

**Testimony of David Gilmour, Ambassador Nominee
to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Wednesday, October 20, 2021**

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is a great honor to appear before you as the nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. I am grateful for the confidence that President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed by the Senate, I will do my best to uphold this trust and advance U.S. national interests and priorities.

I am joined today by my wife Judith Martin, who has spent a lifetime in the Foreign Service, first with her father S. Douglas Martin, a career State Department Officer, and later as my cherished partner as we traveled the world together and raised our family in ten overseas posts and in Washington during the 35 years of my Foreign Service career. I would also like to acknowledge my 93-year-old father, John Gilmour. He worked 34 years in local government, serving the citizens of the small town where I

grew up in Michigan. Everything I know about respect, integrity and dedication to public service, I learned from my dad.

Mr. Chairman, I believe my service as Ambassador in Togo, as Charge d'affaires in Chad, and in senior positions in the Bureau of African Affairs in Washington, as well as postings elsewhere in the world, including as Deputy Chief of Mission in Panama, have prepared me for this assignment. If confirmed, I will draw upon these experiences to advance U.S. interests in Equatorial Guinea and the Central African region.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to advance the foreign policy priorities of the United States, including to promote good governance and respect for human rights, end COVID-19 and prevent the next pandemic, improve the business environment for U.S. trade and investment, and promote regional and maritime security.

Since its independence, there have only been two presidents in Equatorial Guinea, one of whom has ruled for over forty years. Presidential term limits were established in 2011 but were not applied retroactively to President Obiang, who could remain in office until at least 2030. Though multiple party elections are technically allowed, the non-ruling political parties faced

legal restrictions, and opposition leaders have reportedly faced torture, harassment, intimidation, and politically motivated detention. If confirmed, I will raise our concerns with Equatorial Guinea's leadership about human rights and the rule of law, including the value of democracy and transparency. I will urge government leaders to enable true multi-party democracy and to allow the growth of a strong civil society. I will stress that promoting transparency and ending corrupt practices are key to Equatorial Guinea's long-term growth and stability, and critical to strengthening our commercial ties.

Equatorial Guinea, like most of the world, is facing the challenge of the global COVID-19 pandemic and is enduring its third wave of the pandemic. If confirmed, I will work collaboratively with the UN to deliver vaccines through COVAX. I will also seek other action to advance health, wellbeing, and opportunity for all Equatoguineans.

The United States is Equatorial Guinea's largest trading partner and the U.S. Embassy plays a critical role in promoting these U.S. companies' interests. If confirmed, I will continue to work to improve the investment climate for U.S. companies invested in Equatorial Guinea.

Maritime security is Equatorial Guinea's primary security challenge. Since May 2019, there have been multiple incidents of piracy and kidnap for ransom attacks in and around Equatorial Guinea's waters that if left unchecked could impact U.S. commercial interests. If confirmed, I will promote bilateral security cooperation and investment to protect these interests and regional stability. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, I understand that such cooperation must undergo stringent review to ensure it does not come at the expense of our priority to promote respect for human rights and does not inadvertently enable corruption.

Additionally, I believe it is important to note the central role that Equatorial Guinea's improvement on countering trafficking in persons has had on our ability to engage the government on our top priorities. Without the government's concerted efforts, and consistent U.S. engagement, we would not be able to advance U.S. interests in areas like maritime security, corruption, human rights, and democracy and governance. Therefore, countering trafficking in persons will remain a key line of effort for our bilateral relationship.

And, if confirmed, no goal will be more important to me than protecting the lives, interests, and welfare of American citizens living and traveling in Equatorial Guinea.

I promise to work closely with you and the Members of this Committee in this endeavor.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.