

**Opening Statement
For Peter D. Haas
U.S. Ambassador-Nominee to the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
October 20, 2021**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee: It is a privilege to appear before you today. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and support in nominating me to serve as Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I am honored by their confidence in me, particularly during this time of unprecedented challenges – and unrivalled opportunity – in Bangladesh and the broader Indo-Pacific.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize my wife Amy, my steadfast partner over these past 30 years. I would not be here today without her continual support. We have two amazing sons: Carsten who is doing a PhD in German at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Cameron who is doing a PhD in Economics at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Together, they have been my portable “home” as we have served the American people around the world.

Most recently, I had the privilege of serving as Acting Assistant Secretary and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. I also served as Consul General in Mumbai,

India, and as Economic Counselor in Jakarta, Indonesia. These positions taught me that there is no corner of the globe whose partnership is more critical to U.S. strategic interests than the Indo-Pacific, and that we have not yet reached the full potential of this partnership. A democratic, stable, and prosperous Bangladesh will benefit the entire region, and if confirmed, I will advance policies that will enhance our relationship with Bangladesh and promote a free, open, interconnected, resilient and secure region.

The United States has been a reliable friend to and partner with Bangladesh for nearly five decades. We work together on economic development, peacekeeping, tackling the climate crisis, public health, and finding durable solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis. Our two nations also share a commitment to democratic values. Our people-to-people ties continue to grow and help to deepen our cooperation. If confirmed, I will be a tireless advocate for America's interests and values and broadening our partnership with Bangladesh.

Economic development, climate, and health are important cornerstones of the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship. Our economic ties are strong and growing, demonstrated by the establishment of the U.S.-Bangladesh Business Council this year. U.S. private sector investment supports Bangladesh's economic development goals by

bringing U.S. technologies and know-how and promoting transparency, inclusion, and market-based reforms. Bangladesh has also long played a leadership role in advocating for solutions to the climate crisis, and if confirmed, I will advocate for policies that promote our partnership on environmental and climate issues. The United States is also committed to helping Bangladesh recover from the global COVID-19 pandemic. Through COVAX, the United States has donated 11.5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Bangladesh to date and has committed to providing additional vaccine donations in the coming months.

For the people of Bangladesh to realize their full potential, they must also be free to express themselves. The Department of State has long been committed to promoting the free operation of media, civil society organizations, workers, and members of opposition political parties in Bangladesh, without fear of retribution or harm. If confirmed, I intend to continue the Department's work to bolster full democratic participation in advance of the 2023 national elections and to urge the government to protect and defend human rights.

The United States appreciates the generosity of Bangladesh for hosting nearly one million Rohingya refugees who fled violence in Burma. The United States has supported Bangladesh as the largest international donor in the humanitarian

assistance response. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. government's work to promote the voluntary, safe, dignified return of Rohingya refugees in coordination with Bangladesh and the international community, while continuing to advocate for the protections of the human rights of all Rohingya, wherever they may be.

The United States also cooperates closely with Bangladesh on counterterrorism. Bangladesh is one of the largest recipients globally of U.S. counterterrorism assistance. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen this partnership, while continuing to promote our emphasis on the respect for rule of law and human rights. The United States also recognizes Bangladesh's notable contributions to regional security and active role in UN peacekeeping operations.

In 2022, the United States and Bangladesh will celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations. The common goals and the steadfast friendship between the American and Bangladeshi people have remained constant over these nearly 50 years. It is an honor to be nominated at this pivotal point in our relationship and during Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee anniversary year. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to work with this Committee and other members of Congress to support the United States' interests in Bangladesh and the Indo-Pacific region at large.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I look forward to hearing your questions.