be important to the future stability of Liberia. The conviction of former Liberian President Charles Taylor for his role in the Sierra Leone civil war brings to the forefront the need for Liberia to address the wounds left open from its own civil war. President Sirleaf is committed to reconciliation and has appointed fellow Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee to lead Liberia's new national reconciliation initiative. As this process moves ahead, it will be important that all Liberians participate actively and have their voices heard. As a partner, the United States can play a supportive role, offering technical or logistical support to the Government of Liberia's efforts. We understand, however, that this process must be Liberian-led and Liberian-owned.

Last, my highest priority, if confirmed, will be the protection of Americans and American business interests, including mission personnel, living and traveling in Liberia.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in representing the interests of the American people in Liberia. I am happy to answer any questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Ms. Malac.

Mr. Wharton.

**STATEMENT OF DAVID BRUCE WHARTON, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE**

Mr. WHARTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I am honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the confidence that they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Zimbabwe.

And as I expressed before, I am also deeply honored by the presence of my wife and my son here, and their representation of others in my family. My family has represented the United States well in our five overseas assignments, and have been a tremendous support to me. So I thank them for that.

Having been raised myself in a family full of stories about, and respect for, the people of Africa, which is a legacy of my grandparents' 35 years as missionaries there, and having raised our own children in Africa during previous Foreign Service assignments, the possibility of returning to Zimbabwe to lead the United States mission is a privilege that is full of personal, as well as professional, meaning for my wife and me.

With full recognition of the complex challenges Zimbabwe faces, I am optimistic about that country's future, and I know that the United States has an important role to play in helping the people of Zimbabwe build a just, free, and prosperous nation.

Though battered by more than a decade of political strife and economic decline, Zimbabwe retains a foundational human and physical infrastructure upon which it can build a strong future. And it is in the interest of the United States to be a partner in that process. If confirmed, I will continue the work of building produc-

tive and respectful relationships with all Zimbabweans of goodwill. And I will look forward to working with the representatives of other friends of Zimbabwe, especially countries in the SADC region in supporting progress on the Global Political Agreement and on the SADC roadmap to elections.

The United States has shown our abiding concern for Zimbabwe through the nearly \$1 billion in humanitarian relief and health-related assistance we have provided just in the last 6 years. But we need to move the relationship beyond aid. The people of Zimbabwe are fully capable of feeding themselves, of meeting the nation's health and education needs, of building a dynamic political system, and restoring their nation's economy. Zimbabwe can and should be a nation of economic opportunities, of respect for the rule of law, and the rights of all people. Those are the values that reflect the core beliefs that Americans share with the people of Zimbabwe, and those are the values that we should pursue together.

United States policy in Zimbabwe is not about regime change. Only the people of Zimbabwe have the right to choose their government. Our policies support principles, not parties or people. However, when the right to self-determination is denied, the United States cannot stand idly by. We will always stand up for the rights of Zimbabweans to speak, write, read, meet, and fully participate in their nation's political processes. That was United States policy in 1980 when we were the first nation to recognize an independent Zimbabwe, and it continues to be our policy. We will not always agree with the Government of Zimbabwe, but we will always attempt to maintain a respectful and open dialogue.

The United States stands ready to alter the current restrictions on the relationship with Zimbabwe and to forge stronger economic and political ties. Full implementation of the Global Political Agreement, progress on the Southern African Development Community's roadmap, and well-managed and credible electoral processes should be triggers for the United States to open a much more dynamic relationship with one of Africa's most important countries.

If confirmed, I will give special attention to the welfare of American citizens in Zimbabwe, and to meeting with people from across the rich spectrum of Zimbabwe's society, making an assessment of the situation there, and offering recommendations on the best way forward.

As we continue to urge democratic development, we must also continue to invest in the people of Zimbabwe in order to preserve the human capital that is needed to rebuild Zimbabwe in the years ahead. I have faith that with this support, the people of Zimbabwe will find the best path forward and pursue it successfully.

Thank you again for the chance to appear before you, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wharton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID BRUCE WHARTON

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you. I am honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Having grown up in a home full of stories about and respect for the people of Africa—a legacy of my grandparents' 35 years as missionaries in what was then the Belgian Congo—and having raised our own wonderful three children in Southern Africa during previous Foreign Service assignments in South Africa and Zimbabwe, the possibility of returning to lead a U.S. mission is a privilege that is full of personal as well as professional meaning for my wife and me.

With full recognition of the complex challenges Zimbabwe faces, I remain optimistic about the country's future and believe that the United States has an important role to play in helping the people of Zimbabwe build a just, free, and prosperous nation. The trajectory of Zimbabwe's last 15 years should not obscure the nation's tremendous potential. Though battered by more than a decade of political strife and economic decline, Zimbabwe retains a foundational human and physical infrastructure upon which it can build a strong future. It is in the interest of the United States to be a partner in that process and, if confirmed, I will continue the work of building productive and respectful relationships with all Zimbabweans of goodwill.

The United States has shown its deep and abiding concern for Zimbabwe through the nearly \$1 billion in humanitarian relief and health-related assistance we have provided just in the last 6 years. There is no more explicit expression of our support for the people of Zimbabwe than our standing by them through their times of greatest need. But, we need to prepare to move beyond a relationship defined by aid. The people of Zimbabwe are fully capable of feeding themselves, meeting the nation's health and education needs, building a dynamic political system, and restoring what was once one of the strongest economies in Africa. Zimbabwe can and should be a nation of economic opportunities, of respect for the rule of law and the rights of all people. Those are values that reflect the core of what Americans share with Zimbabweans and that we should pursue together.

U.S. policy in Zimbabwe is not about regime change. Only the people of Zimbabwe have the right to change their government. Our policies support principles, not parties or people. However, when the right to self-determination is denied, as it has been in Zimbabwe through restrictions on citizen rights, through political violence, and fraudulent and mismanaged elections, the United States cannot stand idly by. We have taken principled steps to demonstrate our concern about the actions of those responsible for, and those who profit from, miscarriages of the promise Zimbabwe offered at independence. We will always stand up for the rights of Zimbabweans to speak, write, read, meet, organize, and fully participate in their nation's political processes.

If confirmed, I will work to enable Zimbabwe to become a just, prosperous, and democratic state that meets the needs of its people, contributes to development in the region, and plays an important role in world affairs. That was U.S. policy in 1980 when we were the first nation to recognize Zimbabwe's independence, and it continues to be our policy. We will not always agree with the Government of Zimbabwe, but we will always attempt to maintain a respectful and open dialogue.

The United States stands ready to alter the current restrictions on our relationship with Zimbabwe and to forge stronger economic and political ties.

The full implementation of the Global Political Agreement, progress on the Southern African Development Community's roadmap toward elections, and well-managed and credible elections will be a trigger for the U.S. to open a much more dynamic relationship with one of Africa's most important countries. The United States remains open and willing to work with the government to support free and fairly elections.

If confirmed, I will give special attention to the welfare of American citizens in Zimbabwe and to meeting with people from across the rich spectrum of Zimbabwe's society, making an assessment of the situation there and offering recommendations on the best way forward. As we continue to urge democratic development, we must also continue to invest in the people of Zimbabwe—the health, education, humanitarian aid, and business development work—to preserve the human capital needed to rebuild Zimbabwe in the years ahead. I have faith that with this support, once given the opportunity to communicate, organize, and express their will, the people of Zimbabwe will find the best path forward and pursue it successfully.

Thank you for the chance to appear before you and I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Wharton.  
Mr. Laskaris.



**STATEMENT OF ALEXANDER MARK LASKARIS, OF MARYLAND,  
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA**

Mr. LASKARIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am deeply honored to appear before you today, and very grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Guinea.

For my family and me, this is another milestone in our American dream and our American journey, both of which began in the chaos of post-World War II Greece. My presence here today is made possible by the land of opportunity that embraced my late father in 1946 and my mother in 1960.

I approach an assignment in the Republic of Guinea, if confirmed, knowing that Guinea has sent a large number of immigrants to the United States originally via the horrors of the African slave trade, but later in the manner of my parents, young people seeking better lives for themselves and their future children. Indeed a walk down 125th Street in Harlem today shows part of a prospering and vibrant Guinean-American community with which I will be actively engaged, if confirmed. Together with this diaspora, a large community of returned Peace Corps Volunteers, former missionaries, and other dedicated Americans, serve as committed advocates for Guinean-American relations and for the welfare of the Republic of Guinea.

My first exposure to the African Continent was during a 2-year stint as a volunteer high school teacher in a township parochial school in Galeshewe, South Africa. It was 1989 and 1990, and in those 2 years, I lived the miraculous democratic transition led by men and women of good will. As hitchhiking was my only means of travel, I missed Namibian independence by a few days, but still managed to absorb the career lesson that even the most momentous political changes can take place peacefully and democratically.

My first exposure to the Republic of Guinea was quite the opposite from the inspiration of South Africa. I arrived in Monrovia, Liberia, my first Foreign Service posting in 1991, as the countries of the Mano River Union were falling into chaos and violence. The Guinea I first encountered was host to some 1 million Liberian refugees. Its armed forces served in the West African peacekeeping force, then known as ECOMOG. And its government sought to avoid the abyss from which Liberia and Sierra Leone are only now emerging. This experience suggests to me that if confirmed, I will be working in a country that both supports us and needs our support.

The Republic of Guinea has recently been in the headlines for the best reasons: real democratic progress after a succession of dictators. But the story behind the headlines reveals the longstanding social and economic challenges that impoverish the country and stymie its development.

Have also served in Botswana, Angola, and Burundi, my experience in a number of African conflicts tells me that past performance is indeed an indicator of future performance when it comes to countries emerging from dictatorship and civil conflict. To break the cycle, to keep the Republic of Guinea from lapsing back into authoritarianism, we need to be part of the architecture of democracy, supporting all three branches of government plus media and

civil society. We need engagement with the military to professionalize the force and bring it firmly and irrevocably under elected civilian authority. We need to be engaged in poverty relief and disease eradication, as well as in responsible mineral exploitation and sustainable agriculture.

The Republic of Guinea achieved a landmark election in 2010, its first free and fair democratic Presidential campaign. President Alpha Conde, who spent decades advocating for democratic change, emerged as Guinea's first ever democratically elected head of state, ending 50 years of despotic rule and military repression. However, Guinea's transition to a fully functioning democracy will not be complete until the long-anticipated legislative elections are held. I do not need to remind this chamber on the importance of the legislative branch to sustainable democracy. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than helping Guinea to seat a new legislature and then helping that branch of government to fulfill its critical role—its critical institutional role.

In the Republic of Guinea, we have a willing but technically limited partner on regional and international issues. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Guinea on a coordinated approach to regional crises in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. I will do my best to strengthen cooperation on counterterrorism and counter-narcotics issues, as well as other forms of transnational crimes, such as trafficking in persons and money laundering. I will also make promoting the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens my highest priority and seek out commercial opportunities for U.S. companies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to address you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in representing the interests of the American people in Guinea. And I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Laskaris follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALEXANDER MARK LASKARIS

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Guinea.

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I approach an assignment in the Republic of Guinea—if confirmed—knowing that Guinea has sent a large number of immigrants to the United States . . . originally via the horrors of the African slave trade, but later in the manner of my parents, young people seeking better lives for themselves and their future children. A walk down 125th Street in Harlem shows part of a prospering and vibrant Guinean-American community with which I will be engaged, if confirmed. Together with this diaspora, a large community of returned Peace Corps Volunteers, former missionaries, and other dedicated Americans serve as committed advocates for Guinean-American relations and for the welfare of the Republic of Guinea.

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ing in 1991—as the countries of the Mano River Union were falling into chaos and violence. The Guinea I first encountered was host to some 1 million Liberian refugees; its armed forces served in the West African peacekeeping force, known as the Economic Community of West African State Monitoring Group or ECOMOG; and its government sought to avoid the abyss from which Liberia and Sierra Leone are only now emerging.

This experience suggests to me that—if confirmed—I will be working in a country that both supports us and needs our support. The Republic of Guinea has recently been in the headlines for the best reasons—real democratic progress after a succession of dictators—but the story behind the headlines reveals the longstanding social and economic challenges that impoverish the country and stymie its development.

My experience in a number of African conflicts tells me that past performance is indeed an indicator of future performance when it comes to countries emerging from dictatorship and civil conflict. To break the cycle, to keep the Republic of Guinea from lapsing back into authoritarianism, we need to be part of the architecture of democracy, supporting all three branches of government plus free media and civil society. We need engagement with the military to professionalize the force and bring it firmly, irrevocably under elected civilian authority. We need to be engaged in poverty relief and disease eradication, as well as in responsible mineral exploitation and sustainable agriculture.

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In the Republic of Guinea, we have a willing but technically limited partner on regional and international issues. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Guinea on a coordinated approach to regional crises in Mali and Guinea-Bissau; I will do my best to strengthen cooperation on counterterrorism and counternarcotics issues, as well as other forms of transnational crimes, such as trafficking in persons and money laundering. I will also make promoting the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens my highest priority and seek out commercial opportunities for U.S. companies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to address you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in representing the interests of the American people in Guinea. I am happy to answer any questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Laskaris. Thank you to all four of you for those thoughtful, concise, well-rounded summaries of the challenges facing you in the posts to which you go, and for helping me gain some further insight into the things that motivate you to this. Whether it is a family history of missionary service, or personal experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer, or personal experience teaching in a township in South Africa, it is always helpful. You know, I get these profiles and backgrounds. It is always helpful to see and hear the personal experience. And the fact that, literally, you have spent decades in the Foreign Service across the region and across the world further leavens my respect for your willingness to serve.

I am going to ask a series of questions that sort of looking at the interplay between security, democracy, and economic development. And I am interested in a variety of issues. How can we most effectively partner with these nations? How can we work with regional institutions? And what are the things we are doing right, doing wrong. And I will just ask a series of questions in order, if I might.

I have about 20 minutes, and unless another member of the committee surprises by showing up at this point, I am simply going to

keep asking them. I do not think we need to limit me by minutes or rounds or anything like that. We are not used to having that much freedom here.

So if I might, Ambassador Cretz, first, I think you are the one nominee who referenced on the security sector both IMET and the state partnership. I am quite interested to hear from you in the future how you think the State partnership between, I think it is the North Dakota National Guard. Is it North or South Dakota?

Ambassador CRETZ. North.

Senator COONS. North Dakota and Ghana. If I am not mistaken, there is a North Dakota National Guard State Partnership with Ghana. And this is something I have discussed with General Hamm as well as with some of the leaders of the National Guard Bureau. Our own Delaware General Vavala is the current chair of the adjutant's nationally.

I think there is a lot of potential for the State Partnership Program, particularly in nations where you have militaries where accepting civilian rule, as is the case in Guinea, transitioning out of great conflict, as is the case in Liberia, have a lot to offer.

If you have any comments for me about how our IMET work or the State Partnership Program with the National Guards could be more effective, or what promise you think it might hold, I would appreciate that.

Ambassador CRETZ. Mr. Chairman, I think that, first of all, the relationship with AFRICOM is a very important one.

And having worked very closely with General Ward and now over the past year and a half with General Hamm, I am fairly aware of the different kinds of activities that AFRICOM can bring to bear.

We do have a close relationship with the military in Ghana. They are apolitical. They are very professional. They have been a bulwark in terms of the peacekeeping efforts, whether through the African Union ECOWAS or the U.N. throughout the region and throughout the world, in fact.

I think there is a great deal of opportunity to expand that. I think we have seen already that those countries that take advantage of our IMET programs, we find those people return to their countries very respectful certainly of the U.S. military, and certainly wanting to get more of U.S. expertise.

So I think with respect to the relationship and the better coordination that we could do with the States, I certainly am willing to look at how we can develop that relationship further. I think that the National Guard units, of which my son is a member, especially in Delaware, bring to bear a lot of expertise that these countries can use in coping with the various crises, et cetera. And certainly given the issues that Ghana faces, for example, in the explosion of drug trafficking throughout the region, in terms of the problems in the Gulf of Guinea with piracy, et cetera, that there will be ample scope to expand that relationship between our military in the State, AFRICOM, and the Guinean Army as well.

Senator COONS. Well, thank you. I will be interested to stay in touch about regional security, training, what ECOWAS is hoping to do and able to do. I think your experience in Libya will be particularly relevant here. And I think AFRICOM has the opportunity as

a combatant command that does not have a lot of legacy assets that is relatively new to be a leader in how we imagine a new relationship for security with the whole region, where we can deploy assets, such as the National Guard, that have not really been utilized with the strength that I think is possible here.

You mentioned in your statement new, innovative processes for economic growth. And I am particularly in and concerned about our economic relationship with Ghana. I think it is very strong. I am hopeful that the second MCC compact will be quite successful. If I remember correctly, you mentioned it is around power and power generation.

I would be interested in what you see as the opportunities and limitations for economic growth with Ghana. They have had some challenges with extraction recently in terms of their oil discoveries. So, if you would, just to what were you referring in terms of innovative economic development procedures? And how do we make sure that Ghana does not follow the path of Nigeria, but instead is more like Norway? And what are the developmental issues you see tackling?

Ambassador CRETZ. Right. Well, I think, Mr. Chairman, that we—first of all, I think there is a great opportunity for American businesses to invest and trade in Ghana. And just as I have throughout my career, and especially in the last several years in terms of positions when I have had the ability to interact with American companies, this will be a main priority certainly of mine should I be confirmed and take over the mission.

I think we have a lot of tools available to help Ghana improve what—even the dramatic improvements that they have made in trade and investment and in developing their economy over the past several years. We have the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. We have the West Africa trade hub. We have the MCC, as you said. And I think the idea with the MCC is that we are going to be able to have a more mature relationship as we discuss the possibility of having a second MCC pact with Ghana because it will follow on the agrarian reforms that were undertaken in the first pact. Only this time we are asking them to pay a certain amount of the funding, and we are also asking them for some policy reform as part of that compact. So I think that that would be a very possible, very fruitful area for cooperation.

The Partnership for Growth is also a very important aspect of the economic tools that we can utilize to help Ghana in this way because what it does is with no specific funding, it basically lays out a framework whereby the United States Government adopts a whole of government approach to helping Ghana develop its economy, and says that, look, if you have certain issues, you have certain problems within your economy that need to be improved, such as access to credit, the power infrastructure.

We as the United States are willing to take a look at the various kind of policy changes, adaptations, or see what flexibility we have in response to policy changes that you are willing to take as well.

And I think at the end of the day, if you look at the various economic tools that we have to work with Ghana, what they do is they help open—improve the climate in Ghana so as to make it easier

and more attractive for American companies and others to come in to help them with their infrastructure.

So I think there's tremendous opportunity. And, you know, as you mentioned, the loss of the FCS officer is a blow, there is no doubt. And I experienced the same thing in Libya where Libya is on the verge of an explosion in terms of American business, especially to help them rebuild after 42 years of the devastation of Gadhafi's rule. And we lost that officer.

But there are ways, you know. I leave it to the Department of Commerce colleagues to explain what the rationale behind it is. But we did try to find other ways to do it. But at the end of the day, given the importance of helping these countries move forward, and given the importance of having American business, and help these countries, and invest in them, that the Embassy—other parts of the Embassy and the mission are going to have to pick up the slack because we cannot do without commercial advocacy and getting American trade, you know, increased, especially in a country like Ghana, which is poised for even more great success in that area.

Senator COONS. I agree. Thank you, Ambassador Cretz. And I look forward to staying in contact as you support their work in preparation for the December elections, and as you further develop and implement the second MCC. There is also a long-standing relationship between Delaware actually and GMSA—Delaware State University's leadership and GMSA, which provides critical career training for certain mid-level managers. And Ghana is also of real interest to me.

If I might, Ms. Malac, given the limitations of time, I will move to each of you, if I might.

I am very interested in the National Reconciliation Initiative which you referenced. Given your prior experience, you, I know, can give some insight into how it is similar to or different from the reconciliation commissions that Kenya is currently sort of winding up, one that really was largely a regional model in South Africa and different others in other countries. What do you see as the prospects for reconciliation through this reconciliation initiative, and how will you support it as Ambassador?

Ms. MALAC. Thank you, Senator. We are still waiting for the fuller details on what this newest initiative is going to look like, and we expect that that will be forthcoming very soon. It appears to be something that will look different than the Truth-in-Reconciliation Commission, for example, that has been held before. So at this point, it is very difficult for me to give you any sort of real insight into any estimate of what might happen or how it might play out.

I think, as I said in my comments, the role that the United States can really play is to, as appropriate, and where we can find ways to do so, to provide technical and/or logistical support in order to ensure that those kinds of constraints do not prevent the process from going forward. But it certainly is critical that is a nationwide effort and that Liberians from all parts of the country and all factions are able to participate and feel that they can do so.

Senator COONS. And security sector reform, as you referenced, as the U.N. presence is drawn down, given some recent incidents in

the border with Cote d'Ivoire, and given the tragic national history, what more can we and should we be doing, and to what extent will we be taking advantage of some of the partnerships that Ambassador Cretz also referenced as being relevant to Ghana?

Ms. MALAC. Security is a huge concern for both us and for the Liberian Government. I mean, given the history that the country has, it is clear that we need to continue to be vigilant in the security sector.

I do believe that the Government of Liberia has certainly responded appropriately after the recent incident, has worked with the Government of Cote d'Ivoire, both through UNMIL and through UNOSE, to take steps to move more forces into the region, to try to at least shut down some of that cross-border activity.

But it is going to be an ongoing challenge. It is something that we are going to have to watch as UNMIL starts this drawdown, and certainly President Sirleaf has expressed her concern about this phased withdrawal. There will be a requirement for very close coordination both between the United States, the Government of Liberia, UNMIL, and other donors who are active in this sector to ensure that this all happens in a very manageable and responsible fashion. It is going to be still a long process to get to the point where we have enough capacity within Liberia itself to provide for its own security.

But if confirmed, certainly this will be a very high priority for me and will be something that I suspect will take a great deal of my time and energy.

Thank you.

Senator COONS. Mr. Laskaris referenced the vibrant Guinean diaspora community. There is certainly a strong Liberian diaspora community that just by coincidence has a strong footprint in the State of Delaware. The last time I saw President Johnson Sirleaf, I was referencing that there was a reunion of an Episcopal high school from Liberia that has folks from all over the United States, as well as two very large family reunions happening in Delaware of Liberians.

I think this is an important emerging strategy for economic development, helping access American entrepreneurship, financing, export opportunities. What advantage will you take of the tools available to an ambassador? You mentioned \$16 billion, if I am not mistaken, in foreign direct investment in Liberia.

I was very concerned at my first meeting with President Johnson Sirleaf about her comments about the Chinese and their very sizable infrastructure investments, her desire for partnership with the United States, but our very real lack of available programs or resources outside of MCC or Partnership for Growth.

What advice would you have for me about how we might strengthen those opportunities, and what do you hope to do as Ambassador?

Ms. MALAC. Thank you, Senator. Well, you have raised several very good issues here.

I think on the diaspora side, there is, in fact, a program through—both through UNDP, and USAID itself provides some funding to help try to match individuals and organizations within the diaspora with Liberia to bring particular skills or expertise to

bear in different sectors. And so certainly this is actually something I just learned about in the last couple of days, and have great interest in, and will certainly make it a priority to find out more about this program, having worked with other countries where we have a vibrant diaspora—Somalia comes to mind.

We believe very firmly that they can play a role in a country like Liberia in a post-conflict situation where there is so much need and so much to be done. So I can assure you that at least in that regard, we are looking—I would be looking, if confirmed, to build some of those bridges and work to support efforts that the Government of Liberia itself has put into place to try to tap into that diaspora expertise because there is a lot of potential there.

As for the Chinese, they are a relatively small presence, as it were, in Liberia compared to some places on the continent. But, of course, they are looking, as they always are, to enlarge that footprint. They are currently working on World Bank grants to build road infrastructure in Liberia. I mean, again, there is a lot to be done in terms of infrastructure building, so there is lots of room for everyone.

You can have my pledge that if confirmed, I will do everything I can to identify opportunities for U.S. business, not just in the infrastructure arena obviously, but in all aspects of the economy because there is potential there, I think, for U.S. businesses. And we are only at the beginning end of that.

But we are seeing progress in that regard. U.S. presence on the economic side has been steadily increasing, and I can assure you if confirmed, that it will be a high priority for me.

Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Mr. Wharton, Zimbabwe is certainly a nation with great economic potential that has gone through one of the worst economic collapses we have seen in recent history. I have in my office—what is it?

I think it is a \$100 trillion bank note. My kids thought it was fake. Sadly, it is not. My sense is they have sort of clawed their way back out by largely adopting the U.S. dollar's working currency.

I would be interested in hearing what you view—I appreciated your statement that our policy is not regime change, but rather the opportunity for self-determination. There have been calls from other of our allies at SADC and U.N. and others for us to either review or relax our sanctions. On what conditions and at what timeline do you think we would consider that, and then how will you support appropriate political progress, hopefully forward progress in Zimbabwe?

Mr. WHARTON. Thank you, Senator. I think that, in fact, those are key issues in the relationship between the United States and Zimbabwe, and in Zimbabwe's way forward.

One of the problems with sanctions that I am sure you are aware of is that they have turned into talking points for the ruling party in Zimbabwe.

I do not think, though, that the evidence supports the thesis that American sanctions have hurt Zimbabwe's economy. I note that the Zimbabwe Democracy Economic Recovery Act has been in force for 11 years now, but in the last 3 years, Zimbabwe's economy has



grown by 7, 8, 9 percent per year. Per capita GDP has grown about 5 percent a year. And the agricultural and mining sectors have grown by nearly 50 percent.

So I think that the key to continued economic development in Zimbabwe actually has more to do with economic policies in Zimbabwe, and establishing a sort of transparent framework and rule of law that will encourage investors, businesses, and Americans, I hope among them, to take another look at Zimbabwe.

I believe that the individual sanctions that we have placed on about 120 individuals and about 70 entities have had an effect. And, again, I would cite recent economic growth as an indication that these specific sanctions and travel restrictions have not hurt the larger Zimbabwean economy.

I believe, though, that we do need to make it clear that our policies are flexible. They are not static. And we should be able to adjust them in response to democratic progress and progress on the rule of law on the ground in Zimbabwe.

Some of the benchmarks that I think would be important I mentioned in my statement: continued progress on the Global Political Agreement, clear progress toward the SADC roadmap on elections. And one of the things that I think would be especially important would be an express commitment from the Government of Zimbabwe to welcome international as well as national election monitoring groups, groups that could come in 6 months or even a year before the election to take a look at and certify, essentially build international confidence that the people of Zimbabwe have, in fact, had the right to choose their own government.

So those are some of the benchmarks that I think would be critical as we look at adjusting our own policy.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Forgive me because I am greatly interested in the transition in Zimbabwe. I have to go preside over the body, the Senate, in 7 minutes. And so I am going to turn to Mr. Laskaris for a final question, if I might.

I was just interested to read about the Guinean mining code of 2011 and some of the other changes that they are making in the direction of post-security sector reform and economic reform. What do you think are the most important steps Guinea can take to stabilize and secure its transition toward both rule of law and predictability and civilian supervision of the military? And what do you think are going to be the most important steps you will take as Ambassador in these areas?

Mr. LASKARIS. Well, thank you, Senator. I think one thing we have learned in the Africa Bureau over the last two decades is that elections are necessary, but not sufficient, for democratic development. We held a successful election, but we realized that what I call the architecture of democracy needs to follow along with that.

And so let us start on the security side. One of the few forms of military assistance that we did not suspend as a result of the coup in Guinea is a security sector reform advisor who is embedded in the Guinean ministry of defense. And that person works with regional, with donors, and local counterparts trying to devise the policy moving forward on reforming the security services. And that is specifically professionalizing it, bringing it firmly and irrevocably

under the control of elected civilian authorities, improving its human rights record, improving its civil military relations.

I think we need to give the Government of Guinea a very clear roadmap on the conditions under which IMET would be resumed. And if we do that, I will report faithfully back to the Department and let the Washington policy community make a determination as if those conditions had been met. If those conditions are met, I would recommend moving to an IMET program, what we used to call expanded IMET, which is the focus on civil military relations, professionalization of the force.

As I mentioned in my statement, Senator, Guinea has been a reliable and consistent troop contributor to regional peacekeeping, both under the ECOWAS umbrella and under the United Nations umbrella. I think it is an area of real mutual interest that we get the Guinean Armed Forces into the peacekeeping function through ACODA and through subregional and international means.

So, again, given a roadmap to the Government of the Republic of Guinea, if they meet the conditions for resumption of that kind of aid, I think we need to be looking at Guinea as a troop contributor and folding it into broader African activities on the continent.

On the rule of law side, sir, No. 1, I think there is a national reconciliation commission in Guinea. From what I can tell, it really has yet to be fleshed out. It has really yet to function. I think one of our key priorities as donors, as the United States Government, is to end the culture of impunity in Guinea, and you do that through a transitional justice mechanism. It can be the Truth-in-Reconciliation Commission model of South Africa or the Rwandan Gacaca model of tribal justice.

Guinea is an overwhelmingly Islamic country. It can come through the institutions of Islam. It can come through the indigenous tribal institutions of the country. What the United States thinks of that is less important than what the Guineans think of the legitimacy of that process. So if confirmed, I will get out there and try to work within the context of Guinean culture to find something that the Guinean people regard as a legitimate means of addressing the crimes of the past.

On the question of the mining law, specifically, and drawing on your question to my colleague about China, I think the United States mining industry should welcome free and fair competition on a level playing field. So I think it is my obligation as chief of mission, if confirmed, to make sure the regulatory system is free, it is transparent, and it meets the world-class standard, is capable of attracting world-class companies, including those from the United States.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Laskaris.

Mr. Wharton, Ms. Malac, Ambassador Cretz, I am deeply interested in the issues we have raised today and wish I could dedicate more time to it. One of the things I have not done as a Senator is be late to preside, so I hope to maintain that now.

Jeffrey, thank you for your service. I am a past honorary commander of the 166th, and I hope that if there is anything my office or I could do to support you, you will let me know.

To everyone from the families of these four very talented nominees, thank you for being with us here today. And I look forward

to hearing from you as you serve as our Ambassadors in very important regions. I know Senator Isakson and I really enjoy serving together and intend to travel regularly to Africa in the years ahead. It is my hope to continue on this subcommittee for some time, and so developing relationships and knowing how we can support and sustain you in your very important work is of real value to me. And I believe I also speak for Senator Isakson in that regard. We are both very grateful for your willingness to serve.

We will keep the record open for a week for any member of the committee who may wish to submit questions for the record.

Senator COONS. We are otherwise for today adjourned. Congratulations.

[Whereupon, at 4 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

