

**Statement of Susan N. Stevenson**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**November 14, 2018**

Thank you very much Chairman Flake, Ranking Member Booker, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is a great honor to appear before you as the nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, a country that celebrated 50 years of independence from Spain last month. I am grateful for the confidence that President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed by the Senate, I will do my best to uphold this trust and advance U.S. national interests.

Over the past 26 years, I have been privileged to represent the United States in Thailand, China, and Mexico, as well as short-term stints in the Middle East and Africa. I have seen first-hand the impact the United States can have on people worldwide. There have been common challenges in the rule of law, good governance, and transparency, as well as opportunities through entrepreneurship and public policy. While serving as Consul General in Chiang Mai, Thailand, I am proud to have led the U.S. effort to promote the creative economy, to strengthen local industry and to expand the market for U.S. products. While assisting the sizeable refugee communities in northern Thailand, I saw first-hand how U.S. leadership shifted the Government of Myanmar to open to the world. In China, I was part of the interagency dialogue between our two governments to tackle challenges and emphasize areas of common interest. The experience showed me that, despite disagreements with certain nations, diplomacy can further our national interests without sacrificing our values.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Booker, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the honorable members of this committee to advance U.S. interests in Equatorial Guinea. U.S. policy priorities in Equatorial Guinea are to strengthen our commercial ties, promote democracy, improve respect for human rights and civil liberties, and to increase economic, health, and educational opportunities for all citizens. As I have seen through my work in China and on Myanmar and North Korea, countries are more stable and prosperous when they enfranchise their people.

Equatorial Guinea, with a population of about one million people, is strategically located on the Gulf of Guinea. Although the country is a *de jure*

multiparty, constitutional republic, there has been only one president since 1979. The ruling party controls all but one seat in the Chamber of Deputies and one seat in the Senate. Opposition political parties face legal restrictions, and opposition leaders have faced torture, harassment, intimidation, arrest, and even murder. Equatorial Guinea is the fourth largest producer of oil in sub-Saharan Africa, and has one of the highest per-capita income rates in Africa. Despite this, much of its population lives below the poverty level; and official corruption remains rampant. If confirmed, I will encourage the country's leadership to respect human rights and the rule of law. I will urge government leaders to enable true multi-party democracy and facilitate the growth of a strong civil society. I will stress that promoting transparency and ending corrupt practices are key to Equatorial Guinea's long-term growth and stability and critical to strengthen our commercial ties.

The United States has a robust economic relationship with Equatorial Guinea and remains its largest trading partner. U.S. oil and gas companies have invested more than \$14 *billion* in Equatorial Guinea since the 1990s. Senators, this amount represents a substantial investment. The U.S. Embassy plays a critical trade facilitation and promotion role for U.S. investors in Equatorial Guinea. U.S. oil companies are Equatorial Guinea's largest investors, and they have the lead role in oil and gas exploration and extraction. Equatorial Guinea imported nearly \$112 million worth of U.S. goods in 2017. If confirmed, I will continue to work to protect the commercial interests of U.S. oil companies invested in Equatorial Guinea and improve the investment climate for other U.S. businesses.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Booker, while our bilateral dialogue and engagement respects Equatorial Guinea's sovereignty and culture, we also must be frank in discussing our concerns. If confirmed, I will promote the political, economic, and social development of Equatorial Guinea as the country looks beyond its first 50 years of independence.

And, if confirmed, no goal will be more important to me than protecting the lives, interests, and welfare of American citizens living and traveling in Equatorial Guinea. I promise to work closely with you and the Members of this Committee in this endeavor.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.