

**STATEMENT OF MAUREEN E. CORMACK
AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE TO
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
March 6, 2014**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am deeply honored by the confidence placed in me by President Obama and Secretary Kerry.

I would like to thank this Committee for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I will seek to fully merit your trust and avail myself of any opportunities to consult with you, as I know many Members of Congress have spent a great deal of time over the last two decades working to help ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina moves toward a better future.

Mr. Chairman, my husband, William Cormack, who is also a State Department employee, has been my support and partner throughout 24 years in the Foreign Service. He has just transferred to an assignment in Pakistan and is very sorry not to be here today. Our daughter Elizabeth is launching a new product with her colleagues at a start-up in Cambridge, Massachusetts today, our son William is a freshman in college, and our daughter Margaret is on a semester abroad, and so they are all with me in spirit. Some wonderful neighbors and Department colleagues are here and I thank them warmly for their support.

Mr. Chairman, I have on several occasions in my career been fortunate enough to work on Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans. My relationship goes back to the mid-1990s, when as the European Personnel Officer for the U.S. Information Agency, my first assignment in early 1996 was to assign staff to the Public Diplomacy section of our embassy in Sarajevo after the conclusion of the Dayton Accords. Those I assigned were sent on three-month tours to a city still riddled with bomb craters, whose citizens still lived in great hardship. While serving at Embassy Paris in 1999, I was on the press staff for the Rambouillet Peace Talks, and as Director of Western European Affairs in 2010, I worked with our European partners to ensure their contributions to the still critical stabilization missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Kosovo.

Thanks in large part to the key role played by the United States through the implementation of the Dayton Accords, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made strides since those early days. Much more remains to be done, however, and the risk of backsliding cannot be discounted as we look at the situation today.

Starting with the Dayton peace process in 1995 that ended the horrific war that claimed over 100,000 lives, the United States has invested huge amounts of political, human, and economic capital to bring peace and stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina and build its post-war institutions. We continue this work today, with efforts to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's democracy, foster good

governance, increase respect for human rights, and promote economic prosperity. We have a special bond with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a result of our leading role in helping end the war and build the peace, as well as through the thousands of Bosnians who immigrated to the United States. My goal, if confirmed, will be to work with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to build a stable, multi-ethnic, democratic, and prosperous country. We support the aspirations of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina who want to see their country join the European Union and NATO, so they too can share in the political stability and economic opportunities afforded by membership in these institutions. Supporting these aspirations, in close cooperation with our European allies, will be one of my top priorities, if confirmed.

The United States is concerned, however, by Bosnia and Herzegovina's lack of progress on the path to EU and NATO membership. Bosnian politicians and government leaders pledge their support for advancing the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, but have failed to take the basic steps required to move towards membership in these institutions. Constitutional changes are urgently needed to progress toward EU membership and make the government more efficient and responsive to citizens. Defense reforms required for NATO integration and the conditions for transition of the Office of the High Representative remain unmet.

As evidenced in the protests throughout the country last month, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are frustrated with their political leaders, who have done little in recent years to improve the lives of their citizens and respond to the terrible economic situation. Politicians exploit zero-sum nationalism at the expense of the country as a whole, which in turn prevents compromise on critical reforms needed to grow the economy, improve governance, and move towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Despite these challenges, there are both signs of progress and opportunities to pursue. Recent demonstrations and the formation of citizen forums are a hopeful sign of citizen engagement, though it is critical that protests remain peaceful. The embassy has a long history of working with civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If confirmed, I will build on previous efforts to work directly with citizens in support of their focus on shared aspirations instead of what divides them. The citizens will have the opportunity to hold their leaders accountable in the general elections in October, a message I intend to strongly reinforce in public and in private if confirmed. Croatia's entry into the EU, and progress made by Serbia and others in the region on their EU paths, offer the potential to motivate Bosnia and Herzegovina to resolve longstanding obstacles to the country's EU path.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a strong bilateral partner to the United States. Bosnian troops recently returned from a deployment alongside the Maryland National Guard in Afghanistan, and the country remains an ISAF contributor. The staff of our embassy in Sarajevo and branch offices in Banja Luka and Mostar is exceptionally talented and deeply dedicated to our mission.

With the strong support of Congress, U.S. assistance continues to support democratic development, good governance, rule of law, economic growth, defense reform, and inter-ethnic reconciliation. If confirmed, I will continue our crucial efforts to support the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their aspirations for a peaceful and prosperous Euro-Atlantic future, and in their efforts to demand greater accountability from their leaders.

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to appear before this Committee today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you.