

**Statement of Monica P. Medina**  
**Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International**  
**Environmental and Scientific Affairs**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**July 13, 2021**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee, it is a tremendous honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, or OES.

I am deeply honored to be nominated by President Biden, and for the trust he and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. I am also thrilled to have the chance to serve my country again.

I would like to begin by thanking my family. I am eternally grateful to my husband Ron, and our children, Hannah, Michael and Daniel, for their constant support and encouragement as I pursued a career in environmental conservation even when it took me far from home. I also must thank my mother, Jeanne, a retired middle school teacher, who through her passion for elephants and other wildlife, taught me the importance of biodiversity to life on Earth.

If confirmed, I am eager to engage, consult, and collaborate with members of this Committee and to build on your great work on ocean conservation, ending wildlife trafficking and illegal fishing, stemming the rise of future pandemics, fighting plastic pollution, and other OES issues of interest to you.

I would not be here today if it were not for the opportunity the U.S. Army gave me to attend Georgetown University on an R.O.T.C. scholarship at a time when there were not many women who received them. Both my parents were teachers and I could not have afforded a private university like Georgetown otherwise – and my dream was for a career in government and law. I could not have imagined then that my scholarship would lead me to where I sit today – that I would meet my husband, attend Ivy League law schools, serve twice in the Pentagon, work in positions of responsibility on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee staff, at the Department of Justice, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Department of Commerce twice, and now, with your approval, at the State Department.

OES is at the forefront of our responses to the global challenge of the present and the global challenge of the future. Clearly, our nation must continue to work to defeat COVID-19 globally and better prepare for and prevent future pandemics. Likewise, there is no greater long-term threat to our safety and security than climate change. I look forward to supporting the Administration's work on both of these fundamental threats to our health, security and prosperity.

I would additionally raise three areas of particular concern to me, and ones that, if confirmed, I would dedicate special attention to:

1. **The loss of biodiversity globally is a crisis and it is often overlooked.** But there is great bi-partisan work being done here in Congress to conserve species globally and to assist countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas in their efforts to do the same. I greatly admire the International Conservation Caucus' efforts to work collaboratively with legislative counterparts from around the world to ensure we don't lose elephants or rhinos or tigers or penguins or pangolins to extinction.
2. **The ocean also needs our attention.** There is too much tension, damage and lawless behavior in the seas due to deep disagreements over a plethora of hot button issues such as excessive maritime claims, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, the dramatic changes and rapid development in the polar regions, and disregard by bad actors of global shipping safety and security rules, as well as pervasive plastic pollution and ocean chemistry changes. I am very impressed by the work of the Ocean Caucus on these issues. If confirmed, implementing the recently passed Save Our Seas 2.0 Act will be a priority of mine.
3. **Finally, given the rapid growth and competition in space exploration and commercialization, space policy is at a key inflection point.** A new space race could escalate global tensions among superpowers and create problems for future generations if we don't work to ensure today that space actors are complying with their obligations under international law and space activities are pursued in a safe, responsible, and sustainable manner.

All these issues also merit special attention by OES, in my view, because they are central to addressing our nation's strategic competition with China. Moreover, each of these challenges must be handled in a way that recognizes the disparity between developed and developing nations, and ensures the equitable inclusion of diverse stakeholders and the private sector in our solutions. In tackling these and other challenges, I want to assure the Committee that I will work every day on behalf of the American people, with the goal of ensuring that our efforts around the

world support Americans at home and make their lives better. Diplomacy, cooperation, and compassion for our fellow residents of the planet we call home have never been more important.

Thank you again for considering me for this position, and I look forward to answering your questions.