

Testimony of Mary Catherine Phee
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan
March 25, 2015
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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

I am honored to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan. I would like to thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with this Committee. I would also like to thank my family, friends and colleagues who have generously shared encouragement, support and laughter throughout my career. I could not undertake these challenges without them. I am deeply proud of the opportunity to serve our nation and to apply my experience in tough situations to advance American interests.

Mr. Chairman, I know you and the Members of the Committee share in the profound disappointment many of us experienced in December 2013 when the political process in South Sudan broke down and the country's leaders resorted to violence to resolve their disputes. This breakdown has generated a senseless conflict. There has been a significant loss of life and nearly two million people have been displaced inside and outside of South Sudan. More than four million people now need emergency humanitarian assistance and the country's fledgling economy is at a standstill.

Our disappointment is rooted in the special relationship that we in the United States – including Congress, successive administrations, and the American people – forged with the people of South Sudan during their long civil wars and struggle for self-determination. We had high hopes that the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which led to independence in 2011, offered a permanent end to war in South Sudan. But we were not blind to the challenges of overcoming decades of inadequate governance, development and security, and, with our international partners, sought to avert a breakdown of the fragile political order. Then and now, our core interests remain strengthening this young democratic state and promoting

internal stability and regional peace.

In collaboration with our Troika partners, which are the United Kingdom and Norway, we are backing negotiations to convince President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar to commit to a durable ceasefire and to agree to a transitional government of national unity. The negotiating effort has been led by the group of countries neighboring South Sudan known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, or IGAD. To the frustration of all, to date the parties have resisted compromise. The current IGAD Chairman, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, announced March 6 that he would reform the peace process to include the African Union, the Troika, the UN, the EU, and China. We support this approach.

To be sustainable, we believe the final peace agreement must respect the desire of the people of South Sudan for justice and accountability, as well as reconciliation and healing. We have called for the prompt release of the official report from the African Union's Commission of Inquiry, which was charged with investigating human rights violations and other abuses during the armed conflict.

To advance the peace process, the UN Security Council on March 3 unanimously adopted a resolution we introduced that established a targeted sanctions regime and proposed an arms embargo that could be imposed should the South Sudanese leaders fail to respond to the mediation. The resolution demonstrates that the international community condemns this conflict and seeks a prompt, negotiated end to the crisis.

To address the humanitarian impact on the people of South Sudan, we have provided more than \$994 million in emergency humanitarian assistance since the conflict began, including help for internally displaced persons and refugees in neighboring countries. This assistance has helped stave off famine and provided lifesaving services, such as water, sanitation and health care.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work with the leaders and the people of South Sudan to help end the conflict and begin the rebuilding. I will provide vigorous support to the ongoing effort to improve the humanitarian situation.

Through our partnership we can help South Sudan begin to recover from this devastating setback and regain the opportunities present at independence.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I assure you that, if confirmed, I will be proud to carry on the diplomatic tradition of ensuring the safety and security of American citizens abroad, while focusing on the welfare of the American and South Sudanese staff members of Embassy Juba.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Markey, I thank you for the honor to appear before you today and I welcome your questions.