

Statement of Jamie Lindler Harpootlian
Nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
November 2, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of this distinguished committee,

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today. I am deeply grateful to President Biden for the confidence he has placed in me to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia.

I would like to acknowledge that I am joined today by my husband, Richard Harpootlian, who has given me his unwavering love and support in this endeavor. Dick has been a fearless public servant and passionate advocate for fairness and justice throughout his life. I am proud of his lifelong efforts to right wrongs and be a force for good in the world.

I also would like to remember my parents who taught me by example to value public service. My father was a United States Naval Aviator who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, while my mother served in naval communications during World War II and later at home raising two daughters in her husband's extended absences overseas.

Our country has provided me rewarding opportunities for public service in my own career as an attorney – working in the federal judicial system, serving as a court-appointed special master in complex litigation, and serving the Department of Justice *pro bono* as a hearing officer for the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund. In each role, I made pivotal decisions and managed conflicting positions and personalities. I learned that respect for the opinions of others and treating all people with dignity are essential for reaching consensus. Bringing people with divergent views together is necessary for progress. And overarching all, building and upholding trust is vital for success. If confirmed, I hope to use these skills to successfully advance U.S. interests and values in Slovenia.

Slovenia and the United States have strong military, economic, educational, and cultural ties. Slovenia embraces transatlantic cooperation and shares our commitment to safeguarding democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and free and fair elections.

Slovenia is a Central European country with a population of two million that has made impressive contributions to a broad range of regional and global efforts to bolster stability, security, and peace. It has proven itself to be a strong and cooperative partner with the United States, a stalwart NATO Ally, a leader in the EU, and a reliable partner in the UN and multilateral organizations.

Slovenia contributes troops to almost every NATO mission across the globe. It participates in numerous EU and UN missions. This year, Slovenia committed to increasing defense spending by 780 million euros through 2026; a significant step toward meeting its NATO Wales Pledge commitment to spend at least 2 percent of its GDP on defense by 2026. It holds the EU Council presidency until the end of this year, through which it is emphasizing EU-NATO coordination, supporting economic resilience and recovery, and working to bolster stability in the Western Balkans for EU accession. And it participates in several successful bilateral programs with the United States to support strong military relationships.

To confront the security challenges of Russian and People's Republic of China (PRC) strategic investments in Central Europe's energy, transport, and digital infrastructure, Slovenia shares our goals for strategic nuclear energy cooperation, protecting 5G communications networks, developing alternative infrastructure and renewable energy sources, and adopting a foreign direct investment screening mechanism.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure Slovenia's strong commitment to stability and security around the world remains steadfast, including its efforts toward Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans, and to meeting its NATO defense spending commitments and fulfilling NATO Capability Targets.

Slovenia welcomed the United States' return to the Paris Agreement and the Biden-Harris Administration's reengagement on global climate change. One of the top priorities of the Slovenian EU Council presidency is advocating for reduction of greenhouse gases by at least 55 percent by 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality in 2050. If confirmed, I will work with our Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry to support Slovenia's actions on climate.

Slovenia has one of Europe's fastest growing economies with projected GDP growth of approximately 4.5 percent in 2021 and 2022. Positive economic factors include a well-educated, multilingual workforce, and technical expertise.

If confirmed, my top priority will be the safety and well-being of U.S. citizens in Slovenia. I will work to strengthen our bilateral relationship using all the diplomatic tools available to me to build relationships, deepen understanding of the United States, and to counter disinformation. And I will foster our shared vision of democracy. We are stronger in confronting challenges when we work cooperatively with our allies.

It would be the greatest honor of my life to serve in this capacity. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.