

Statement of Sharon Cromer

Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

September 29, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown me as their nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia. If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with you and other distinguished Members of Congress to advance our nation's security and foreign policy interests.

Mr. Chairman, I am here today, the product of a loving family. My mother, Thelma Cromer, now deceased, showed me how to live a life of abundance despite having so little. My father, Walter Cromer, Sr., drove a taxi right here in the nation's capital for over 60 years and inspired me to explore the world. My loving husband of 33 years, Arnold Sobers, Jr., supported my every step. Together, we raised two brilliant daughters, Courtney and Simone and we now have two adorable grandchildren. I am very grateful to all of my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors across the globe. They are my heroes.

Mr. Chairman, I have proudly served the American people for the past 35 years as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development. I successfully advanced U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and managed large, complex inter-agency programs, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the President's Malaria Initiative, Feed the Future, Power Africa, and wildlife anti-trafficking. I championed girls' education, women's empowerment, youth employment, and the rights of marginalized people, including LGBTQI+ communities, to prosper and live in peace and dignity. I have enjoyed mentoring and sponsoring employees of every color, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation; helping each one to grow professionally, assume greater responsibilities, and fully contribute to advancing U.S. goals. If confirmed, I will continue to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion in the workforce and in our programs.

Mr. Chairman, the U.S. and The Gambia have a close bilateral relationship based on shared ideals of democracy, religious tolerance, good governance, security, and economic prosperity. As a young, university student traveling in The Gambia, I experienced the warm hospitality and proud traditions of the Gambian people. It was clear then, and I believe it is true today, that Gambians admire American culture and traditions. If confirmed, I will strengthen the U.S./Gambian partnership for the benefit of both countries.

After 22 years of authoritarian rule, in 2016 Gambians voted for a new president and commenced the transition from dictatorship to democracy. While some promised reforms have been implemented, much more remains to be done if the aspirations of the Gambia people for a transparent, democratic government accountable to the people are to be realized. The upcoming December presidential election will be an opportunity for Gambians to show the world that they are committed to solidifying their hard-won democratic gains. The U.S. has been a steadfast partner, supporting the Independent Election Commission's successful voter registration effort and helping civil society organizations empower citizens through voter education. This December, Gambians will determine their path forward through a free, fair and peaceful election.

Given the opportunity, I will support The Gambia's ongoing democratic process. I will combat corruption and promote economic prosperity which will allow both U.S. and Gambian firms to invest and create good jobs. I will encourage trade and the use of the American Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA). I will speak up for human rights, and explore ways to improve the primary health care system. Of paramount importance is the need to maintain a strong security partnership. I will pursue U.S. national security and foreign policy interests by helping the Gambian people achieve their goal to become a prosperous, secure, and democratic nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to address you today. I am happy to answer any questions.