

Statement of Elizabeth Fitzsimmons
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Togolese Republic
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
October 20, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, what a privilege it is for me to appear before you today as the nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Togo. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity. In fact, my very first chance to live outside the United States came from then-Senator Biden, who in 1989 selected me as one of two Japan-U.S. Senate scholars from Delaware and set me on the path that would lead to my diplomatic career. If confirmed, it will be the honor of a lifetime to lead our Embassy to advance the interests of the United States and the American people in Togo.

I am thankful that I get to share this moment with my family and loved ones. Diplomacy is our “family business” -- my husband Richard Seipert serves as a Diplomatic Security Special Agent at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and my son-in-law Grant Holyoak is a first tour Foreign Service officer at Embassy Beijing. I am so grateful for a lifetime of support from my wonderful husband, my children Taylor, Morgann, MaKaela, Tyson, and Adam, my daughter-in-law Laura and sons-in-law Grant and Jake. My grandchildren Molly, Harrison, and William are

also watching and I'm thrilled that my mom, Barbara Noseworthy, is as well since she has visited our family at every posting abroad.

Throughout my 26 years in the Foreign Service, I've served across the globe and in a variety of roles in Washington, DC. As Deputy Executive Secretary, I supported two Secretaries of State as they travelled hundreds of thousands of miles projecting American values and engaging with citizens and governments across the globe. As acting Deputy Spokesperson, I helped explain U.S. policy to the world. And most recently, as the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs, I led a fantastic team to build stronger, deeper relationships with the countries of Africa to make the continent safer, more secure, more prosperous, and more democratic. I am a dedicated and engaged mentor to dozens of colleagues and I am committed to making the Foreign Service a more diverse, resilient, and effective organization. I welcome the opportunity to continue this work, if confirmed, as the U.S. Ambassador to Togo.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Togo in 1960. Since then, the United States and Togo have built a strong relationship based on shared goals: advancing peace and security; promoting trade and economic growth; strengthening government and democratic institutions; and supporting opportunity for all Togolese citizens.

Togo is a key regional partner to maintain peace and security in West Africa. Togo plays an active role in mediating regional disputes, most recently in Guinea. The government works alongside civil society, regional partners, and our Embassy in Lomé to strengthen national resilience to violent extremism. Togo currently has more than 1,300 troops and gendarmes in UN missions, making it the 16th largest national contributor. AFRICOM General Townsend's recent visit to Togo highlights the importance the United States places on Togo's partnership in promoting regional peace and stability. If confirmed, I will continue to foster security cooperation between our two countries to enhance the capabilities of Togolese security forces.

The United States works closely with the Government of Togo to improve the investment climate in order to attract U.S. companies to take advantage of Togo's geographic advantages as a logistics hub, with the Gulf of Guinea's deepest deep-water port, and a regional air transport hub. Before the pandemic, Togo enjoyed a period of steady economic expansion fueled by international investment and a concerted effort to modernize the country's commercial infrastructure. The Togolese government calls the Port of Lomé the "lungs" of the economy and promotes Togo as the gateway to West Africa. As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that the United States support partners like

Togo to return to a path of economic success by promoting trade and investment opportunities for the U.S. private sector.

While Togo aspires to become a regional economic and security leader, these goals cannot be achieved without strengthening Togo's democratic institutions. Recent Togolese government restrictions on the media, politically motivated arrests, limitations on political gatherings, and suspensions of press outlets raise concern. If confirmed, my Embassy team and I will work with the Government of Togo, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote political reforms, reinforce democratic institutions, and strengthen electoral institutions and processes to promote free and fair elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee for this opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and my colleagues across the United States government to strengthen our relationship by promoting peace, stability, democracy, and economic growth in Togo. I welcome any questions you may have and hope you and your colleagues will visit Togo to witness the growing bilateral partnership firsthand.