

**Testimony of Ambassador Deborah Malac
Ambassador Designate to the Republic of Uganda**

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

**Subcommittee on African Affairs, Global Health, Human Rights and
International Organizations**

November 3, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today as the nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Uganda. I thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence and trust they have placed in me by sending my name to the Senate for consideration.

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

Mr. Chairman, I have been extraordinarily privileged to serve as a member of the Foreign Service for more than 34 years. As the daughter of an immigrant who arrived in the United States in the middle of the last century in pursuit of freedom and opportunity, my service is small repayment for all that the United States has afforded my family and me. The majority of my career has been spent working in and on Africa, beginning with my first assignment in Cameroon in 1981. That first taste of Africa was followed by assignments in South Africa, Senegal, Ethiopia, and now, Liberia, where I have had the great honor to serve as Ambassador since 2012. Interspersed among the Africa assignments, I have worked in Washington and Southeast Asia on issues of democracy, development, trade, and security.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has enjoyed a close bilateral partnership with Uganda for the past quarter century. Uganda and the United States have worked together to promote the peaceful resolution of a series of regional conflicts. Having expelled the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from Ugandan territory, the Ugandan military has continued to lead regional efforts to counter the LRA in central Africa. As the second largest troop contributor to the African Union

Mission in Somalia, Uganda has made tremendous sacrifices in its efforts to degrade and defeat the terrorist al-Shabaab and bring peace and stability to the Horn of Africa.

The United States is supporting Uganda to build capacity in law enforcement crisis response, counterterrorism investigations, criminal justice sector reform, border security, and countering violent extremism and terrorist finance.

Uganda stands out not only for its contributions to regional peace and security, but also for its great strides in transitioning from a country beset by internal conflict to one that is at peace and growing economically. When President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 after decades of violent internal strife in Uganda, he instituted macroeconomic policies that contributed to steady economic growth. We look forward to continuing to work with Uganda to help expand economic activity for its citizens and support improved governance that will help foster broad-based economic development.

We are working to help Uganda strengthen its multiparty democracy and reinforce respect for human rights. Uganda will hold elections in 2016, during which President Museveni will seek a fifth term. If confirmed, I will urge the President to ensure the political space necessary for a spirited and robust campaign in which all parties participate freely. It is important for the region and Uganda's future that the elections are free, fair, transparent, and peaceful. We continue to urge the Ugandan government to respect the fundamental human rights of all individuals.

On the development front, we continue to invest in Uganda with a robust set of programs. USAID has provided over \$430 million over the past 6 years in development assistance to help Uganda's people, efforts that support vital activities including education and economic growth, as well as reintegration and rehabilitation support for those affected by past conflicts in Uganda, including many former LRA abductees. President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative focuses on improving productivity and incomes in the agriculture sector, on which 70 percent of Uganda's citizens rely for their livelihoods.

In the health sector, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate has fallen from a high of 13.4 percent in 1992 to around 7 percent, where it has stagnated for the past decade. Malaria still causes an estimated 70,000 to 100,000 deaths per year, and progress in improving maternal and child health is slow. Through the Global Health Security Agenda, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the

President's Malaria Initiative, and the Saving Mothers, Giving Life partnership, we are working with the Ugandan government to improve the quality and accessibility of health services and to address Uganda's most pressing health concerns.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will seek to strengthen our partnership with Uganda as a force for regional peace and security. I will also work with the government and people of Uganda in pursuit of a healthier, more productive, and more prosperous society where protection of citizens' political and personal freedoms is a priority for all. Achieving these objectives will be critical to Uganda's future stability and economic growth, as well as its continued role as an important and constructive regional leader. Finally, Mr. Chairman, or more precisely, **first**, if confirmed, the protection of U.S. citizens and U.S. business interests in Uganda will be the foremost concern for my team and for me.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to represent and promote the interests of the American people in Uganda. I welcome any questions the Committee may have.