

Statement of Claire Pierangelo
U.S. Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 30, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee as Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar and to the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank my family and friends who have supported me throughout my career: My parents, the late Dr. Anthony and Mrs. Rose Pierangelo, who lived their lives helping others and who would have been thrilled to be here today. My beloved sons Luca and Nicholas Pierangelo, who have been my intrepid travel companions and my most avid supporters. My brothers and their families and my friends who always made sure we had a welcoming home upon our return.

Mr. Chairman, I have served across four continents, from Cold War Europe to a newly independent Haiti to a Southeast Asia in transition and now in a challenged West Africa. These were often tough, sometimes dangerous environments. I have led teams working on economic reform, public health crises, violent extremism and terrorism, and the challenges posed by lack of democratic institutions and rule of law. I have worked closely with our Department of Defense colleagues on disaster management, maritime security and as an assistant professor at the National War College. As a San Diego native, I was an avid student of the challenges of wildlife conservation through the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance and I have carried that passion throughout my career.

If confirmed to be concurrently Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar and Ambassador to the Union of the Comoros, I will safeguard U.S. interests and strengthen our relationships with the peoples and governments in these nations. We enjoy positive relationships with Madagascar and Comoros as we partner with them to address their many domestic, regional and global challenges.

With the upcoming presidential elections in Madagascar in 2023, and in Comoros in 2024, we have an opportunity to partner with the Malagasy and Comorian people to reinforce democratic principles, to advocate for full and open political participation, and to press for the protection of human rights. Fair and transparent electoral processes would strengthen democracy and support stability, a precursor to fostering resilient and sustainable development. If confirmed, my team would support the independent democratic aspirations in Madagascar and Comoros and would seek to counter malign influence and disinformation.

These two nations sit at the maritime crossroads of the Indian Ocean, Africa and the Atlantic and deserve our increased strategic attention. The sea lanes linking Madagascar, Comoros and East Africa are an important geostrategic transit route for tankers and other maritime traffic. The region's largest deep-water port is situated at the northern tip of Madagascar. Oil and gas reserves in the area, including potential large reserves off western Madagascar itself, are

attracting interest and investment from countries who do not always prioritize these nations' long-term security.

Stability in the region is also threatened by climate change, creating serious humanitarian, economic, and environmental crises. Southern Madagascar has suffered an extended drought, throwing more than 1.4 million people into food insecurity and causing internal migration that threatens unique ecosystems. COVID-19 has brought significant health and economic challenges to Madagascar and Comoros and there is an urgent need for additional vaccine doses to protect their populations and combat this threat to the global community.

If confirmed, encouraging U.S. trade, protecting U.S. investment, and promoting greater economic self-sufficiency would be top priorities. The U.S. Mission to Madagascar, largely through USAID, has robust development assistance programs, and collaborates closely with other international partners. Our efforts are focused on providing basic healthcare, primary education, and emergency food aid in the south; combatting wildlife trafficking and corruption; and promoting good governance, and economic development. If confirmed, I commit to advancing these efforts, as well as combatting threats to Madagascar's biodiversity, including illegal fishing, deforestation, and unsustainable harvesting of its unique flora and fauna. I would look forward to working with the Peace Corps to resume its historically vibrant programs in Madagascar and Comoros.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. If confirmed, I would serve proudly as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros. I welcome advice from you and your staff on the United States' interests in Madagascar and Comoros. One of the highlights of my Foreign Service Career has been facilitating the visits of members of Congress to the countries where I served and I hope to host you or your staff in the future. I welcome any questions.