

Statement of Daniel J. Kritenbrink
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply grateful to President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. I want to thank my wife Nami, children Mia and Joe, my parents Don and Joyce, and sisters Kay and Nancy, for their love and support.

It would be the honor of a lifetime to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, a region in which I have been engaged for 24 out of my 27 years in the Foreign Service. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting closely with the Senate.

President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed diplomacy at the center of U.S. foreign policy, and emphasized the centrality of a free and open Indo-Pacific to the security and prosperity of the American people. If confirmed, I would focus on the following six priorities.

First, revitalizing ties with allies and partners. Our network of alliances and partnerships is our greatest strategic asset, enabling us to pool our strengths to advance shared interests, deter common threats, and promote universal values – including our commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that is rules-based and unconstrained by coercion; the peaceful resolution of disputes; freedom of navigation and overflight; and respect for human rights. If confirmed, strengthening these relationships will be my top priority. The priority placed on our treaty alliances was demonstrated by President Biden’s hosting of his Japanese and Republic of Korea counterparts in April and May. The President’s hosting of the first-ever Quad Leaders Summit in March showed the resolve of the Indo-Pacific democracies Australia, India, Japan, and the United States to work together to support the region. I support ASEAN centrality and, if confirmed, will work to strengthen our strategic partnership with ASEAN, including treaty allies Thailand and the Philippines. If confirmed, I will reinforce our partnership with friends in the Pacific Islands, including our unique relationship with the Freely Associated States. I will also further develop our robust ties with our democratic partner Taiwan.

Second, prevailing in our strategic competition with China. The People’s Republic of China is our biggest geopolitical test. I support approaching the PRC from a position of strength, by working with allies and partners, engaging with international organizations, standing up for our values, and investing in our diplomatic and military capabilities – and the American people. Secretary Blinken has said our approach to China will have competitive, adversarial, and cooperative aspects. The United States will counter PRC attempts to erode the international rules-based order, push back on unfair PRC trade practices, secure critical supply chains, protect sensitive U.S. technology, and build our strength at home. We will continue holding Chinese authorities responsible for the ongoing genocide in Xinjiang, the trampling of autonomy and civil liberties in Hong Kong, and systematic repression in Tibet. We will bolster partners’ capacity to resist PRC intimidation and oppose China’s unlawful maritime claims. We will also cooperate with Beijing when in our interests, such as on the climate crisis, counternarcotics, and

nonproliferation. As President Biden has said, we are not looking for conflict but welcome stiff competition and will defend U.S. interests across the board.

Third, *reducing the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.* President Biden has stated we remain committed to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and will work with allies to address that threat through diplomacy and deterrence. If confirmed, I will work to ensure North Korea and others abide by UN Security Council resolutions while supporting a calibrated and practical diplomatic approach that prioritizes the security of the United States, our allies, and our deployed military forces.

Fourth, *supporting inclusive economic policies that benefit all Americans.* If confirmed, I will ensure our diplomats in the region fight for every job and the interests of American workers by insisting on market access and fair treatment, and by stopping intellectual property theft and currency manipulation. We will also work with regional partners to foster economic development that is transparent and sustainable, including via APEC.

Fifth, *promoting democracy and human rights.* Our values and our example are critical to successful diplomacy in Asia. If confirmed, I would work with our allies and partners to support democracy, promote human rights, and stand against abuses wherever they occur. In Burma, I would work with partners to press the military to reverse course following the February 1 coup, cease violence, release those unjustly detained, including American citizens, and return Burma to the democratic path chosen by its people. I would work to support the people of Burma by holding accountable those responsible for violence. I would also promote accountability for PRC officials responsible for human rights violations across China. Throughout the region, we will champion transparency, the rule of law, civil society, and independent media.

Sixth, *addressing global priorities, particularly combating COVID-19 and the climate crisis.* On COVID-19, if confirmed, I pledge to support our work with regional partners and international initiatives such as COVAX and the Quad Vaccine Partnership to provide U.S. leadership in the fight to end the pandemic. On the climate crisis, I would work to advance climate solutions with countries in the region, which include some of the world's largest emitters as well as those most vulnerable to climate change.

If confirmed, I will also prioritize the safety and well-being of my team, maintain their focus on top goals, and ensure they represent the diverse talents of the American people.

Thank you for inviting me to testify. I look forward to your questions.