

Statement of Jonathan R. Cohen
Nominee for Deputy Representative of the United States of America
To the United Nations and Deputy Representative of the
United States of America in the Security Council of the
United Nations
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 9, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Menendez, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the Deputy Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations and am grateful to the President and Ambassador Haley for this opportunity.

Serving our nation as a Foreign Service Officer for the past 32 years has been a great privilege, and never more so than now with this opportunity to represent the United States of America at the United Nations. I want to thank my wonderful wife Lidija and our remarkable daughters Alexandra and Gabriella for their love and support over the years and the many moves. Their tenacious adaptability and patience with me and my calling are in no small part responsible for me being here today. I also want to thank my Foreign Service mentors, and in particular, the Ambassadors, Deputy Chiefs of Mission and Assistant Secretaries with whom I have served.

Being nominated for this position is the realization of a dream I held from an early age. Growing up in a California family that was not internationally oriented, I was launched on my path to the Foreign Service through involvement in high school Model United Nations and a university career devoted to international relations. I owe a special debt of gratitude to two inspirational high school teachers who helped equip me with the tools for this path: debate coach and English teacher extraordinaire Barbara Carson and Model UN advisor and history teacher Rome Friesen. The prospect of helping resolve vexing international challenges to peace and security inspired me as a teen and fueled my academic interests as a university student. Having the opportunity to do so in America's service has motivated my professional life ever since.

Throughout my career, I've worked with United Nations representatives, agencies and issues at just about every posting. From my first assignment in Thailand as a refugee protection officer visiting refugee camps and detention facilities along the Lao and Cambodian borders and interacting daily with

UNHCR, to coordinating on aid programs in the West Bank during the first Intifada, to service in multiple UNSC capitals advocating US priorities under discussion in the Security Council, to work with UNFICYP and the SRSG in Cyprus seeking to reunify the divided island into a bi-zonal bi-communal federation. Nowhere were the stakes higher or the challenges greater than in my most recent overseas tour as DCM in Baghdad where I regularly met with the leadership of the UN Mission in Iraq; where my briefings at the SRSG's monthly meetings for the diplomatic corps guaranteed that American views on the political and military situation of the country had primacy, and where I helped craft with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator a high-impact, low-cost stabilization program that got over a million IDPs safely home. I have seen the UN rise to challenges and exceed expectations, delivering impressively on its mission to provide peace, security and relief while operating with fiscal discipline. In each such case, in my experience, there was an essential common element – strong U.S. leadership and involvement. If confirmed, I pledge to provide that kind of leadership in all I do at USUN.

Over my three decades in the Foreign Service, I have seen many ways the UN contributes to international peace and security, from the deployment of peacekeepers who courageously serve in some of the world's most dangerous places, from Lebanon to South Sudan to Mali, to the operations of organizations such as the World Food Program which, with significant U.S. support, is providing life-saving food assistance to millions of people affected by famine and food insecurity. The UN's value also lies in actions such as the extensive sanctions regime imposed on North Korea by the Security Council, in effect banning all known North Korean exports, and shutting down its lawful capacity to earn hard currency abroad. These examples demonstrate the critical role the UN plays in advancing U.S. national interests. The United States has been and must continue to be a leader in the United Nations. If confirmed, I will energetically contribute to our important leadership in all these areas as well as our work at the UN on Iran, Syria and Middle East peace, and other issues before the Security Council.

That being said, the United Nations must reform if it is to be more effective. We need to bring the organization up to 21st century standards. Secretary General Guterres' UN reform plan is an encouraging, important step in the process. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure that his efforts align with U.S. priorities. Ambassador Haley has been a strong leader on UN reforms, and has been working closely with like-minded countries to push for greater accountability and transparency, to reduce duplicative structures and mandates, to streamline planning and budgetary processes and to better assess peacekeeping operations. If

confirmed, I look forward to joining her in these efforts to ensure America gets what it pays for at the United Nations. Additionally, the United States has been a champion for accountability when peacekeepers are accused of sexual exploitation and abuse. If confirmed I will strongly support a zero tolerance standard.

Another area of my focus, if confirmed, will be the fight to end disproportionate and unjust attacks on our ally, Israel. Throughout the UN system, there is persistent anti-Israel bias. This is particularly egregious in the Human Rights Council, with its standing agenda item dedicated to criticizing Israel. If confirmed, I will fight this bias at every opportunity, and will continue to reinforce Israel's efforts to normalize its role in the UN and the broader international community.

The United Nations can strengthen U.S. security prosperity and international effectiveness and be an even more effective vehicle for international peace and security. If confirmed, it will be my great honor to devote myself to furthering America's efforts at the United Nations by contributing to the focused U.S. leadership there with the goal of promoting and protecting America's interests and values.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to address you today. I appreciate and value this Committee's oversight of our efforts at the United Nations and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your respective staff members on the range of issues on the UN agenda. Your continued engagement is, and will remain, an important element in our ability to successfully advance America's interests at the United Nations.

I look forward to your questions.