

**Statement of Marie C. Damour**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic Fiji, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic**  
**of Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**July 13, 2022**

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republics of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu. I am grateful for the confidence shown by President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance the interests of the United States by reinvigorating our ties with our Pacific neighbors.

I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge my family, without whose support and guidance, I would not be here. My father, Alfred Damour, established a model of public service for my three brothers and I throughout his career as an officer in the U.S. Army, including active duty in the war in Vietnam. My mother provided for me the best example of how a woman can and should pursue individual goals in a professional career while simultaneously caring for her family and community. Their values and the example they set guide me each and every day. While my brothers and their families could not be here today, I know they are here in spirit. I also want to thank the many Foreign and Civil Service colleagues with whom I have had the honor to serve over the course of my 29-year career in the Department of State.

My experiences have taught me the power of our country's values-based diplomacy. If confirmed, I will draw on these lessons and my regional policy experience to advance the United States' strategic interests in the South Pacific.

The United States is a Pacific nation. We share an important history with our Pacific Island neighbors. It was in the Pacific Islands that Americans braved some of the hardest-fought battles of the Second World War, forging connections that are not easily forgotten. Our peoples are knit through a large Pacific Islander diaspora in the United States. If confirmed, I will work in collaboration with the five nations to which I would be accredited to ensure that our common future is one of prosperity, peace, and stability.

President Biden has made addressing the climate crisis one of his administration's top priorities for good reason: our Pacific neighbors are experiencing the most devastating impacts of climate change, particularly Kiribati and Tuvalu, two of the lowest lying atoll nations for which this is an existential issue. As Secretary Blinken stated during his trip to Fiji this year, every defining issue of the 21st century runs through this region: the climate crisis, global health, the future of technology, whether nations will be free to chart their own path or be subject to coercion by more powerful nations.

If confirmed, I will listen and work with our Pacific partners to advance solutions that will support Pacific communities and help them adapt to the impacts of climate change, address public health issues, support better communication, and preserve international rules and standards.

The Pacific Island nations are global players. Both Fiji and Tonga have been important contributors to regional and international Peacekeeping Operations. Fijian forces are currently participating in various UN missions, where they are responsible for providing security for mission personnel and facilities. Tonga was an early member of the Coalition to liberate Iraq. Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu are committed to their responsibilities as UN members, and the United States cooperates closely with them on a wide range of issues in that forum. All five nations boldly supported Ukraine in the UN. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to build this regional and global cooperation.

Success in tackling our common regional and global challenges will depend on fostering the internal strength of our Pacific Island partners that comes from strong democratic institutions, rule of law, and respect for human rights. The Pacific Islanders share our respect for democratic values but realizing those values can be challenging in practice. If confirmed, I will strive to build civil society, democracy, and good governance through all means available to us.

Embassy Suva is responsible for the United States' largest geographic consular district in the world – over two million square miles. It is challenged by almost yearly cyclones, floods, and tsunami warnings. If confirmed, I will make disaster preparedness and support for U.S. citizens a priority focus.

My career at the State Department has taught me that our people are our most precious resource. If confirmed, it will be my privilege to lead Embassy Suva's diverse and dedicated team of American and local staff and welcome the return of Peace Corps Volunteers.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your comments and questions.