

Statement of Caryn R. McClelland
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Brunei
Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 30, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be here before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam. I am deeply grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for placing their confidence in me to serve the United States in Brunei. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to advance U.S. interests in Brunei.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my family, friends, mentors, and colleagues, whose support and guidance has been critical throughout my career. Most importantly, I want to recognize my daughter Marlowe, who has shared this adventure with me for the last 13 years, and my parents Robert and Catherine. Without their constant love, support, and encouragement, I would not be here today.

The U.S.-Brunei relationship has flourished over the years as we continuously work together to promote a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. We have enjoyed more than 170 years of close cooperation since our countries signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation in 1850. The United States was also among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Brunei after it became fully independent from the United Kingdom in 1984.

Our partnership with Brunei and our support for ASEAN centrality remain a cornerstone of our Indo-Pacific policy. The United States works closely with Brunei, especially during its role as the ASEAN Chair in 2021. Brunei's time leading ASEAN coincided with the two most acute challenges to face ASEAN since its inception - the coup d'état in Burma and COVID-19. Brunei has been steady and constructive partner on both issues. Our shared commitment to addressing some of the region's most pressing challenges will continue to yield cooperation, including on pandemic response, confronting the climate crisis, and resolving the conflict brought on by the coup and violence in Burma.

The robust security, economic, and people-to-people ties between our two countries are at the core of our relationship with Brunei. Our defense relationship is described in our Memorandum of Understanding on Defense Cooperation, and our military-to-military ties have become a cornerstone of the U.S.-Brunei bilateral relationship. Prior to the pandemic, Brunei conveyed a strong desire to increase participation in military exercises and engagements with the United States, particularly with respect to enhancing maritime domain awareness. While many in-person defense exchanges have either been postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions, Brunei remains committed to our defense partnership as witnessed by its recent purchase of U.S.-origin defense equipment and its continued participation in our bilateral maritime exercises. We have a shared interest in maintaining peace and stability, unimpeded lawful commerce, and respect for international law, including freedoms of navigation and overflight and other lawful activities in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will look for opportunities to strengthen our partnership in these areas with the Bruneian government and

work with Brunei to uphold the rules-based international order that has underpinned the region's security and prosperity.

We have also fostered a positive economic relationship with Brunei and enjoy a robust trade in goods such as aircraft, machinery, technology, iron, and steel, among others. U.S. goods and services trade with Brunei totaled an estimated \$262 million in 2020. We frequently work with Brunei and other regional economies to lower barriers to trade and investment across the Indo-Pacific region, leveling the playing field for U.S. companies and supporting job growth at home. If confirmed, I hope to further expand our bilateral trade relationship and advance an economic agenda that promotes shared prosperity, leverages economic potential, and builds inclusive and resilient economies - especially as the entire region works toward pandemic recovery.

If there is one thing the past year and a half has taught us, it is the true value of personal relationships. Our cultural, educational, and people-to-people ties with Brunei are critically important to advancing both mutual understanding between our nations and our bilateral relationship. In a country with limited exposure to the United States, engaging the next generation of Bruneian leaders and changemakers is vital. Prior to the pandemic, approximately 50 Bruneians participated annually in U.S. Embassy-sponsored exchange programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the Fulbright Program and other professional and academic exchanges. The U.S. Embassy in Brunei also maintains a robust network of more than 300 alumni of U.S. government exchange programs and regularly works with Bruneian civil society to collaborate on addressing issues of mutual concern, such as empowering women, promoting entrepreneurship, and protecting the environment, among other issues. If confirmed, I intend to leverage these exchange programs and other initiatives to broaden our people-to-people ties in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. I look forward to your questions.