

Statement of Margaret (Meg) Whitman
U.S. Ambassador-Nominee to the Republic of Kenya
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 24, 2022

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and to answer your questions on my nomination to be the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Kenya. I also thank President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken for the opportunity to serve our country.

First, let me introduce my husband of 42 years, Dr. Griff Harsh, who is here with me today. Griff is currently the chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at University of California Davis Medical Center. He is eager to accompany me to Kenya should I be confirmed. Griff and I are the parents of two adult sons and grandparents to two toddlers.

By way of background, I graduated from Princeton University in 1977 with a bachelor's in economics and as a member of the fourth class to accept women. I then earned an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1979.

During my 40-year business career, I have been president and CEO of three multinational Fortune 100 companies – eBay, HP, and Hewlett Packard Enterprise. I have been a trustee of The Nature Conservancy, one of the largest land and water conservation organizations in the world. I currently serve as national chair of Teach for America, which works to improve K-12 education in underserved communities. My career has honed my leadership and communication skills. I have worked with heads of state, senior business leaders, and government regulators to build coalitions for innovative programs. I am well versed in strategy formulation, negotiation, intellectual property protection, small business development, global trade, and technology. I am adept at leading large organizations by fostering shared values, purpose, and commitment to excellence.

I have conducted business in numerous African countries. In 2018, I visited Kenya with The Nature Conservancy to review the organization's work to help local communities secure their land and water rights, and thus encourage environmentally and economically sustainable water and land management practices.

I am very excited about the possibility of serving in Africa as our ambassador to Kenya, a country of strategic importance to the United States. With a population of over 50 million, Kenya is the third largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa. Mission

Nairobi is the largest U.S. embassy in sub-Saharan Africa and the 13th largest mission in the world. Its staff of 1,700 represents 34 U.S. government agencies.

Should I be confirmed, I will continue the current U.S. focus on supporting democracy and democratic institutions in a vibrant Kenyan society, particularly in advance of the elections in August. We want Kenya to remain a strong, reliable, and capable partner of the United States in addressing common challenges in East Africa and beyond. I will work to promote sound governance, economic prosperity, public health, regional peace and security, and cooperation in defense.

In the Kenyan elections this upcoming August, we must encourage Kenyan leaders from across the political spectrum to support credible, peaceful electoral processes that showcase the strength of Kenya's democracy.

A stable democratic society and economic prosperity are mutually reinforcing. Kenya has a diverse and dynamic economy with strong potential for future growth. It faces many challenges, but the United States can be helpful by promoting legislative and judicial reform, anti-corruption measures, and collaboration among Kenyan and American businesses.

Kenya is well-positioned to be an African leader in information technology, telecommunications, and mobile banking and is open to partnering with the United States. Working with Kenya to assemble the infrastructure, connectivity, and expertise needed to help build the country's "Silicon Savannah" will be a big part of my mission, and an opportunity I hope numerous U.S. companies will eagerly embrace.

The United States is the largest financial contributor to Kenya's health care system. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with the Kenyan government and public and private health institutions to ensure the efficacy of U.S. assistance in responding to the COVID epidemic and other infectious diseases and improve overall health outcomes.

Kenya is also a significant contributor to regional peace and security, especially through its contribution of troops to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. If confirmed, I will work closely with Kenya to address instability and combat terrorism in the Horn of Africa.

Our bilateral defense cooperation with Kenya, a partnership of over 60 years, is strong. But we must be strategic and nimble in helping Kenya confront threats to its security.

I look forward to supporting the Kenyan government on defense matters and advancing America's interests in the region.

Thank you for considering my nomination. If confirmed, I will apply all my energy and leadership skills to the role of ambassador. I look forward to working constructively and respectfully with our partners in Kenya and East Africa to achieve our shared goals. Serving the United States in this role would be a great privilege.