

Statement of The Honorable Chesley Burnett Sullenberger III
Nominee for Representative of the United States of America to the Council of the International
Civil Aviation Organization, with the rank of Ambassador
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 29, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the Committee: I am deeply honored to be with you today as the President's nominee to become the U.S. Representative on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Please allow me to begin my statement today with a few comments about my biggest supporters, my wife Lorrie and our two daughters, Kate and Kelly. Kate, our older daughter, is a doctor of veterinary medicine in an emergency clinic. Kelly is working full time as a manager in enrollment for a major university and will finish her PhD in the spring. Lorrie put her career on hold to stay home with our girls when as an airline pilot I was gone two thirds of every month. We were equal partners in leading our family through decades of airline life. And we are so grateful that both of our young women found their life passions early and have pursued them so enthusiastically and successfully. If confirmed, Lorrie and I are looking forward to an exciting new chapter in our lives.

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply grateful to the President for this nomination and the confidence in me that he and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by asking that I assume this important role.

I seek this position because I want to once again serve this nation that has afforded me such wonderful opportunities that have filled my life with such purpose and meaning. In leveraging my life experience, I want to help restore and rebuild U.S. leadership in global aviation and increase economic opportunity for all Americans, while improving their safety and security when they travel by air.

With COVID, climate change, and security threats, we are at an inflection point. While we are facing great challenges, we also have great opportunities to positively affect global aviation standards and recommended practices for decades to come.

At several points in my over half-century aviation career, along with many colleagues, I have made significant contributions to our aviation progress. At each

juncture, after each success, I have hoped that my greatest contributions might still lie ahead. And at this juncture, that is still my hope and my goal.

The International Civil Aviation Organization may be far from a household name, but its purpose and performance are crucial to U.S. national security, and it benefits from a history of American leadership dating to its foundation in 1947. The remarkable growth in civil aviation over the last 75 years is a testament not just to American innovation, but also to the tangible value in multilateral bodies such as ICAO that facilitate cooperation, coordination, and mutual benefit.

If confirmed, I would strive to extend the legacy of U.S. leadership on matters related to aviation safety and security, and to harmonize global aviation standards. I would underscore the administration's commitment to meaningful action on carbon offsets, sustainable aviation fuels, and gradual direct emissions reductions.

I would also focus intently on actions to strengthen ICAO's culture of transparency and accountability – actions that cannot be delayed given the recent history of mismanagement at the organization. I believe corrective measures became more achievable with the recent election of Juan Carlos Salazar as the organization's new Secretary General, and if confirmed, I would be a relentless advocate for necessary reforms.

I would also be attentive to the risks posed to international organizations such as ICAO by authoritarian states who see benefit in undermining the purpose and performance of these multilateral venues. Standard-setting bodies such as ICAO must work for the benefit of all its members and in keeping with their intended roles, principles, and values. For ICAO, that means the safety, security, and sustainability of civil aviation. That mission is threatened when member states disregard their international commitments, as in the case of the Belarus Ryanair incident, or the repeated, unannounced launch of missiles by the North Korean regime.

I also understand that successful American engagement at ICAO requires the strongest possible relationships across federal agencies, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Department of Transportation, and continuous conversation with aviation industry groups.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed I would succeed many capable American representatives before me, and would make every effort to live up to their collective standard. The United States has every reason to be proud of its leadership and continued preeminence in civil aviation, and I carry that pride with me. If I am fortunate enough to represent the United States at ICAO, it would be the honor of my lifetime.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.