

**Statement of Reuben E. Brigety, II**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**May 24, 2022**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the committee, good morning. It is my great honor to appear before you as the nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa. I am joined here today by my wife Dr. Leelie Selassie, our sons Roebel and Redda, and many family and friends who are watching these proceedings online. I am grateful for the confidence that President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to assume leadership of this important post. Further, I am deeply humbled to be nominated to lead the same embassy that was once led by my late mentors Ambassador Edward Perkins, Ambassador William “Bill” Swing, and Ambassador Princeton Lyman, each of whom were legendary diplomats who brilliantly represented the United States in Pretoria during consequential moments in South African history. If confirmed, I will do my best to live up to the standards that they set for diplomatic excellence in building partnerships in South Africa while advancing American interests.

Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s first post-apartheid President, once said: “When you speak to a man in your language, you speak to his head. When you speak to a man in his language, you speak to his heart.” The word *Ubuntu* is a South African concept that is translated as “I am because we are.” It is a call for the recognition of the common bonds that unite us as human beings and the understanding that our wellbeing is intimately entwined with each other. If confirmed, I will be committed to practicing *Ubuntu Diplomacy* in developing and strengthening this vital bilateral relationship.

The United States and South Africa are two of the world’s great constitutional democracies. We are both international leaders on a range of topics of global importance – from addressing climate change and health security, to promoting peace and security as well as economic development. The relationship between our two countries should be one of close coordination, enduring comity and shared purpose. In practicing *Ubuntu Diplomacy*, I will ensure that official U.S. engagement with the government and people of South Africa is firmly rooted in the principles of common cause and mutual recognition. If I am confirmed as ambassador I will assert

America's position and interests clearly, skillfully, and consistently, with my engagement firmly rooted in dignity and respect.

South Africa is currently experiencing the most dramatic political, economic and social developments since the end of apartheid. These include shifting electoral politics, a reckoning over years of official corruption, and ongoing efforts to address inequalities in the economy.

Despite these profound challenges, the possibilities for South Africa's future are bright. The next few years will no doubt prove decisive for South Africa's prospects through the middle of the twenty-first century. Though South Africa's destiny is clearly for South Africans to choose, it is in the interests of the United States for South Africa to succeed. It is a G-20 nation with the most diversified economy on the continent and stands as the largest African trading partner of the United States. We have many common priorities, such as ensuring global food security. South African scientists have been at the forefront of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and President Cyril Ramaphosa has played an indispensable role as the African Union's Champion for COVID-19 Response. Should I be confirmed, my tenure as Ambassador will focus on advancing three central objectives.

First, we will deliver programs to improve the human condition and preserve the natural environment. I will work with the Government of South Africa to ensure that PEPFAR programs are implemented effectively; that our productive cooperation to bring an equitable end to the COVID-19 pandemic continues; and that climate change initiatives such as the Just Energy Transition come to fruition. As a fourth-generation educator, I am particularly interested in finding new ways to support education and skills training in the country.

Second, I will promote new American investment in South Africa, particularly those schemes that will generate job creation for South Africa's young people.

Finally, I will be a tireless advocate for democracy and democratic values. It is not appropriate for the United States to seek particular outcomes for South Africa's elections. Yet, in common cause with the people of South Africa, I will use the platform of the U.S. Embassy to call for the rule of law, transparency, accountable government and an end to corruption at every opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your consideration of my candidacy. I look forward to taking your questions.