

Statement of Record
Lucy Tamlyn
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Benin
Before
The Committee on Foreign Relations
U.S. Senate
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it is a great honor for me to appear before you today. I am grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Benin.

My husband, Jorge Serpa, is here today representing many far-flung family members, especially our children Ben and Filipa. Unexpected evacuations and long separations have not dampened their enthusiasm or the pride they take in being part of the Foreign Service family. I know that I could not have come this far without their love and support.

I joined the Foreign Service in 1982 and have served in positions of increasing responsibility across three continents, including three assignments with the Bureau of African Affairs. Working alongside of, and learning from, extraordinary colleagues and leaders in the State Department, I have gained the experience and the understanding which, if confirmed, will enable me to faithfully represent and advance U.S. interests in Benin.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, Benin is a strong partner of the United States. The people of Benin are justly proud of their democratic traditions, and record of peaceful transfers of power. President Thomas Boni Yayi, serving his second and final five-year term, was invited by President Obama in 2011 to the White House as one of four African presidents representing Africa's democratic progress, which as President Obama stated at the time, is vital to a stable and prosperous Africa, and also critical to the stability and prosperity of the world.

With 50 percent of the Beninese population under 18 years of age, Benin is a vibrant and dynamic nation rich in culture, history and potential. We partner with the government of Benin to provide a helping hand to support the inclusive economic growth which is the centerpiece of the country's own poverty reduction strategy, and which will enable the people of Benin to achieve a better future for themselves and their families. Our largest assistance program targets malaria, a disease which is particularly deadly for the young, and which takes an enormous economic toll on the economy. Benin is on track to receive a second Millennium Challenge Compact, a reflection of its ability to sustain high rankings in the MCC's political, economic and social indicators, and to muster the political will to address shortfalls when those rankings slip. U.S. investment in Benin through the

Millennium Challenge Account will help address energy shortfalls, which are a serious impediment to economic growth.

Benin is a strong regional partner on other fronts. It has stood with its neighbors to confront the horrors of Boko Haram and is a member of the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Task Force, to which it has pledged a battalion. The government partners with the United States and other international donors to combat piracy, drug trafficking and other maritime crime. Our shared values are reflected in the stands that Benin takes in international fora and in its multiple contributions to peacekeeping operations worldwide, including in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But challenges remain internally and externally for Benin. Robust economic growth is needed to meet the needs of the people, but despite considerable efforts on the part of President Yayi's government, extreme poverty and corruption remain serious obstacles to development. The country is vulnerable to external shocks, particularly emanating from larger economies in the region. Transnational Organized Crime can flourish where borders are porous and thinly surveilled and where corruption corrodes the rule of law. And finally, extremist violence threatens Benin's near neighbors, as perpetrators of such violence find recruits in disenfranchised and vulnerable communities.

My priorities, if confirmed, will be to identify those areas where U.S. partnership can assist the government and people of Benin continue as a beacon of democracy, stability, peace and tolerance in the region. I will seek to further strengthen the ties of friendship and understanding with the people of Benin. And I will look for ways to advance U.S. interests for the benefit of the American people through a partnership with Benin which bolsters the fight against transnational organized crime and enables us to stand together for shared values internationally.

Benin has welcomed more than 2,000 Peace Corps Volunteers over the years and - in the truest spirit of partnership - these Volunteers have given much - and received much from the host communities in which they worked. Kate Puzey was one such volunteer whose life was tragically cut short - but whose memory very much endures. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities will be to continue to work with the Government of Benin for justice for Kate Puzey and her family.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to address you today. I am very happy to take any questions which you may have.