

Statement of Jon Huntsman
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 19, 2017

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and Members of the Committee,

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Russian Federation. I want to thank the President for his confidence in me and for the opportunity – with your approval – to represent the American people during a critical period in U.S.-Russian relations. In addition, I want to express my gratitude to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson for supporting my nomination.

I also want to take a moment to thank my family – my wife, Mary Kaye, and my children Mary Anne, Abby, Liddy, Jon, Will, Gracie and Asha. Their love and support has sustained me through the many phases of my life and the different hats I have worn in both the public and the private sector. I could not undertake this journey without them. At our family's core lies the belief that service is the price we pay for citizenship in this great country.

I have had the privilege of serving as Ambassador before – to China and to Singapore. I am fully cognizant of the profound responsibilities a Chief of Mission must assume. During my previous service, including as Governor of the great state of Utah, and in the private sector, I have prided myself on leading dynamic teams and achieving important goals by bringing together individuals from different backgrounds and different viewpoints. If confirmed, I look forward to working with colleagues from the State Department and all other U.S. government agencies to advance the interests of the American people.

While I am confident my previous experiences prepare me for this sensitive diplomatic mission, I am under no illusion that serving as the U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation will be easy or simple. Our relationship with Russia is among the most consequential and complex foreign-policy challenges we face. As a nuclear superpower and permanent member of the UN Security Council, we have no choice but to deal with Russia on a range of issues touching on global stability and security. Yet we also need to recognize that today, contrary to Helsinki Final Act principles and international law, Russia continues to threaten stability in Europe, including by violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbors. Russia also restricts the human rights of its people. There is no

question that the Russian government interfered in the U.S. election last year and Moscow continues to meddle in the democratic processes of our friends and allies. Finally, Russia is disregarding its arms-control obligations and commitments.

As we work to balance these multiple challenges, I appreciate the leadership and insight that this committee has demonstrated on Russia and, if confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to collaborate with all of you in the months and years ahead.

If confirmed, I will focus on four primary approaches:

First, I will engage Russian government officials, from the highest tiers to the local level, to advance American interests. Key among our goals are defeating ISIS, countering terrorism, upholding arms control and non-proliferation obligations and commitments, finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria, and resolving the crisis in Ukraine in a way that respects Ukraine's sovereignty and restores its territorial integrity.

I will also not hesitate to remind government officials that they are accountable for their actions. Exhibit A is the fact that interference in the U.S. election has led directly to the current low level of trust in the relationship. The views of Congress were heard clearly on this point in the near-unanimous passage of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

Second, I will work to protect the interests of the American people, to include the U.S. business community, scholars, tourists and other American visitors who spend time in Russia and engage its citizens. I believe people-to-people exchanges and private interactions are an important way to show that our disagreements are with the government of Russia, not with its people.

Third, I will seek out Russian people from across all walks of life to share perspectives, to relay American values, and to deepen my already growing appreciation for Russia's rich and fascinating history and culture. As I have done in previous assignments, I look forward to meeting with civil society leaders, including those in the religious and human rights community.

While the Russian government has sought to limit U.S. public diplomacy, our diplomatic mission in Russia continues to engage ordinary Russians and thought leaders and maintains a diverse outreach program. I plan to take part in that effort, as I strongly believe cultural understanding is enriched by an open and respectful

exchange of thoughts and ideas. I look forward to meeting as many Russian citizens as possible during my travels throughout the country.

Fourth, but certainly not last in importance, I will work to ensure the safety and security of my team, who work tirelessly on behalf of the American people.

Despite Russia's actions against U.S. mission diplomatic staffing, the team – both the American and the Russian staff – continues to serve with professionalism and an unwavering commitment under difficult conditions.

I will be honored to work side by side with the mission team to ensure the continued stellar work of the U.S. diplomatic and consular mission. I also want to extend my personal appreciation for those Americans and Russians whose service at the U.S. Mission in Russia have been cut short by the Russian government's unfortunate decision.

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