

**Statement of Michael Pelletier  
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Madagascar and  
the Union of the Comoros  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
September 26, 2018**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Senator Booker, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee as Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our relationships with the Governments and people of Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me at this time to introduce to you and the rest of the Committee my wife, Sujatha, and our two sons, Aniketana and Ethan. I have been so blessed to have their company and support as we have travelled the world representing the United States of America, and I am so pleased that they are as excited about this opportunity as I am.

I believe that my educational and professional experiences have prepared me well for this moment. My studies focused on political and social development in Africa, and led me to the Foreign Service and to my first assignment overseas in Senegal. Since then, I have been privileged to work across Africa, in the Arab world, and several times in India. Having served around the Indian Ocean throughout my career, it is truly an honor to now be considered as the nominee to serve as Ambassador to these great island countries: Madagascar, with its rich,

proud, and unique history and cultural and linguistic unity; and Comoros, with its many ties to all of the regions bordering the Indian Ocean.

These are critical times for both Madagascar and Comoros. Madagascar is preparing for elections in November, on schedule five years after the 2013 elections that re-established democracy there. Comorians recently approved a number of constitutional changes in a referendum, and are now working through the results of that referendum. The United States, of course, fully supports the strengthening and reinforcement of democratic systems and the respect of democratic rights in both countries, as we do around the world.

The United States supports Madagascar's efforts to promote democracy and human rights. A successful, free, fair, and transparent election this year would signal the further strengthening of Madagascar's democracy and give us an outstanding opportunity to redouble our efforts there to support political stability and to engage with the democratically-elected government to encourage resilient and sustainable development for all of Madagascar's people, and to protect its unique resources. Madagascar's task is made even more difficult by the ongoing drought in the southwest and seasonal outbreaks of plague. Our development assistance and partnerships with Madagascar, including a vibrant Peace Corps program, and our work with other international partners, can help Madagascar successfully address these challenges, including providing for the education and

health needs of the people, combatting the illegal harvesting and export of Madagascar's unique and rich flora and fauna, fighting corruption, and encouraging a positive business climate and transparency conducive to trade and investment.

If confirmed, I will also serve as Ambassador to the Union of the Comoros. Our goal is to continue to develop our positive and constructive relations with Comoros. I look forward to supporting our local staff there and the staff in our Embassy in Antananarivo who are dedicated to U.S.-Comoros relations, as well as our well-focused Peace Corps program there.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Booker, Members of the Committee, I am truly honored and grateful to appear before you today. I look forward to the opportunity to serve as Ambassador to Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros, and to strengthen and advance our partnerships there.