

Statement of Jessica Davis Ba
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
August 3, 2022

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, it is the greatest honor of my diplomatic career to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. I appreciate the confidence of the President and Secretary Blinken for entrusting me with this opportunity of a lifetime. If confirmed, I will advance our bilateral relationship and build upon our enduring partnership for the benefit of all Americans and all Ivoirians.

I am here today to continue my family's legacy of service. We are Washingtonians. We are educators, public servants, and veterans. We are patriots who have chosen a life in our nation's capital dedicated to improving our country and our global community. I made my first solo trip overseas in high school to volunteer with Operation Crossroads Africa and decided then to pursue life in the international community.

If confirmed, I will serve - and lead - to empower all people to achieve their greatest potential and make a difference in our world.

I recognize the enormity of this moment that I share with my family who support me on this journey. My husband Mahtar and our five sons – Alioune, Ibrahim, Omar, Ismael and Soulayman. We have served to advance common values and the interests of the United States in Nigeria, Guinea, Somalia, Kenya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Chad. My late grandmother, Doris Haynes, a retired D.C. public school principal joined us, celebrating her 90th birthday in Nairobi. Through our service, my parents - Janice and Joseph Davis, my brother Jay and his family, and our friends discover the world through our lived experience.

This is an important moment for the people of Côte d'Ivoire. They have taken bold strides to strengthen democracy through political dialogue and reconciliation. With its National Development Plan, the country is building the foundation for a prosperous future. Ivoirians are investing to reap democratic dividends.

If confirmed, I will prioritize partnerships to achieve our common goals, aspirations, and vision for the future.

I will encourage Côte d'Ivoire's political leaders to continue on the path toward peace, fortifying democratic institutions with every step. Through our Embassy programs, I will encourage political competition and respect for human rights, including freedom of expression. We will emphasize greater participation of women in the economic, political and social fabric of the nation.

The partnership between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire is vital to meet the unprecedented global and regional challenges of this moment. Terrorist activity is on the rise in West Africa as violent extremist organizations in the Sahel seek to expand their influence into coastal states.

Côte d'Ivoire's neighbors are besieged by extra-constitutional changes in power. Disinformation is prevalent in Ivoirian social media. The unjustifiable war in Ukraine has increased food and fuel prices for the people of Côte d'Ivoire and around the world.

Yet through these challenges, our partnerships remain strong. Together, we strengthen democracy, expand economic prosperity, and increase security.

Côte d'Ivoire's economic performance is extraordinary with enormous potential for increased trade and U.S. commercial investment. If confirmed, I will expand opportunities for American companies to unleash innovation and contribute to a private sector that encourages transparency, entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth.

A country is strongest when its citizens experience safety and security. If confirmed, I will work closely with you and colleagues across the U.S. government to increase health security, enhance Ivoirian military capabilities, and strengthen community resilience. I will capitalize on new opportunities provided by the Global Fragility Act, landmark legislation made possible with bipartisan Congressional support. If confirmed, I will lead our mission to strengthen democratic institutions, deepen economic and cultural ties, and expand partnerships based on mutual respect between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your questions.