

Statement of Ambassador Michael A. Battle, Sr.
U.S. Ambassador-Nominee to the United Republic of Tanzania
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 24, 2022

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee for Ambassador to the United Republic of Tanzania. I am deeply appreciative of the confidence that President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me.

My wife, Linda Battle, and I look forward to returning to the African continent and specifically to Tanzania, if confirmed, where we have visited and enjoyed observing conservation efforts in the Serengeti.

Returning to diplomatic service is an honor which I look forward to, fully aware of the awesome privilege and responsibilities. I served as U.S. ambassador to the African Union and U.S. representative to the UN Economic Commission for Africa and as senior advisor to the Africa Bureau for the first U.S. Africa Leaders' Summit. As a retired Army Reserve officer and diplomat, I know the joy of service to our great nation. In my non-government service, I have been an administrator in higher education in positions ranging from university chaplain and instructor in philosophy and religion to president of a major theological seminary.

The United States has a long-standing commitment to Tanzania's development as a stable, reliable, democratic partner, capable of growing its economy sufficiently to support its people, while also becoming a market for U.S. exports and investment. Tanzania is also an important stabilizing force in the region, and it contributes to peacekeeping in central Africa, Sudan, and South Sudan. With the threat of terrorism and conflict in northern Mozambique on Tanzania's southern border, maintaining a productive security relationship is now even more important.

Under President Samia Suluhu Hassan's leadership, Tanzania has started to reverse course from the democratic backsliding and isolationist tendencies of Tanzania's previous administration. Tanzania is on the right track, but it can and must do more. President Hassan's statements on reopening democratic spaces present a unique opportunity for the United States to support and encourage this positive momentum. If confirmed, my goal will be to strengthen our bilateral relationship, continue to encourage the Tanzanian government to put into action President Hassan's commitments to democratic freedoms and respect for human rights, and bring Tanzania back into the international fold as a leader in the region.

If confirmed, my first priority will be to focus on the people: both American and Tanzanian. Ensuring the safety and security of embassy staff and Americans residing in and visiting Tanzania will be my top priority. For Tanzanians, the deterioration of democratic norms over the last few years has restricted personal liberties, including free association and peaceful assembly. I am committed to working with the host government, like-minded missions, civil society, and international organizations to support and encourage President Hassan to do more to reverse this trend. We will want to see legislative and regulatory changes to institutionalize legal protections to democratic institutions, civil society, and the media. Additionally, I will work with the Tanzanian government to further strengthen systems to prevent and prosecute human trafficking.

Almost 80 percent of the assistance provided by the American taxpayer to Tanzania is directed to improving the health of the Tanzanian people. Currently, the United States' top health priority is to support the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination campaign, which Tanzania started thanks to the provision of vaccine doses in connection with the United States. U.S.-funded programs to reduce the burden of HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis are bearing fruit in Tanzania. If confirmed, I am committed to leveraging our foreign assistance to strengthen governance and transparency in the health sector and improve health outcomes, including training in the prevention, detection, and response to deadly viruses that are endemic to the region, such as Ebola.

While a challenging business environment has impeded U.S. business investment in recent years, if confirmed, I will work towards expanding American business opportunities in Tanzania and improving the overall investment climate.

Tanzania is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world and the Government of Tanzania has been lauded for its conservation efforts. However, Tanzania's population growth, high poverty rate, and the effects of climate change create pressure on its natural resources and contribute to tensions between conservation efforts and local populations. If confirmed, I will promote programs to strengthen Tanzania's ability to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and encourage the country to continue to protect and sustainably utilize its natural resources.

If confirmed as the U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania, I look forward to working closely with you and other Members of Congress to ensure that U.S. interests, policies, and assistance to Tanzania promote democracy, security, and sustained

economic growth. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and I would be pleased to answer any questions.