

**Testimony of Mary Beth Leonard,  
Ambassadorial Nominee to the African Union  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
June 8, 2016**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, and Members of the Committee,

It is a great honor to appear before you today as the nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the African Union and as the U.S. Representative to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). I joined the Foreign Service 28 years ago nearly to this day – in the same class as today’s co-panelist Geeta Pasi, I might add – with a newly minted Master’s Degree in African studies. I remember vividly my excitement that the State Department would agree to send me to live and work in Africa. Sitting here today, after six tours in Africa and two domestic Africa-related tours, my excitement is equally palpable as I contemplate the prospect that, if confirmed, I will marshal those professional experiences in directing U.S. relations with the African Union. These experiences culminated with the honor of serving as Ambassador in Mali, where the U.S. mission was at the forefront of a closely coordinated multilateral effort to support that country in emerging from a multidimensional security and governance crisis. 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 your staffs to promote and protect U.S. interests across Africa by strengthening and expanding our ties with the continent’s premier multilateral institution.

I am pleased to welcome family members who are with me today including my sister Ann Marie Stoica and niece Mary Ann Manning.

Nothing I could say today would underscore the importance of our relationship with the African Union more than President Obama did by his historic visit to Addis Ababa last July. As the first U.S. President to visit the AU, President Obama delivered a strong message on our commitment to Africa – to democracy, to opportunity, to prosperity, and to the promotion of and respect for human rights for all people. This is a relationship rooted in shared goals, which are reflected in President Obama’s 2012 Policy Directive for sub-Saharan Africa and the AU’s

Constitutive Act (the AU's founding document): Peace and Security; Democracy and Governance; Opportunity and Development; and Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our close collaboration in all four areas.

U.S. resource contributions to AU peace and security efforts have included both capacity building and operational support. Capacity building has assisted with AU peacekeeping and conflict early warning work and operational support has included equipment, training, and logistics planning. Most recently, U.S. support has enabled AU efforts to counter the Lord's Resistance Army, support the AU Mission in Somalia, and bolster the Lake Chad Basin Commission's efforts to counter Boko Haram. The AU and its member states have made substantial progress in being able to step up to their security challenges but additional work is needed, including in counterterrorism and maritime security. The realization that international largesse is not without its limits has led to discussions about new partnerships to provide both more reliable support and greater financial responsibility from the AU and its member states in UN-authorized peace operations in Africa. We welcomed the AU's appointment this January of Dr. Donald Kaberuka as the AU High Representative for the Peace Fund, highlighting the AU's commitment to this issue. If confirmed, I would look forward to next steps as we work together with the AU, the UN, and others in the international community to bring new proposals to fruition.

The United States and the AU share a commitment to democratic principles, including free and fair elections, peaceful transitions of power, and sound governance. More broadly, we look to the AU as a respected voice on the continent that builds consensus on African issues among member states and stakeholders. I will continue this dialogue if I am confirmed, including frank discussions about how to address situations where democracy and governance are falling short. As President Obama made clear during his AU visit last year, the United States does not believe that governments should change their constitutions to benefit the incumbent in power. Our diplomatic efforts to resolve or prevent such crises are multi-faceted, and indeed multilateral; the African Union, along with sub-regional African organizations such as the East African Community, has been and will continue to be important partners in this regard.

On the development front, the AU's "Agenda 2063" in the words of AU Commission Chairperson Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, "encapsulates the aspirations of Africa's people for themselves and for their continent." From PEPFAR to the President's Power Africa initiative, the United States has been at the forefront of helping Africa and Africans realize those aspirations. We need to help Africans build sustainable livelihoods and better opportunities, particularly for this continent's strikingly young population. Congress' 2015 renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act for another ten years will enable more African entrepreneurs and exporters to build their businesses via stronger and more open trade relationships with the United States, another area I look forward to supporting, if confirmed.

I cannot close without a word about the global response to the Ebola crisis, where our U.S. military and medical personnel worked alongside counterparts from Africa, Europe, China, and elsewhere to treat the ill and build institutional resilience in the Ebola-affected countries. We could not have succeeded without the critical contributions of the African Union, which deployed medical personnel and helped to coordinate a very effective response. If confirmed, it would be my honor to continue to pursue our efforts to support the nascent Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, partially modeled on our own CDC, as framed in the April 2015 memorandum of cooperation signed by Secretary Kerry and Chairperson Dlamini Zuma.

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.

Approved: AF – Acting DAS Peter Barlerin (ok)  
June 3, 2016

Drafted: AF/ERA: CJLamora, 05/25/16, ext 7-5772, (571) 289-4877  
AF/ERA – Christina Bruff (clearance coordinator), 7-7917,  
202-394-5823

Cleared: AF: Amb.-Nominee Leonard (ok)  
AF/ERA: STicknor (ok)  
AF/ERA: MJain (ok)  
AF/ERA: KMoody (ok)  
USAU: KHintz-Tate (ok)  
AF/SA: MBittrick (ok)  
AF/PDPA: PDimon (ok)  
AF/E: PLord (ok)