

Statement of Isobel Coleman
Nominee for U.S. Agency for International Development
Deputy Administrator for Policy and Programming
July 27, 2021

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee: I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be Deputy Administrator for Policy and Programming at USAID. I am grateful for President Biden and Administrator Power's trust in me at this important moment. I would also like to thank the SFRC staff who have so strongly supported the mission of USAID and have been stalwart partners to the Agency.

I would not be appearing before you today without the love and support of my family who have encouraged me at every step: my wonderful husband Struan; my terrific children Cullen, Struan, Julian, Josie, and Adrienne; my siblings, my loving parents Michael and Edie, and my mother-in-law Ginnie. I thank you all.

Over the past 20 years, my work as a writer, diplomat, and NGO leader has taken me to troubled spots around the world – from Afghanistan and Yemen, to South Sudan and Eastern Congo. I have had the privilege of visiting more than a dozen USAID missions and I have seen up-close the incredible work of USAID staff and partners -- from programs training young women to provide life-saving maternal care in rural Afghan villages; to democracy programs helping young people understand their new-found political rights in Tunisia. These and other American investments not only improve the lives of millions but also advance our own interests. We at home are more secure and prosperous when democracy and economic opportunities expand for others around the world.

Today, the work of USAID is more important than ever. Covid-19 continues to ravage the world's most vulnerable populations. The pandemic's secondary effects, including loss of incomes, food insecurity, and widespread school closings, are exacting a steep toll in many communities. Untethered corruption is destabilizing countries around the world, and conflict is now driving more than 80 percent of humanitarian needs.

My career has helped prepare me to lead the Agency to confront the challenges facing our global development efforts at this time. I have written extensively about economic reform and democratization, and I'm probably best known for my decades-long work to underscore the advantages of investing in women and girls globally. My years in the private sector have helped me to hone my management skills. My time as a diplomat at the UN exposed me to the benefits and challenges of multilateralism and instilled in me the imperative of leveraging our resources to marshal those of other countries. And, as an NGO leader working across Africa, I gained first-hand appreciation for the acute challenges facing USAID partners in delivering assistance to those devastated by conflict and humanitarian disasters.

If confirmed, I will bring these experiences to bear at USAID to ensure that our programming continues to be more innovative and effective, that it is aligned to Administration and Congressional priorities, and to mobilize other governments, international organizations, and the

private sector to be force multipliers of our work. I will also lead on ensuring a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion across the Agency.

Meeting today's demands – from helping partner countries adapt to climate change, to countering democratic backsliding – depends on finding innovative ways to do more with less. To that end, I will strive to ensure that the Agency is breaking down programmatic silos to realize the multiplier effect of our work across bureaus and sectors. I am clear-eyed about the competitive challenges posed by China, Russia, and other authoritarian regimes, and will make sure that USAID is deploying the best of America – including technical expertise, financing, corporate partnerships and innovation alongside our generous grants – to provide an alternative to predatory development models that breed and exacerbate corruption.

If confirmed, I pledge to work with you and your colleagues to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are being deployed effectively to advance American foreign policy interests while doing the most good for the most people. I will bring to my role the same commitment to transparency, bipartisanship, and collaboration with this committee that I brought to my prior role in government.

I thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you and I look forward to answering your questions.