

Douglas Manchester Opening Statement
Nominee for United States Ambassador to The Bahamas
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 20, 2019

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. I am deeply grateful to the President and Secretary Pompeo for the support and confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with you, with this committee and its staff, and other Members of Congress to advance our nation's interests in The Bahamas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family for all their support over the years. My children and grandchildren could not be here, but it is my family's love and support that has made this possible. I have had the wonderful fortune of success in insurance, real estate, medical instrumentation, broadcasting, publishing, construction, hotel ownership and development, and oil drilling. I have operated 27 companies, with a total workforce of more than 6,000 people, surrounded myself with an outstanding and diverse group of employees and advisors. I believe this experience is integral and essential in managing a successful U.S. mission in the Bahamas and has well prepared me for the duties of Ambassador to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

The Bahamas, since its independence as a sovereign nation in 1973, has been a steadfast partner and neighbor to the United States. Given our shared interests – at its nearest point, the country lies barely 50 miles from the coast of Florida – we have cooperated as partners on security, commercial, cultural, and other issues. Together we are confronting shared challenges such as illicit trafficking in narcotics, arms, and people, as well as the need to bolster the rule of law. If confirmed as Ambassador, I affirm my intention to maintain and strengthen the United States’ collaboration with The Bahamas.

If confirmed, I would take charge of a Mission that has forged strong diplomatic and political ties with the government in Nassau. The Bahamas has been a leader in our drive to restore democracy in Venezuela. In bravely staking a position supporting a government there under the leadership of interim president Guaidó, The Bahamas has taken the lead in the Caribbean, setting a bold example for nations in the region to follow. The Prime Minister of The Bahamas joined President Trump last March at a Mar a Lago summit, reinforcing our shared ties and steadfast commitment to democracy, security, and prosperity in this hemisphere.

Through close political, economic, and cultural ties, the United States and The Bahamas have forged a strong bilateral relationship that has served both countries well. Bahamians regularly travel to the United States to visit friends and

family and to conduct business. And approximately six million U.S. citizens travel to The Bahamas annually.

If confirmed, I will strive to ensure the safety and security of American citizens living in or visiting The Bahamas. I will work closely with Bahamian authorities, civil society groups, and guide the U.S. Mission, to promote innovative, effective, and whole-of-government efforts to reduce crime and other illegal activities.

I will also continue to promote greater economic ties between the United States and The Bahamas for our mutual benefit. The Bahamas is an attractive destination for U.S. businesses when Bahamian authorities offer stable and transparent regulations for procurement and investment. The Bahamas can offer our businesses a place to grow while we offer them an “engine” for their own development. Earlier this month, the Embassy participated in a business conference that highlighted the advantages and opportunities for American businesses to develop investments and export markets in The Bahamas. If confirmed, I intend to support efforts to further U.S. economic interests abroad.

While geography and history have forged strong bonds between our countries, The Bahamas also maintains close economic ties with many other nations. We strongly believe that American companies can successfully compete

with anybody in the world when transparent regulations and practices and steadfast respect for the rule of law prevail. If confirmed, I will continue our work to ensure the United States remains the commercial partner of choice in The Bahamas. I will also prioritize monitoring China's growing engagement in the region.

Expanding educational exchanges is one of the best ways to deepen the already existing cultural and historical ties between the United States and The Bahamas. At present, approximately 2,100 students from The Bahamas study in the United States, and more than 950 students from the United States study in The Bahamas. And in the year ahead, we will resume our sponsorship of Fulbright scholarships for Bahamians, scholarships that allow experts to research and explore more about our two nations, deepening our understanding and cooperation. If confirmed, I will seek to increase levels of educational exchange between our two countries, including through enhancing existing partnerships and the building of new ones to achieve greater understanding and ties between our people.

If confirmed, I look forward to enhancing U.S. - Bahamian relations and exploring every opportunity to engage with the government and people of The Bahamas to advance U.S. and shared interests. I will also work closely with Congress to broaden our engagement under the U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership and U.S.-Caribbean 2020 strategy.

Finally, as a matter of the highest priority, I would like to emphasize that my number one priority as Ambassador will be to protect U.S. Mission personnel, private U.S. citizens, and visiting American tourists throughout The Bahamas.

In closing, I am confident that I have the experience, commitment, and energy to lead our bilateral relationship with the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. If confirmed, I pledge to uphold the tradition and high standards of public service expected of a U.S. ambassador. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve my country in this new capacity if confirmed.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and Committee Members, I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome your questions.