

## NOMINATIONS

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2021

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m. in Room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Booker, Van Hollen, Risch, Young, Cruz, Rounds, and Hagerty.

Also present: Senator Whitehouse

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Ambassador Nichols, Ambassador Sison, congratulations on your nominations, and thank you for your willingness to continue serving our country, as well as your families.

We understand that that is a sacrifice of all of those who are part of the family and in terms of this continuing service, so we appreciate that as well.

At this pivotal moment for our foreign policy in the State Department, I am heartened that President Biden has nominated individuals to two critical positions.

I believe that your experience and commitment will be assets to the department and critical to the defense of our interests and values.

I understand that the Senator from Rhode Island will be introducing Ambassador Nichols this morning, and that the Senator from Maryland, a member of this committee, will be introducing Ambassador Sison.

I do not see Ambassador Whitehouse yet. I know he is very busy in Judiciary affairs. So he is probably is on his way here.

So let us recognize the Senator Van Hollen first for an introduction.

### **STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to both the nominees.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to introduce to you the president's nominee to

serve as our next Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, Ambassador Michele Sison.

And in this nomination, President Biden has not only selected a nominee with impeccable credentials, unimpeachable character, and a deep knowledge of foreign policy, he has also wisely selected a longtime Marylander.

I had met Ambassador Sison before, but my conversation with her yesterday makes me even more confident that she has the knowledge and experience we need at this critical moment in our history.

President Biden is determined to renew American engagement around the world and leadership in international organizations and, if confirmed, I am confident Ambassador Sison will faithfully help achieve this goal.

Ambassador Sison has had a distinguished career at the highest levels of the United States Foreign Service. Her experience spans nearly four decades and six presidents.

She has served as our ambassador four times to different places: first, to the UAE, then to Lebanon, then to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and most recently, to Haiti, a post she was appointed to in 2018 and a post which brought her full circle from her first diplomatic position as the human rights officer at Embassy Port-au-Prince in 1982.

Throughout her 39 years at the forefront of U.S. diplomacy, she has served in a variety of roles that have taken her across the world, representing our nation's interests in West Africa, South Asia, and elsewhere.

She also spent four years as the United States deputy representative to the United Nations from 2014 to 2018, a position that makes her ideally prepared for this new post.

She also has a long track record of collaborating with U.N. peacekeepers and has gained a firsthand knowledge of the U.N. entities responsible for development, humanitarian relief, and human rights in the field.

Her superb talents have been recognized by our country many times. She is decorated with numerous awards for her service, including Superior Honor awards, the ambassadorial level awards for her contributions to counter proliferation and combating trafficking in persons, and she has received both a Distinguished Service Award and the Presidential Rank Award of meritorious service.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I could go on, but it would consume the entire hearing. So let me end with this. I grew up in a Foreign Service family and lived in some of the countries where Ambassador Sison has served.

I know a good diplomat when I see one, and Ambassador Sison fits the bill. She exemplifies the very best of what it means to serve our country as a career Foreign Service officer.

I urge the committee to support her nomination.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen.

And after that sterling recommendation, Ambassador, maybe you should just rest your case. But we are not going to let you off that easy.

In any event, thank you, Senator Van Hollen. I understand that Senator Whitehouse is with us virtually.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I am, Chairman.  
The CHAIRMAN. Please proceed. Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND**

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, and thank you, Ranking Member Risch, for welcoming me to your committee today.

Like Senator Van Hollen, I come from a Foreign Service family. I am the black sheep in a family of—my grandfather, father, uncle, and cousin who were all Foreign Service officers.

So it gives me particular pleasure to be here to recommend a career Foreign Service officer and a native Rhode Islander, Brian Nichols, as the nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

My father served for decades, not exactly on the champagne circuit but in countries embroiled in conflict and upheaval, where the comforts and security of America often felt very far away. But he always felt he was doing rewarding and deeply important work.

Brian Nichols has had a similar career serving in challenging State Department roles in South and Central America, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

He has won department honors for his contributions to State's trade development mission and helped lead the department's international narcotics and law enforcement work.

He has been our United States ambassador to both Peru and Zimbabwe, a country emerging from decades of dictatorial rule and dire economic hardship. So he knows the ropes and he has skills developed in our small, tight knit, and diverse state.

Rhode Islanders have, I think, an unusual ability to reach beyond seeming difference and even simmering enmity to find shared values and common humanity, and Ambassador Nichols is a shining example of that skill.

Building consensus is as simple, he says, as understanding people, a very Rhode Island quality, a very diplomatic quality, and one which Ambassador Nichols has demonstrated throughout his distinguished career.

I am confident that if we confirm his nomination, he will serve all Americans well and make us proud.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse, for your introduction of Ambassador Nichols.

Ambassador Nichols, your nomination comes at a time when the Western Hemisphere is reeling under a cascade of challenges: the devastation wrought by COVID-19, the fraying of democratic consensus, major migration crises, and a void a four years of American absence that China is seeking to fill. The task at hand is immense.

With death rates among the highest in the world, COVID-19 is inflicting a terrible toll on the hemisphere, and the United States has to step up. As we accumulate surplus vaccines, we must prioritize vaccine access for countries in the hemisphere as part of our global efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable are vaccinated.

And as the region's economic health has a direct impact on the United States, we have to take bold steps to facilitate its recovery. That is why this committee voted to authorize a capital increase for the Inter-American Development Bank last month.

Additionally, Latin America is facing the recurrence of flawed elections, deterioration of the separation of powers, attacks on journalists and freedom of the press, and entrenched autocrats in Havana, Caracas, and Managua.

Indeed, we know where democratic decay can lead. After two decades, Venezuela is now a land of unbridled criminality and kleptocracy, where a humanitarian crisis has forced more than 5 million people to flee their homeland.

While the scale is distinct, we also know that irregular migration from Central America is rooted in decades of low levels of democratic governance.

Deficit, or I should say, deficient institutions are unable to meet the needs of the people and too many leaders have exploited weak rule of law to place their personal interests over those of their citizens.

Given the scale of the challenge, I am pleased to see that Vice President Harris is heading the administration's diplomatic efforts in Central America.

Under her leadership, we are already seeing an increased humanitarian response and a strong reaction to leaders that seek to undermine democracy.

So, Ambassador Nichols, I look forward to discussing with you. I appreciate our visit yesterday. We had a whole tour de force of the Western Hemisphere, and we look forward to discussing with you how we will address some of these challenges and best to collaborate to ensure your success.

Ambassador Sison—I am sorry, Sison. I do not know why I am—it is in my mind. But, Ambassador Sison, I apologize.

Welcome to your sixth Senate confirmation hearing. It is deeply reassuring that President Biden nominated you, a diplomat with extensive experience, immense skill, and a demonstrated management record to be the next Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Organization Affairs.

Over the course of the Trump administration, we witnessed a dramatic and troubling erosion of U.S. government leadership at the U.N. We tried to pull out of the World Health Organization in the middle of a pandemic.

We undermined international protections for women, girls, and LGBTI individuals, and we defunded or reduced funding to key agencies. We refused to pay our dues in full to U.N. peacekeeping operations and, as a result, the United States has accrued \$1.1 billion in arrears.

When we shun our responsibilities and fail to lead, other countries take note and seek to take advantage, to the detriment of our interests and security.

China and Russia have sought to fill the vacuum left by our absence. It is time for renewal and engagement with the United Nations and its agencies, like the World Food Programme and UNFPA.

In the wake of the devastating COVID–19 pandemic, we must redouble the Biden administration’s effort at restoring U.S. leadership at the WHO and other international health and humanitarian organizations.

The world will be closely watching how we more effectively engage within and work to strengthen international organizations.

So I look forward to hearing your views and working with you to ensure we restore our critical leadership role.

In closing, at a time of unprecedented challenges around the world, America needs outstanding leadership at the State Department. We look forward to your testimony.

And now I am going to return to the distinguished ranking member for his remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to both of you for your willingness to serve. Certainly, outstanding credentials. It is not often we see a panel like this with the depth of experience that the two of you have.

I want to start at where the chairman started and that is on the issues in the Western Hemisphere. I am increasingly concerned that while a majority of nations in our hemisphere are considered democracies, authoritarian regimes in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba have systematically dismantled democratic institutions and have committed some of the world’s worst human rights abuses.

These bad actors undermine their own countries, but they also undermine their neighbors. Transnational criminal organizations and malign state actors benefit from and contribute to these authoritarian regimes and pose a significant threat to the peace and stability of our hemisphere.

More broadly, I remain exceedingly concerned about the malign influence of China and Russia throughout our hemisphere and the apparent increase of that.

China’s predatory lending practices and spread of corruption threaten the sovereignty and the privacy of our southern neighbors.

At the same time, Russia has exported repressive tactics to allow authoritarian regimes to maintain control and crackdown on dissent.

Beyond external malign influence, poor governance, violence, and lack of economic opportunity in countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have prompted waves of illegal migrants to show up at our southern door.

The previous administration negotiated a number of agreements with these countries, and the current administration’s failure to capitalize on those agreements has only fueled a surge of migrants over the past few months, along with other precipitating factors, and demonstrates a significant challenge to our government’s ability to protect our homeland.

Lastly, as you know, Ambassador Nichols, the Columbia River Treaty between the United States and Canada is a great example of two nations managing a shared resource. I want to impress upon you the importance of a successful and timely conclusion to these negotiations for the entire North West congressional delegation.

As you know, a number of us on a bipartisan basis have been working diligently with the department to move the negotiations forward. We stand ready to continue to assist the administration however we can in this effort.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on all of these important matters. Next, we have the nomination for Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. This position oversees a wide range of multilateral organizations, the largest being the United Nations. The United States remains the biggest donor to the U.N. in both assessed and voluntary funds.

While the Chinese Communist Party has increased its assessed dues, it is still severely lags behind the United States and our allies in voluntary contributions.

The Chinese Communist Party uses its minimal donations to leverage a large-scale malign influence campaign to reform global governance, as they call it, such that the international system is more conducive to its own interests.

As detailed in my report last fall on transatlantic cooperation on China, the Chinese Communist Party does so in part by inserting favorable language into U.N. resolutions, orchestrating the election of its top diplomats at U.N. agencies, and using its veto power as a member of the U.N. Security Council to block efforts to expose human rights violations.

This fall, the United States will have an opportunity to negotiate the scales of assessment of U.N. peacekeeping to be consistent with U.S. law. Currently, the United Nations assesses the United States at 27.9 percent.

As you know, this is not congruent with U.S. law. No country should pay more than 25 percent, and in 1994, the Congress of the United States enacted a bill that imposed 25 percent on U.S. contributions for this program. That law remains in effect today.

This mandate should be upheld during the upcoming negotiations. I will remind the administration that this is U.S. law and it must be used in the negotiating position.

I also remain concerned, really concerned, by the administration's recent decision to resume funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East, also known as UNRWA.

This was done without securing, without insisting on, without even asking for any reforms. Over the years, the agency has employed individuals affiliated with Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.

UNRWA schools have been used to store Hamas weapons and there have been numerous cases of UNRWA textbooks containing material that is anti-Semitic. U.S. government assistance to UNRWA should cease unless true reform, as described above, is secured.

Finally, I am also concerned about the administration's decision to seek a seat at the U.N. Human Rights Council, again, without seeking any reforms.

The Council is a broken body that focuses the majority of its time on bullying our ally, Israel, and allows some of the greatest human rights abusers like China, Cuba, Russia, Iran, and Venezuela a seat at the table.

I know it is a bumper sticker to say, oh, we are always better off with a seat at the table when issues are being discussed than not being there. That is not always true, particularly in this instance, when you are sitting there rubbing elbows with the worst human rights abusers on the planet.

Only true reform will bring legitimacy back to that Council and the administration should work to secure substantial changes.

With that, I thank both of you for being here today, your willingness to serve, and recognize the sacrifices of both you and your families in this effort.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.

We will now turn to the two nominees. We ask you to summarize your testimony in about five minutes. Your full statements will be included in the record.

And we will start off with Ambassador Nichols.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS OF RHODE ISLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS)**

Mr. NICHOLS. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the next Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken for the confidence that they have placed in me at this crucial moment in our hemisphere.

The opportunity to appear before this committee for the third time as a nominee to serve the American people steels my resolve to fight for the values that our nation holds dear—democracy, the rule of law, and the innate dignity of every individual.

With over 32 years serving our nation at some of our most challenging missions around the world, if confirmed, I look forward to bringing all my skills and experience to bear in that fight.

President Biden has said that democracy holds the key to freedom, prosperity, peace, and dignity, and if we work together with our democratic partners with strength and confidence, we will meet every challenge and outpace every challenger.

My experience serving in our embassies in North, Central, and South America, as well as directing our policy towards the Caribbean, convinces me of the vital urgency of the President's words.

Our home, the Western Hemisphere, remains central to America's welfare, our prosperity, and our future. America's fortunes cannot be separated from those of our closest neighbors.

If confirmed, I look forward to drawing on the enormous talent and dedication of the community of professionals within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, as well as civil society throughout the Americas, our own private sector, and, of course, our Congress to advance America and the region's progress toward a more democratic, secure, and prosperous region.

I have spent most of my career within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. If confirmed, I will strive to build an inclusive,

compassionate, and diverse team that reflects our nation's prowess and professionalism.

We will work to expand our engagement and partnerships throughout the Western Hemisphere, especially with our closest neighbors, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

The situation in Central America demands our urgent attention and unflagging efforts to promote democracy, prosperity, and security, addressing the root causes of irregular migration.

The disastrous effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and a recession in many countries have opened the door to malign influences from outside our region.

We will build upon the shared values, family ties, economic opportunities, and commitment to fundamental freedoms to counter those malign actors and deliver a better future for the people of our region.

My professional achievements owe to the women who surround me: my wonderful wife, Geri, a retired senior Foreign Service officer, my talented daughters, Alex and Sophie, and my brilliant mother, Mildred.

They have pushed me to be a better person, sacrifice for my career, and nurtured me with their love and support.

In 1959, my late father began our family's adventure in diplomacy and foreign affairs, serving as a Fulbright Scholar and then partnering with the U.S. Information Agency on various projects in Europe, and helping to start the American Studies Program at the Free University of Berlin.

My own past assignments provide rich experience, should the Senate confirm me, to serve as Assistant Secretary. During my tenure as ambassador to Zimbabwe, I have fought tenaciously for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. I have led my team in responding to the multi-dimensional humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe.

As ambassador to Peru, I led a large mission that focused on improving the rule of law, fighting transnational crime and corruption, and promoting respect for human rights, particularly of women, girls, and disadvantaged groups.

I also led a unified mission initiative to promote American businesses and grow American jobs, earning the department's Charles Cobb Award for those efforts.

Prior to that, as the principal deputy assistant secretary for international narcotics and law enforcement, I helped direct a team of nearly 7,000 professionals who worked to expand access to justice, protect civilians, and combat crime around the world.

I have hands-on experience shaping our rule of law programs in Mexico and Central America, as well as crafting innovative justice sector outreach to Afro descendant and indigenous populations in the Americas.

Should the Senate confirm me, I will aim to exemplify the highest standards of our great nation and strengthen our diplomacy. I look forward to partnering with you to advance America's interests in the Western Hemisphere.

I stand ready to answer any questions you might have now and in the future. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nichols follows:]



## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS

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The opportunity to appear before this committee for the third time as a nominee to serve the American people steels my resolve to fight for the values that our nation holds dear: democracy, the rule of law, and the innate dignity of every individual. With over 32 years serving our nation at some of our most challenging missions around the world, if confirmed I look forward to bringing all my skills and experience to bear in that fight. President Biden has said that "democracy holds the key to freedom, prosperity, peace, and dignity. . . . And, if we work together with our democratic partners, with strength and confidence, we will meet every challenge and outpace every challenger." My experience serving in our embassies in North, Central, and South America as well as directing our policy towards the Caribbean convinces me of the vital urgency of the President's words.

Our home, the Western Hemisphere, remains central to America's welfare, our prosperity, and our future. America's fortunes cannot be separated from those of our closest neighbors. If confirmed, I look forward to drawing on the enormous talent and dedication of the community of professionals within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, as well as civil society throughout the Americas, our own private sector, and, of course, our Congress to advance America and the region's progress toward a more democratic, secure, and prosperous region.

I have spent most of my career within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. If confirmed, I will strive to build an inclusive, compassionate, and diverse team that reflects our nation's prowess and professionalism. We will work to expand our engagement and partnerships throughout the Western Hemisphere—and especially with our closest neighbors Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. The situation in Central America demands our urgent attention and unflagging efforts to promote democracy, prosperity, and security—addressing the root causes of irregular migration. The disastrous effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and a recession in many countries have opened the door to malign influences from outside our region. We will build on the shared values, family ties, economic opportunities, and commitment to fundamental freedoms to counter those malign actors and deliver a better future for the people of our region.

My professional achievements owe to the women who surround me: my wonderful wife Geri, a retired Senior Foreign Service Officer, my talented daughters Alex and Sophie, and my brilliant mother Mildred. They have pushed me to be a better person, sacrificed for my career, and nurtured me with their love and support. In 1959, my late father began our family's adventure in diplomacy and foreign affairs, serving as a Fulbright Scholar, then partnering with the U.S. Information Agency on various projects in Europe, and helping to start the American studies program at the Free University of Berlin.

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Should the Senate confirm me, I will aim to exemplify the highest standards of our great nation and strengthen our diplomacy. I look forward to partnering with you to advance America's interests in the Western Hemisphere.

I stand ready to answer any questions you might have now and in the future.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ambassador Sison?

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. MICHELE JEANNE SISON OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER AMBASSADOR, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AFFAIRS)**

Ms. SISON. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee.

I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, IO. I am grateful to President Biden and to Secretary Blinken for this opportunity.

I want to recognize my daughters, Alexandra and Jessica, who are watching virtually today. Their love has supported me as I represented our country around the world and at the United Nations.

Over the past 39 years, I have been privileged to serve under six U.S. administrations and as ambassador four times overseas to the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Maldives, and Haiti.

Given that experience, as well as service in Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, India, Pakistan, Iraq, and at the U.S. mission to the United Nations, I know that the United States cannot address today's global challenges alone.

From climate change to the COVID-19 pandemic, we must work in partnership with other nations. President Biden has made it clear that we will put our core U.S. values at the center of our foreign policy.

As U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative at the U.N. in New York, I saw that our nation is stronger when we lead the way in crafting strategic cross-regional partnerships. These alliances are key in safeguarding multilateral institutions from those such as the People's Republic of China that seek to bend the U.N. system to their authoritarian agendas.

We must actively out compete efforts by nations that stand in opposition to our U.S. values on human rights, democracy, labor rights, and transparent economic practices.

If confirmed, this will be at the top of my agenda. It is important that we uphold the rules-based order that upholds and promotes our values, advances sustainable development, and protects human rights.

The United States has a strong stake in leading efforts to preserve a free and open market, a free and open internet, and in advancing global governance in areas such as technology, trade, and climate change.

These rules and values benefit American interests and the American people. From the World Food Programme to UNICEF to the International Telecommunication Union, we have a deep stake in leading the international system, driving forward reforms with our partners.

We must also ensure that the voices of civil society, women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other marginalized communities are heard.

I have seen firsthand how U.N. peacekeepers and humanitarian workers protect civilians and save lives in places critical to U.S. national interests.

I have witnessed the positive impact of U.S. leadership when we insist on results and when we press for accountability, including accountability related to sexual exploitation and abuse.

We are the largest contributor to the U.N. system. It is in our interest to lead in promoting genuine reform. Thus, ensuring the transparency and integrity of multilateral bodies is a key priority.

We must promote qualified independent candidates to lead multilateral institutions and we must leverage the commitments of other countries to ensure that financial burdens are shared.

We must also fight bias against Israel across the U.N. system. The IO bureau support strong U.S. leadership at the U.N. and multilateral venues to advance our U.S. national interests, protect the American people, promote U.S. prosperity, and drive the reforms needed to ensure the effectiveness of international organizations.

As a Foreign Service practitioner, I know that our skilled diplomats at our missions abroad, our talented negotiators, and our amazing civil service subject matter experts are our force multipliers in the multilateral arena and in mobilizing global action.

If confirmed, prioritizing diversity and inclusion and building strong morale within the IO bureau will be at the top of my list, and if confirmed, I also pledge, number one, to look hard at U.N. and international organization management and budgeting practices and at how agencies implement ethics rules, including whistleblower protection; number two, to insist on effective peacekeeping operations that advance political solutions, have realistic and achievable mandates, and include women's participation; number three, to consult with you as we work together to meet the challenges of today's strategic competition and as we prove that respect for human rights, transparency, and democratic norms can and will prevail.

If confirmed, I know that you will be counting on me to make sure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are well spent and that our multilateral policies and programs improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable citizens, contribute to international peace and security, and serve the American people.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sison follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MICHELE J. SISON

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee.

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From climate change to the COVID 19 pandemic, we must work in partnership with other nations. President Biden has made clear that we will put our core U.S. values at the center of our foreign policy.

As U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative at the U.N. in New York, I saw that our nation is stronger when we lead the way in crafting strategic, cross-regional partnerships. These alliances are key in safeguarding multilateral institutions from those, such as the People's Republic of China, that seek to bend the U.N. system to their authoritarian agendas.

We must actively out-compete efforts by nations that stand in opposition to U.S. values on human rights, democracy, labor rights, and transparent economic practices. If confirmed, this will be at the top of my agenda. It's important that we uphold the rules-based order that upholds and promotes our values, advances sustainable development, and protects human rights.

The United States has a strong stake in leading efforts to preserve a free and open internet, and in advancing global governance in areas such as technology, trade, and climate change.

These rules and values benefit American interests and the American people. From the World Food Program, to UNICEF, to the International Telecommunication Union, we have a deep stake in leading the international system—driving forward reforms with our partners.

We must also ensure that the voices of civil society, women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other marginalized communities are heard. I've seen firsthand how U.N. peacekeepers and humanitarian workers protect civilians and save lives in places critical to U.S. national interests.

I've witnessed the positive impact of U.S. leadership when we insist on results, and when we press for accountability—including accountability related to sexual exploitation and abuse. We are the largest contributor to the U.N. system; it is in our interest to lead in promoting genuine reform.

Thus, ensuring the transparency and integrity of multilateral bodies is a key priority. We must promote qualified, independent candidates to lead multilateral institutions, and we must leverage the commitments of other countries to ensure that financial burdens are shared.

We must also fight bias against Israel across the U.N. system.

The IO Bureau supports strong U.S. leadership at the U.N. and multilateral venues to advance our U.S. national interests, protect the American people, promote U.S. prosperity, and drive the reforms needed to ensure the effectiveness of international organizations.

As a Foreign Service practitioner, I know that our skilled diplomats at our missions abroad, our talented negotiators, and our amazing Civil Service subject matter experts are our force multipliers in the multilateral arena and in mobilizing global action.

If confirmed, prioritizing diversity and inclusion and building strong morale within the IO Bureau, will be at the top of my list. And, if confirmed, I also pledge:

- to look hard at U.N. and international organization management and budgeting practices, and at how agencies implement their ethics rules, including whistleblower protections;
- to insist on effective peacekeeping operations that advance political solutions, have realistic and achievable mandates, and include women's participation; and,
- to consult with you as we work to meet the challenges of today's strategic competition—and as we prove that respect for human rights, transparency, and democratic norms can and will prevail.

If confirmed, I know you will be counting on me to make sure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are well-spent, and that our multilateral policies and programs improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable citizens, contribute to international peace and security, and serve the American people.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you, and I welcome your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ambassador.

We will start a series of five-minute rounds and I will start.

Ambassador Nichols, we had a good tour of the hemisphere yesterday so I am not going to revisit all of those. But there is one or two I do want to drill down on.

As Miguel Diaz-Canel assumed the leadership of Cuba's Communist Party and completed his transition to what I believe is dictator and chief, the Cuban regime repeatedly has used the mantra of "somos continuidad," which means "we are the continuation," to make it clear that they need to maintain a single-party authoritarian state.

Nevertheless, in a renewed wave of civic activism, including protest by artists, singers, and others in the San Isidro movement, a, largely, Afro-Cuban movement, there is a demanding greater respect for democratic values and an end to human rights abuses.

So what our policy is, moving forward, is going to be incredibly important. Let me ask you a couple of questions. Do you believe that the attacks on our diplomatic personnel, known as the Havana syndrome, either were conducted by the Cubans or are known in terms of who conducted them by the Cubans?

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would just note, by way of entry, that I know that our Cuba policy is under review within the administration. But let me offer a few thoughts, and if confirmed, I look forward to contributing to that process.

Our priority in Cuba, as the rest of the hemisphere, needs to be democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Countries should not be grandfathered because they have failed to respect those tenets.

The new First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba does not appear to me to be significantly different from his predecessors. But time will tell on that point.

With regard to the Havana syndrome—my knowledge of the process of looking into that is limited, but I certainly believe that, given the amount of control that the Communist Party has in Cuba, there are more things that they can tell us about what was going on at that time.

And I think that the process that the Secretary has designated, led by Ambassador Pamela Spratlen and the Health Incident Response Team, working with our interagency partners, is an important opportunity to get to the bottom of these incidents, and if confirmed, I commit to contributing to that process.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I appreciate that.

It is impossible, if you understand Cuba's state-controlled system and its security apparatus to believe that anything can happen in the island without some knowledge of the Cuban regime, which they, certainly, have not shared with us, and now we find these attacks proliferating in other parts of the world.

Do you believe that the practice of the Cuban regime of taking 20 percent of remittances to Cuban families, then converting the balance of the remittance to Cuban pesos that are worth a fraction of what Americans send to their families, that can only be used at state-owned stores is an acceptable practice?

Mr. NICHOLS. Again, the Cuba policy is under review. But I do believe that those who are most responsible for abuses of human rights and democracy in Cuba should not benefit from remittances going to the Cuban people.

Our priority needs to be what is best for the Cuban people and focus our efforts on supporting them, and I believe that the best

ambassadors for doing that are the American people and, particularly, the Diaspora here.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let me hone in on my question because I have a limited time.

I appreciate all of that but here is the point. If we want to help the Cuban people, taking 20 percent off of the \$100 I send to my aunt, converting the other \$80 of U.S. dollars into pesos, which is worth a fraction, and then being able, largely, to only buy at a government store, which is jacked up in prices, is not helping the Cuban people.

It is, certainly, helping the regime. So I am for sending my remittances to my aunt, but I want her to get the remittances I send.

Let me ask you this. Do you believe that sending, as the regime does, Cuban doctors abroad, then taking away their passports and getting paid for their services without fully paying the doctors is human trafficking?

Mr. NICHOLS. I believe that their labor rights are being violated in large measure, and I think it has many characteristics of human trafficking, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And do you believe that the militarization of the Cuban economy, whereas Raul Castro's son and son-in-law, high-ranking officers of the Cuban military, is an acceptable practice for U.S. businesses to engage with?

Mr. NICHOLS. I think that we should be working to promote diversity in the economy in Cuba and focusing our efforts on what is best for the Cuban people.

The roles of senior officials and family members in the economy goes in the opposite direction and, if confirmed, I look forward to contributing to the department's review of our policies within the interagency.

The CHAIRMAN. Yeah. Well, let me just say that, and I will end on this note, so an American business wants to do business in Cuba or they want to do, you know, tourism or they want to sell agricultural products.

They either have to go to Raul's son or son-in-law, both high-ranking officials of the Cuban military who control the two, quote/unquote, "companies" that are run by the regime.

You become a partner with the state, in essence, a partner with those who oppress its people, and your partner is high-ranking officials of the Cuban military.

I do not know if we, for example, would accept that in China. I do not know if we would accept it elsewhere. And it is, certainly, not a help to the Cuban people.

So I look forward to continuing that conversation.

Senator Risch?

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Nichols, I want to talk about a parochial issue. That is the Columbia River Treaty. How engaged have you been on that issue or have you been, prior to coming on board here?

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you. I have received a briefing on the treaty from our negotiators and legal team. I have not participated in the deliberations with regard to the negotiation.

Senator RISCH. Okay, thank you.

I hope you will familiarize yourself with this. I can tell you, this is not a partisan issue. Indeed, we have been—we—when I say we I am talking about the Senators, particularly from the Northwest, have been working with the negotiating team from the State Department, and we found them really good to work with.

They are working on an issue that is incredibly complex and incredibly difficult with a friend and neighbor but with whom we have, obviously, competing interests as we try to complete the negotiations.

I have trouble with some of my colleagues here whose last brush with the Columbia River was when they took geography in either grammar school or high school.

So they are learning how important the Columbia River is to those of us that have water that flows into the Columbia and the effects that it has upstream on us.

So, first of all, I do want to tell you, you have got a good team in place. We intend to continue to work with them, and it is bipartisan and I hope that we will continue down that road, and I look forward to your help in that regard.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator, and I look forward to working with you on that, if confirmed.

The Columbia River and its basin have important implications for hydroelectric power, green energy, the environment and, obviously, flood control and the economy of the western part of our nation.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much.

Ambassador Sison, I want to underscore to you the disappointment a lot of us had when the administration jumped right back into UNRWA.

What UNRWA has done over the years is very disheartening and it is impossible to explain to the United States taxpayers, particularly my constituents, how the funds that—U.S. taxpayer dollars that flowed into UNRWA could be used to print textbooks that I have no doubt you have seen that have anti-Semitic materials in them—and this is paid for by U.S. dollars—and also the other things that UNRWA has done, allowing their facilities to be used for military facilities and that sort of thing.

Again, we want to participate always in these things. But when they are doing stuff like that, it becomes very difficult, and particularly when the funds have now been freed up for UNRWA to get those funds again, and we are a huge contributor to that operation.

What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. SISON. Good morning, Senator, and thank you for that question.

The issue of transparency, accountability, and oversight with regard to the U.N. Relief Works Agency, UNRWA, and across the U.N. system would be a key priority, if confirmed.

On UNRWA specifically, it is absolutely critical that we insist on neutrality, and that goes for the staff of UNRWA, the policies, the programs, the educational materials, that you have mentioned.

If confirmed, I will be insisting on these red lines of complete neutrality, no educational materials, whether it is textbook or online educational resources that contain references to anti-Semitism, incitement.

These are important issues and, if confirmed, I would be working with U.N. counterparts and others in the IO bureau and across our State Department to insist that these red lines are not crossed and that internal controls are maintained.

Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Well, I appreciate that, and I appreciate your commitment and your thoughts in that regard. It always amazes me when something like this happens where the funds were freed up without a commitment.

I mean, if they will not make the commitment before they get the money, how in the world can you possibly think they will make the commitment after they get the money?

So it amazes me how we transfer funds like this without getting anything back for it.

And my time is up and I thank you for that commitment.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.

I understand Senator Cardin is with us virtually.

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank both of our distinguished nominees for their service to our country.

Ambassador Sison, I am proud that you are a Marylander. I heard Senator Van Hollen's introductions. We are very proud of your career service, diplomatic service, to our country.

It is, clearly, going to be challenged as we reassert America's diplomacy globally in the work that we do with our international organizations.

So I look forward to working with you.

Ambassador Nichols, I, again, thank you for your career of public service. Both of you have served our nation with distinction and honor, and I join the chairman in thanking you and your families for your willingness to continue in public service.

Ambassador Nichols, you and I had a chance to talk. I just want to underscore a few of the points.

One area that affects both of the individuals that are before us is the U.S. role in the OAS. I mention that because Senator Wicker and I had introduced legislation that became law for a parliamentary dimension within the Organization of American States.

And I point that out, the more that we can get legislators working with our diplomats, particularly in international organizations or regional organizations, I think the more effective it will be.

So I look forward to a stronger parliamentary arm within the OAS. We have a very strong parliamentary arm within OSCE. I think we could improve our representation at the United Nations.

We have two of our members who are designated to represent the Senate. I think working with each other we can strengthen unity in U.S. foreign policy goals.

Ambassador Nichols, I want to ask you about a subject that we talked about at some length and that is making anti-corruption a key part of our policy in our hemisphere. We have seen an erosion of good governance.

We knew that in Northern and Central America. We see significant challenges as countries have gone back on their commitment for their anti-corruption institutions.



We see this in so many countries, of course, and Cuba is a country that the chairman has mentioned frequently is a corrupt country, Venezuela, et cetera.

We have legislation that you and I have talked about that passed our Senate last Congress that we are going to try to get to the finish line this time that will fine tune the missions—each of our missions in each of our countries on anti-corruption.

I want to just get your comments as to how high a priority this will be when you are confirmed.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you very much, Senator.

Fighting corruption is vital to our efforts to strengthen democracy in our hemisphere and around the world. I want to thank you and the other members of this body for the tools that you have given us.

I believe that we should robustly use our Treasury OFAC sanctions, our 7031(c) sanctions, and the full range of tools available to deal with those who would steal from the public purse, deprive the peoples of the region of their resources and their wealth.

And given my experience in my current assignment and previously in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, I look forward to deploying those tools robustly in support of democracy around the region.

I would also like to note that I fully concur that the Article One branch of government and its engagement around the hemisphere with other legislatures will be an important tool in supporting democracy.

Senator CARDIN. Let me raise one more issue with you, if I might, and that is the Caribbean states. For too long we have not given them the attention that they need. We have not done well with their voting at the United Nations or at OAS, for that matter, and there are many Caribbean states. It does not take too much attention or resources to strengthen our ties.

What strategy do you have in order to increase our partnership with the Caribbean states?

Mr. NICHOLS. If confirmed, I look forward to building on our shared values with the Caribbean and their commitment to democracy and the rule of law.

I believe that our engagement with the Caribbean region needs to include a robust presence and, if confirmed, I look forward to advocating for that.

We need to leverage our development tools around the region, work with our multilateral partners, and international financial institutions to get them the resources that they need, and to make sure that we are attending to those issues that hold them back in their development.

Senator CARDIN. Dr. Sison, I would just underscore the point that we could do much better in getting support at the United Nations if our missions recognized how important those votes are to United States foreign policy.

We have got to connect the dots in more capitals around the world so that we have stronger support at the United Nations, and letting us know in Congress where we can be helpful and getting those types of relationships that can help us advance our foreign policy.

I hope you have a strategy to help us do that.

Ms. SISON. Good morning, Senator, and, indeed, the necessity of building broad cross-regional alliances and partnerships is critical across the U.N. and multilateral venues, whether we are talking about New York or Geneva, really, across the multilateral space.

And I do appreciate the offer that I just heard for the IO Bureau and, if confirmed, I will take you up on this. I think that so many of the members of this committee have built deep relationships with leaders across the world and, if confirmed, I would hope that I would be able to turn to you and ask for some help but with enough advance notice and placing a call or two when and if needed.

Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. I look forward to working with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Young, I understand, is with us virtually.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman. I am not sure my picture is appearing. Can I be heard?

The CHAIRMAN. You are certainly heard but not seen.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. Well, I will just go ahead and dive in.

So building on Senator Cardin's questions pertaining to the Caribbean Basin, as you know, Mr. Nichols, the Senate is considering a far-reaching China package, which includes American policies towards the Western Hemisphere, which, if confirmed, you will be tasked with overseeing.

One of your first responsibilities would be managing the creation of a strategy to strengthen economic competitiveness, good governance, human rights, and the rule of law in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I want to know what policies you believe have worked in the past in these areas and how we might better work to improve some of these policies across the region to reduce our neighbors' vulnerability to Chinese influence.

And, you know, you might include specifically how the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative could be utilized to push back on Chinese infrastructure developments.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator.

I think that we have a robust menu of policies and options that I would seek to leverage, if confirmed. We need to work across the board in institution strengthening, using our Agency for International Development for political party strengthening, for grass roots policy support at the human level.

I think we've got to take advantage of our international financial institution partners and make sure that they are helping to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in the region, particularly the Inter-American Development Bank as a tool within our own region.

The Organization of American States is similarly an important tool that, within its Charter, it is committed to those tenets of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law that we hold dear.

Working throughout the region, as I have, justice sector support has been crucial and, I think, very successful in many countries

around the region, and providing units and organizations that respect human rights and the rule of law that support democracy and the extent to which we can build upon those resources will be important.

I think CBSI has been an important tool throughout the region. In terms of the future and the way forward, we need to look to leverage that asset in building institutions, making trade, communication, service sector improvements.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. All right.

I am sorry to interject. Our time is just somewhat limited, understandably, in this format. So, my apologies, sir, I am going to move on because I have some other things I would like to turn to.

I just returned from our southern border with Mexico. I spent all day Friday down there in the Yuma, Arizona, area, where I actually spent some time years ago as a United States Marine, participating in counter trafficking operations and monitoring some of the activities there, working with other agencies.

The challenges continue. In fact, I think it is fair to say we are hearing this, Republicans and Democrats alike, that we have an ongoing crisis at the southern border, and that crisis has underscored the importance of identifying the root cause of unchecked immigration from the Northern Triangle region.

Despite \$3.6 billion in U.S. aid over the 2016 to 2021 fiscal years, immigration policy from the new administration has still resulted in a staggering number of migrants fleeing these countries.

And I suppose we do not need to really fixate on the massive uptick we have seen in the last couple of months. Everyone is aware of it.

Despite billions of dollars in U.S. aid to these economically distressed countries, why have we seen a recent surge in immigration when it was, largely, controlled for the past several years?

Mr. Nichols?

Mr. NICHOLS. I think there are a variety of reasons but I point to a couple that are driving the uptick. One is a loss of economic opportunities driven by climate disasters and climate change in the region, corruption, violence, rule of law, a lack of hope, and we need to work to address the root causes of those challenges urgently.

I will keep my answer brief, but happy to go into it further, if you would like, sir.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you for your time. I would also add the message from the White House has not been particularly helpful. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you both for your past service to this country and for your willingness to be considered for these important posts at this critical time.

Ambassador Nichols, I want to begin with you. As we heard from Senator Young, so much of the focus on America's borders has been on the southern border between the United States and Mexico.

But I want to ask about our northern border with Canada, because for states like New Hampshire that border Canada, the border closures have been very disruptive both for businesses that go

back and forth across the border to do business, but also for many of our residents who have relatives in Canada and have been limited in their travel.

Now, I understand that these were done because of the pandemic. But we are coming up on an end to the most recent extension of that border closure in May, and I wondered if you have any sense of what will happen on May 21st when the current restrictions expire and whether we need to keep this border closed or how soon we might be able to safely reopen it.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator.

I am not yet confirmed. I have not been privy to the deliberations on that topic. I know that the HHS and Homeland Security are looking at this issue carefully.

I believe that the decision will be driven by the best science available. We are making important progress in our own country against the pandemic, and I hope that we'll be able to see progress with regard to the border soon.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. Do I have your commitment that, once confirmed, that you will look at this issue closely and urge an examination that recognizes the challenges that are faced by that border closure?

Mr. NICHOLS. Yes, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Ambassador Sison, I still have fond memories of my visit to Lebanon during your tenure there as ambassador. Sadly, things have significantly declined in Lebanon since that time, and I know that you are very familiar with UNIFIL's mission in Lebanon, how important it has been to the country and to its relations with its neighbors.

If confirmed, how will you approach the mandate renewal in August and how can the U.S. be a moderator between the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL, and Lebanon's neighbors?

Ms. SISON. Good to see you again, Senator, and good morning.

As with all peacekeeping missions, we want to make sure that at the time of mandate renewal and discussion at the U.N. Security Council that we are looking at realistic and achievable mandates, that we are looking at mandates that include women in peacekeeping as both military and police peacekeepers, that when possible that this mandate promotes the political solution, and that we look at the reforms in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, to deliver on that mandate, and, of course, the mandates need to be well resourced as well to be effective.

UNIFIL has played a stabilizing role in southern Lebanon, and we are seeing this at the present time as well. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to consult with you, Senator, and other members of this committee on how we can make peacekeeping the most effective and efficient investment and that the peacekeepers are resourced to perform their mandates effectively.

Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. One of the most pressing issues facing the Security Council at the U.N. is the need to maintain humanitarian aid in Syria.

How can you and the State Department and those of us in Congress support Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's efforts to push

back against Russia's obstructionism in allowing that humanitarian aid to those who need it?

Ms. SISON. Senator, I absolutely agree with you on the urgency of keeping humanitarian delivery, these corridors open.

The reauthorization of Bab al-Hawa for another 12 months is completely a priority and, if confirmed, would be looking to push on the other two cross-border points that are not currently authorized to be used.

The suffering that we see, particularly in northeast and northwestern Syria, is alarming: food insecurity, the inability to deliver badly-needed medical and other items, particularly in this period of the COVID pandemic.

So, if confirmed, I do look forward to consulting closely with you and with working with Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield and her team on this critical issue of the reauthorization of the cross-border delivery.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I am out of time. But I just want to weigh in in support of your point about the Havana syndrome and our efforts that we should be making with the Cuban regime to press them more on what they know.

And, Ambassador Nichols, I would also just like to weigh in. I appreciate the administration's appointment of Ambassador Spratlen.

But the fact is, in Congress, we are still not getting the information we need on what is actually happening with so-called Havana syndrome government wide, nor are we seeing the coordination that I think we would all hope to see and the assurance that those people who are affected are getting absolutely the best health care that they need.

So I hope you will share that with the State Department.

Mr. NICHOLS. I will, Senator, and those who were injured in those attacks and the health of our people throughout our service and throughout our government are my highest priority.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Rounds?

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to both of you for your service to our country. You, clearly, are both very well qualified and we appreciate your offer of continued service.

Ambassador Nichols, I am concerned about, I guess, the ongoing and, in some cases, increasing Chinese and Russian engagement in the Western Hemisphere.

One example is China's launching of a vaccine diplomacy strategy into Latin America, while Russia is launching countless disinformation campaigns in Latin America to discredit the West, specifically, the United States.

What do you think should be done to address this and what resources are available to you for that purpose? I know that you have indicated that there are some organizations and so forth.

But when it comes to their very aggressive approach to provide misinformation about our country but also to gather additional leverage within the Western Hemisphere, share with me your thoughts and what tools you would see available to you.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator, and I fully share your concerns.

We have a number of tools available to us. We have the Global Engagement Center pushing back on disinformation. We are bolstering our public diplomacy at the embassy level throughout the hemisphere, and I think that is a very important tool.

We have shared values, and we need to point out to the peoples of the region the shared values that we have, and the difference between what we consider important and what the real costs of the engagement that the malign actors from outside our hemisphere, like China and Russia, are engaging in.

The Chinese offer all sorts of things. They don't come for free. The Chinese are getting something out of it, and we need to push back aggressively with a variety of tools.

They also offer in their economic engagement unfair competition practices and corruption, and when we see that we need to call it out.

Senator ROUNDS. I think sometimes their offer of assistance to a contrary is seen as a first step in where, later on, they will start asking for small favors and then move into more demands.

In our case, I would suspect that there are times in which we are seen as looking at some of our neighbors and saying, we expect you to behave in a particular way, and rather than talking about our shared values we try to impose values upon them.

Share with me your thoughts about the differentiation between our shared values and times in which we might be seen as placing our values upon them. I think it is a critical difference.

Mr. NICHOLS. I think that there are advantages in our hemisphere and that our founding documents in this hemisphere lay out what the nations of this region believe in and what they have committed to.

The OAS is the world's oldest regional multilateral organization, and its Charter lays out values very clearly that all of the nations in this hemisphere have signed onto, and I think we can point to those.

We can point to polling of the publics in this hemisphere and their value for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, and I think when we talk about what the Chinese and the Russians are really offering, what they are really asking of governments, there is a big difference between what one individual official in a government might want and what, I think, the people of that nation might want.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Ambassador Sison, the COVID-19 pandemic, certainly, put a spotlight on the World Health Organization. Concerns have been expressed that the WHO lacks sufficient resources to manage a global pandemic as well as maintain its integrity.

Do you think that the WHO is resourced to handle a global pandemic, and do you believe that it is still an unbiased organization, despite Chinese influence?

And, finally, how do you think the Department of State can help to strengthen the organization?

Ms. SISON. Good morning, Senator.

Indeed, the issue of the World Health Organization—WHO's need to be fit for purpose and modernized is an important one, and there is an issue, of course, of the need for sustained financing.

We do not want to start down a road and only to find that we are not able to continue down the road as we work to strengthen WHO's ability in surveillance detection, in infectious disease prevention, the ability to respond, to insist that all member states report transparently.

But, of course, that sustained financing needs to be matched with a strong focus and, if confirmed, this would be a top priority on transparency, accountability, and oversight of the WHO's operations.

You mentioned the word integrity and, absolutely, we need to make sure that the WHO's assessments, findings, reports, are science based, expert led, free from outside influence.

And, again, we need to insist that all member states comply with the international norms on infectious disease reporting, international health regulations. We need full transparency on this. Could not agree more, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, my time has expired.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Murphy?

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your willingness to continue to serve, especially in these very important roles.

Ambassador Nichols, I wanted to turn to the topic of Venezuela. You know, by no metric can anyone suggest that President Trump's policy in Venezuela was a success. Maduro was more cemented in power at the end of his four years.

But there has been some interesting developments over the past few months. We have seen some compromises by the Maduro government on humanitarian access, the creation of a new electoral council, willingness to join the Norway-hosted talks.

And so I am interested to learn from you your early thoughts about how the United States can help push this momentum along, capitalize it, and then, specifically, whether this is the time to talk about restoring diesel swaps.

I have believed for a while that the United States should be engaged in this policy as a way to relieve humanitarian suffering inside the country.

But I wonder if this policy now makes even more sense, because not only does it provide an avenue to try to get much-needed economic relief to people who are suffering, but it also may be a way to show that the United States is open to helping to be a part of these sort of grass shoots of negotiating room.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator.

There needs to be a key focus in our policy, in my view, which I should caveat that I understand is under review within the administration. So this will be my personal views.

But I believe that we have a major advantage in dealing with Venezuela, that there is a broad multilateral coalition working to promote democracy in Venezuela, and that is something that we

need to leverage aggressively to push the Maduro regime towards free and fair elections.

We need to support the Venezuelan people, both at the political level in the form of opposition leaders and interim President Guaidó, as well as pushing for humanitarian assistance and ensuring that the people of Venezuela do have access to the help that they need.

With regard to diesel swaps right now, as I understand it, there is enough diesel capacity within Venezuela, at least for the next six months or so.

I think that is something that needs to be watched, and if we see that there is a problem there for the Venezuelan people I think that is something to be looked at.

But I think maintaining economic pressure to negotiate on a government that has shown that it will use dilatory tactics to prevent progress toward free and fair elections in addition to things like releasing political prisoners and allowing a free press, we have to be very cautious on.

Senator MURPHY. Yeah, no doubt, as Senator Menendez regularly reminds us, this is Maduro's game is to sort of entertain hopes of reform, stringing the international community and the United States along with, you know, nothing to be found at the end of the rainbow.

And so I think we go into this with eyes wide open. But it is also interesting that Guaidó himself has proposed the incremental lifting of U.S. sanctions as an incentive to try to continue along this path.

But I look forward to working with you on this as the review continues.

Ambassador Sison, I wanted to talk to you about a topic that regularly comes up in this committee, and that is Yemen. We have a U.N. and WFP appeal that is right now about one-third funded.

Now, it is never 100 percent funded, but in prior years we have been able to stave off famine by making sure that we are at least 80, 90 percent funded on that appeal. There are some pretty important countries like Qatar that have made sort of no contribution.

There is talk of a second donors conference to try to make sure that we put our foot onto the pedal, because we are looking at a 2021 famine, a new outbreak of cholera, if we do not rally the world community through the U.N., through WFP, to make sure that the money is there.

And by the way, the United States put in less money this year than we did last year, which is not exactly helping the situation.

Just your thoughts on how we can make sure we get the humanitarian dollars we need in Yemen.

Ms. SISON. Good morning, Senator, and share your concern about the food insecurity and the need for humanitarian access to the vulnerable populations in Yemen and, in fact, just flew up for the hearing from Haiti.

But we did have WFP Executive Director David Beasley with us a couple of weeks ago, and we actually discussed Yemen and the alarming situation there with the mounting food insecurity.

So, if confirmed, you have my absolute commitment that I would be working both with stakeholders to create these broad partner-



ships with other donors and like-minded countries, also to support Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield and her team up in New York because, of course, the U.N. Security Council has put an enormous amount of effort and work into maintain Security Council voice—united Security Council voice on Yemen.

If confirmed, I look forward to consulting and talking with you more on this important topic.

Senator MURPHY. Great. Thank you very much to you both.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, thank you. And, Ambassadors, thank you for your service. Greatly appreciated.

I would like to, first, talk about the Western Hemisphere. I am from Tennessee. Since the border collapsed in late January, we have experienced a dramatic increase in drug trafficking, in overdoses, in human trafficking.

We have now got unaccompanied minors coming into Tennessee. Our schools and hospitals are asking whether we have the capacity to deal with this.

This has become the most urgent crisis in America from a national security standpoint, from an economic security standpoint, from a humanitarian standpoint.

So earlier this month, I traveled to Guatemala and to Mexico to meet with leaders there to try to get at the bottom of what the problem is, what is driving this.

I did not hear much talk about climate change. What I heard was that we are sending messages from here, whether it is talk, election talk, about how people will be treated if a certain outcome occurs, whether it is talk about the potential for a \$15 minimum wage, whether it is talk about checks for illegal immigrants, or the fact that we have extended unemployment—plussed-up unemployment benefits all the way to September, which is creating a giant job opening here in America.

Coyotes are taking these messages and marketing them to very vulnerable people. They are encouraging these vulnerable people to put their life savings on the line and to risk their lives, to make a very dangerous journey, a journey in which more than half of them are involved in some—in some way in crime, whether they become part of the drug trafficking, part of the sex trafficking, or in some other way violated horribly.

This is a very dangerous humanitarian crisis that is occurring at our border. The leaders of these countries are not happy about this at all. They blame us, in large part, but they also see opportunity.

That is what I was trying to get at and I want to share these with you, Ambassador Nichols, these observations, that when I met with the president of Guatemala, he said, look, I am not asking for you to send money or fund NGOs, but help us technically—night vision goggles, technical training, so we can manage our own border. Our own national sovereignty is being violated, he told me. We want to cooperate. We think we can cooperate, and if we can get our border under control and bring the rule of law more in line, we

will see more infrastructure investment, which is what they desperately need.

We have tools here. This committee has jurisdiction over some of the tools that we can help them with infrastructure investment, but we need to get the rule of law and public safety in order there.

I think there are great opportunities to cooperate with them, and I would look forward to working with you toward those ends.

They also want to see us stop the national security problem that they have got too because they do not know who is entering their country. It is a real issue.

It sounded even more so when I talked with the Mexican Foreign Minister and the Minister of Economy of Mexico. They have a grave concern about who is coming across their southern border and, again, they highlighted that opportunity for us to cooperate on a security basis, again, with training, with technology, with equipment. These are ways to help them address the problem.

But the most clear and urgent problem is dealing with our own border, to stop sending the wrong messages that are encouraging this sort of behavior. And what is happening, particularly in Mexico, is that with the movement of coyotes, the overwhelming force that is occurring at our southern border, that it is creating an opening for the cartels to move even more drugs, more sex trafficking, more contraband across our borders.

The cartels are getting larger and more powerful by the day and it is making it that much more difficult to manage the situation in Mexico, in Guatemala, and other countries in that region.

So I would look forward to working with you on this grave national security crisis, and I hope that you will commit to do that with me.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator. I look forward to working with you and the other members of this body, if confirmed, on these issues.

I know that colleagues within the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and Population, Refugees and Migration, under the leadership of Vice President Harris and with the participation of Special Envoy Zúniga are working hard on the issues that you have discussed.

Senator HAGERTY. We need to do more, but thank you for that commitment.

Ambassador Sison, again, thank you for your service.

Still related to this area, what was very clear to me is that China is increasing the movement of fentanyl and fentanyl precursors into Mexico. These are getting manufactured and then trafficked across our border. It appears that all the cooperation between Mexico and the United States to interdict this has collapsed.

I would be very interested in your thoughts on how, in the position that you are, hopefully, going to go to how you can increase our cooperation with Mexico to push back against China and their importation of this illegal drug that is killing our children.

Ms. SISON. Good morning, Senator, and I share your concerns about these illegal drugs coming into our country, as both a mother and a grandmother.

There is, definitely, an important role within the U.N. and multi-lateral space to push this U.S. priority forward and, if confirmed,

I look forward to consulting with you, working with you and with stakeholders, in organizations such as the Universal Postal Union because there is a postal piece of this.

And the work that we have done on some of the standards has actually made a difference in the multilateral sphere in enforcing and moving these norms into the international space as well as in the U.N. body that deals with drugs and crime.

Senator HAGERTY. I look forward to working with you, and I will just add this. The Mexican authorities made clear to me that they do not have the technology to examine the cargo that is coming in from China. They felt like we could help them significantly there.

You think about x-ray technology, heat-sensing technology, the types of things that they could use to deal with the fact that China has become very clever at hiding fentanyl and the precursors that are being shipped in to their country and then being remanufactured.

So I appreciate that commitment and look forward to working with you.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine is recognized and he has graciously agreed to preside while I go to the Finance Committee. After Senator Kaine, at this point, no Republican colleagues who have sought recognition virtually are present.

So it would be Senator Booker, who is with us virtually, and then Senator Van Hollen.

Senator Kaine. [Presiding.] Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations to the witnesses for your service and for your nominations.

I want to ask three Western Hemisphere questions to—Ambassador Nichols, to you about the Northern Triangle, and then I cannot resist taking advantage of having the Haitian ambassador with us today to ask a question about Haiti, Ambassador Sison.

So, Ambassador Nichols, the Northern Triangle. We have seen real backsliding in the Northern Triangle on governments' transparency, corruption, violence, economic opportunity issues.

Recently, in both Guatemala and El Salvador, there have been a sacking of judges and prosecutors who have been known for trying to prosecute corruption. Even more troubling, in Honduras the Honduran election of 2016 was a sham and the OAS called for it to be rerun.

Instead of supporting the OAS, the U.S. recognized the government of Honduras, and what did we get for it? What we got for it was the government canceling transparency initiatives, canceling anti-corruption initiatives, and now the president of Honduras is implicated in a couple of high-profile drug smuggling prosecutions in the United States.

Obviously, if we are going to try to deal with this migration problem, one of the key pillars to it is strengthening governance, security, transparency in the Northern Triangle.

I suspect that there will be a request that we invest funds to do that, and I want to be supportive. But how can we invest funds to promote those ends when the governments in the Northern Triangle are often the causes or at least, in some cases, the causes of the problems rather than the solutions?

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator.

It is not enough to win office democratically. People have to govern democratically, and central to that is the importance of the separation of powers and a strong independent judiciary, and that is something, if confirmed, that I will argue for vociferously with our partners throughout the hemisphere and, particularly, in the Northern Triangle.

We have programming that has been successful around the world in strengthening the justice sector, and we need to press forward with those efforts, particularly in the Northern Triangle countries.

Corruption is a noxious influence in that region, in that part of our hemisphere, and we need to leverage the tools that you have given us to call out those corrupt actors who are preventing the course of justice from flowing properly.

We also need to leverage our development assistance and our multilateral partners to ensure that the institutions are built and people get the support that they need so they are not attracted to populist and easy solutions that quickly turn to ashes in their mouths.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Ambassador, I think all those are the right answers and I also think they are the things that we have tried to do for years with very little effect. So I hope we will not be in a Groundhog Day of repeatedly doing something and seeing it not work.

Let me make one point on economic opportunity in the region. Again, we would want there to be stronger economic opportunities so people can stay. But how do we invest in stronger economies with governments that have not proven to be reliable partners?

I have an idea. U.S. employers employ a lot of people in the Northern Triangle in the retail sector, in the textile sector.

Rather, if we are going to try to increase economic opportunities, I would hope State and Commerce and others, the vice president's office, would pull together American employers who employ folks in the region and say, for example, what could we do as policy that would make you hire and invest more in the Northern Triangle.

I will give you an example. There is probably a couple hundred thousand textile workers in the Northern Triangle who are employed by American firms.

This is just a brainstorm, but if we were to say, for example, the purchase of PPE during the pandemic was revealed to be a critical national security issue, we should only buy PPE that is American made or that is made with American product in nations with whom we have free trade agreements.

That would pull a huge part of the PPE supply chain out of China and it would give a strong preference for the production of PPE in the Northern Triangle, which is produced with American cotton in factories in that region. Something like that would lead to significant economic expansion or opportunities there.

So I hope, as we focus on economic opportunities, get the advice of the American companies that are already there.

Ambassador Sison, there is this, you know, obviously, huge challenge in Haiti, deep unrest over the term of the president, and a five-year term, but there is huge unrest over when did it start.

What is the U.S. doing to try to help solve this dilemma and pave a way for a less corrupt Haiti, going forward?

Ms. SISON. Good morning, Senator, and good to see you again.

The U.S. and, I will say as the sitting ambassador, U.S. ambassador to Haiti, we have been really urging all stakeholders, so the political actors, the economic leaders, civil society leaders, to come together and work in an inclusive manner to reach an accord that will serve the Haitian people.

And I say this because the political impasse has had an impact over the last two years on the security situation. We see increased gang violence has had a negative effect on the economic side, including economic development side.

The focus has got to be, I believe, on rule of law, combating corruption, promoting justice sector reform, and moving ahead on insisting that these overdue legislative elections, which should have been held in late 2019, do move ahead.

The president has been ruling by decree because there is no legislature. So to get a president out of ruling by presidential decree, there need to be free, fair, and credible legislative elections later this year, as announced by the government of Haiti, followed by a presidential election, so that at the end of the sitting president's term there is an elected president to take his place. The—

Senator KAINE. And thank you, Ambassador. I am over my time and I need to gavel myself out of order and—but thank you for that answer.

I believe Senator Cruz is on his way, but I believe Senator Markey, we are going in seniority and you are up next.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Ambassador Nichols, thank you for your service over the years. I want to talk a little bit about climate change and the United States government and its ability to use Global Magnitsky to strike back at those who are committing crimes against environmental defenders.

I know that you have experience in working on these issues. So could you please tell us what you believe we can do as a country to counter environmental human rights violations in the Western Hemisphere?

Because, clearly, we are at a tipping point and we have to make sure that we are using all of the influence of our government.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you very much, Senator.

It is a complex question. I will touch on a few examples.

For example, if you are dealing with a company that is illegally dumping mining tailings in a river, suborning local officials, and improperly taking resources out of a nation, that seems to me like an example where you could leverage the full range of anti-corruption tools in response to illegal mining practices.

In Peru, artisanal and illegal gold mining was a huge problem and linked to narcotics trafficking, and when I was ambassador there, we worked intensively on leveraging law enforcement tools against those responsible, especially in that nexus of narcotics and illegal mining.

Senator MARKEY. Yeah, gold mining, logging, wildlife trafficking, environmental degradation, all of that. I have introduced legislation, the Targeting Environmental and Climate Recklessness Act,

and it is just to reinforce the reality that all across these countries, brave climate defenders in Central and South America are risking their lives peacefully in order to ensure that these carbon-intensive industries and unsustainable business practices are wreaking havoc on local communities.

And what my legislation would do is it would give the United States, give you, the ability to target foreign individuals and companies engaged in destructive climate actions to ensure that existing human rights and corruption sanctions under Global Magnitsky are used to strike back at those committing crimes against environmental defenders.

Can I just follow up? Just looking at the Amazon, if I may, and the degradation of that forest, which are, as we know, the lungs of the planet, how can we better work to prioritize its protection with the countries that it spans across in South America, in your opinion, Mr. Ambassador?

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you very much, Senator.

I think engaging with the key Amazon nations, starting with Brazil but also Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia that is crucial. Our diplomacy can have an important effect on their policies.

I know Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Kerry is deeply engaged in that exercise. Programmatically, we can leverage our development assistance on the issue of climate, particularly on the protection of forests and rain forests in the region.

We also need to think about how do we leverage our trade agreements, which include environmental provisions, to protect the environment and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you on these issues.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, sir. And just moving to Colombia, quickly, if I could, I am very concerned about the escalation of violence in Colombia.

My question to you is what do you believe we should be doing? What steps should the United States government be doing in order to use our political influence to decrease the—that violence and the suppression of ordinary citizens in that country?

Mr. NICHOLS. The situation in Colombia is a complicated one. Colombia is a long-term ally of the United States and we need to be engaging with President Duque, as I know, our ambassador and key leaders in the administration are, one, to work to deescalate the challenges, two, to address the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, which sort of was one of the reasons why the fiscal package that President Duque introduced was introduced, and three, to prioritize getting back on track to implementation of the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia.

And if confirmed, I look forward to working towards those goals.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, sir. Thank you both for your service.

The CHAIRMAN. [Presiding.] Thank you.

Senator Van Hollen?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, and again, congratulations to both of you on your nominations.

Ambassador Sison, in my introduction this morning, I mentioned your experience in the area of international humanitarian relief,

and in your new position and confirmed you will be a key player in that arena.

Now, I support an immediate ceasefire in the fighting between Israel and Hamas. But whenever the rockets and the bombs stop falling, we will have a humanitarian disaster in Gaza.

As you well know, there was a humanitarian crisis in Gaza before the fighting started and now it is much worse. We all know that Hamas is a terrorist organization that controls Gaza.

We also know that Israel has the right to self-defense, and I am glad that the United States and this committee have assisted Israel in the development and the deployment of the Iron Dome, which has intercepted thousands of Hamas rockets.

But I also think that the United States and the international community needs to do everything we can when the fighting stops to assist the millions of innocent Gazans who are trapped there and have nothing to do with Hamas.

So my first question is a simple one. Do you agree?

Ms. SISON. Yes, Senator, I certainly share your concern about the human suffering associated with this outbreak in violence, and I do believe that providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian population with, again, all the transparency, accountability, and oversight built into that, while maintaining our long-standing security relationship with Israel is in the U.S. interest.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you, Madam Ambassador.

Just to give an extent of the challenge we are going to face with the international community, this is—I am just quoting here from the New York Times' report today in terms of the humanitarian crisis:

“The fighting has destroyed 17 hospitals and clinics in Gaza, wrecked its only coronavirus test laboratory, sent fetid wastewater into its streets, and broke water pipes serving at least 800,000 people.

Sewage systems inside Gaza have been destroyed. A desalinization plant that helped provide fresh water to 250,000 people in the territory is offline. Dozens of schools have been damaged or closed, forcing some 600,000 students to miss class and some 72,000 Gazans have been forced to flee their homes.”

Now, as your answer did and my question did, I am focused now on post-conflict humanitarian relief to millions of people who have nothing to do with the conflict in Gaza.

So do you agree that the United States and international relief agencies should insist that all parties involved give access consistent with security requirements, but access to provide humanitarian relief in Gaza?

Ms. SISON. Senator, yes, the issue of humanitarian access to provide needed food, medical items, particularly in this time of the COVID pandemic, is absolutely critical.

If confirmed, I would be working with the IO team and other stakeholders across our government and with U.N. partners not only to emphasize the urgency of working towards sustainable calm, but to ensuring that needed humanitarian relief with the built-in safeguards on transparency, accountability, oversight is delivered to the most vulnerable populations.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Madam Ambassador.

Now, we also have an ongoing humanitarian disaster in Ethiopia. President Biden has called for a ceasefire in that conflict and we, the United States, are working with international relief agencies to try to get humanitarian relief to those there.

This committee two days ago had a briefing with Ambassador Feltman and I had a follow-up conversation with Ambassador Feldman, the Special Envoy, yesterday. Can you just talk briefly about what we need to be doing and demanding in terms of providing humanitarian assistance in that conflict?

Ms. SISON. Indeed, Senator, I share your concern about the increasing food insecurity that we see. The U.N. and the International Organizations Bureau have an important role to play and, if confirmed, I would be working with a number of these U.N. agencies, including World Food Programme and others.

There are other associated human rights issues that I also believe the IO Bureau would be working on and, if confirmed, calling out those who are perpetrating these human rights abuses, these armed actors, widespread reports of sex- and gender-based violence and other atrocities.

We would want to continue to speak with one voice at the U.N. Security Council on these issues, and I look forward, if confirmed, to working with Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield up there in New York as well as the U.N. agencies providing this humanitarian relief and using the appropriate space to call out those armed actors and others perpetrating these atrocities and abuses.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you.

Senator Coons and I were in Sudan just a short time ago and visited one of the refugee camps that have been set up by UNHCR, and I think it is important the United States continues to support that effort as well as the World Food Programme. They are doing essential humanitarian work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cruz?

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your service. Congratulations on your nominations.

Ambassador Sison, let me start with you. You have emphasized repeatedly that you intend to work to ensure that American taxpayer dollars are well spent at the U.N. and other organizations.

But Americans are deeply concerned about the structure and leadership of those organizations. Organizations like the Human Rights Council are hopelessly biased, especially against the nation of Israel, and they are mendaciously sympathetic to countries like Iran that commit atrocious human rights abuses.

It is no surprise why that is the case, given that those are the sorts of countries that make up a majority of the members of the Human Rights Council.

To take another example, the U.N.'s Commission on the Status of Women, the body's top legislative body on women's rights, recently elected Iran as a member. The Iranian regime, of course, enforces a broad array of gender apartheid policies and, concerning, when asked, the Biden administration declined to condemn that farce.



I worry that no amount of financial accountability can reform these deeply problematic organizations as long as we allow them to be led by countries that are antithetical to their purpose.

I would like your opinion on that. How can financial oversight, which you have discussed, fix these deep problems, especially if the Biden administration is unwilling to speak out clearly against them?

Ms. SISON. Senator, the issue of U.S. leadership is critical, I believe, to addressing the need for reform, and I agree with you there is a need for reform in many of these institutions.

We need the U.S. back at the table pushing for these reforms. There is the issue, yes, of financial accountability, transparency, oversight, but there is also the issue of U.S. leadership building strong cross-regional partnerships and alliances so that our U.S. core values—protection of human rights, labor rights, and economic transparency—are at the forefront.

We need to remind some of our like-minded of what we all signed on to in the Charter of the United Nations because its foundational document is strong on the human rights.

On the Human Rights Council, Senator, I do believe that when we are at the table and as we are coming back to the—to the HRC, we have the ability to better defend Israel from de-legitimization, from unfair targeting, from discriminatory efforts because we are there and we are present.

We have seen when we are there that the number of items brought up under this article, Agenda Item 7, the only single country targeting of Israel in that space, that we are able to push back by coming back also and, of course, with our candidacy better able to create these cross-regional alliances to encourage more human rights right-minded countries to firm up its members.

Senator CRUZ. But does the hypocrisy of some of the worst human rights abusers being themselves members, does that concern you?

Ms. SISON. Indeed, it does. But we have also seen, Senator, the Human Rights Council has put the spotlight on Venezuela. The Human Rights Council has put the spotlight on China and the treatment of Uighurs, has put the spotlight on Hong Kong.

So the issue of our people-to-people diplomacy creating these strong cross-regional alliances of like-minded countries to make sure that our core U.S. values are at the forefront. This is why we need to be at the table and back.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Ambassador Nichols, I would also like to ask you, briefly, about Mexico, and our relationship with Mexico is complicated. They are a neighbor. We share a land border.

But they are also a country with its own interests, and when it comes to foreign policy we need to use all the foreign policy tools we have.

Recently, the Mexican Government has taken a range of steps to downgrade counternarcotics cooperation with the United States, and in one incident, Mexico even released sensitive information that we provided to them in violation of the U.S.-Mexico Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty.

I have introduced legislation to try to address some of these concerns. But, of course, there is an enormous role for the State Department to play in conveying American concerns and priorities.

Do you also share these concerns with Mexico's behavior in connection with, cooperation with, the United States in counter-narcotics and treaty violations, and how should we address those issues?

Mr. NICHOLS. Our cooperation with Mexico on rule of law, counter-narcotics, justice issues, is vital. It is long standing. I had the pleasure of working on those issues when I was Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging proactively with the government of Mexico on our security cooperation. It is vital for both of our nations. Mexican cooperation is something that we need and they need.

The challenges as was discussed in terms of things like fentanyl and precursors, other opiate trafficking into the United States, illegal activities on the border—we need each other to resolve those, and I look forward to working with our law enforcement colleagues on the U.S. side, with our embassy Law Enforcement Working Group in Mexico City, and with Mexican officials, if confirmed, to press forward to ensure the highest level of cooperation, Senator.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We normally do not have second rounds. But as I understand it, Senator Hagerty has—I am going to extend the courtesy to you.

Senator HAGERTY. I appreciate it, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Kaine, I am actually following up on a point that you raised. If I could borrow you for two minutes. But I just wanted to add a comment that Senator Kaine inspired.

In my recent visit to Guatemala and to Mexico, one thing that was clear to me that they were very interested in cooperating on was the fact that we are working very aggressively to reshore businesses from China.

We are all very concerned about security of our supply chain. Those companies that are coming back to the United States, I want to get every job I can. Let me be clear. I want every one of those jobs in America that I can get.

But to the extent that they are not coming back to America, rather than have them go to some other Southeast Asian country, why not find a way to work together to bring them into our hemisphere and to bring them to our friends there who need the economic opportunity, which this may help stem some of the root cause?

I do not want to overlook the immediate concern. We have to fix the border crisis now. But mid- and long-term, there is a real opportunity here.

Leaders cited CAFTA as a way to address this. You wisely brought this up, Senator, and I think taking a look at CAFTA, which actually presents now some restrictions and some constraints on what they can do, all of those constraints are being actually picked up by China right now because they are not part of that free trade agreement.

We need to look very aggressively at what we can do with the FTAs that are in place, what we can do with economic development on a joint basis.

I think that the United States can do a great deal to help these countries improve the rule of law and create the proper constructs.

Again, we have the mechanisms to help them with infrastructure because of the various funding mechanisms that exist here in Washington and elsewhere.

But creating that economic opportunity and seizing this trend right now coming from China is something that I encourage you very much to focus on.

Thank you.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Senator. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on that.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. One or two final questions.

Venezuela, despite the recent charm offensive, and that is what I consider it, the fact remains that Nicolas Maduro is a brutal dictator whose regime has committed, from my perspective, crimes against humanity, perpetrated fraud in the country's presidential and legislative elections, responsible for Venezuela's massive humanitarian crisis.

So I, first of all, want to commend the president, President Biden, for providing TPS for Venezuelans. But with Venezuela descending into a failed state status, I know that interim President Guaidó and a coalition of democratic actors are pushing for comprehensive negotiations, both presidential and legislative ones, as well as a return to democratic governance and increase aid to address the humanitarian crisis.

So, Ambassador Nichols, is not that something that we should be able to get our arms around and supportive of and seek an international mobilization for a simple proposition, internationally supervise the fair and free presidential and legislative elections?

Mr. NICHOLS. Mr. Chairman, I agree that is something that the international coalition should be focused on. Our multilateral partners play an important role.

As you wisely state, the Maduro regime's goal is to delay, to deflect, to distract, and I think, cognizant of that, we need to take an approach that limits the regime's ability to do those things.

As I said earlier, our multilateral partners are a vital tool in that regard. But the protagonists of this need to be the Venezuelan people and the Venezuelan opposition, led by interim President Guaidó.

The CHAIRMAN. Mm-hmm. You are familiar, or maybe I should add, are you familiar with the roles that, for example, Russia, China, and Turkey are playing in Venezuela? Russia, not only through its entity there that they use for what I call mercenary soldiers, but also I hope you are familiar with reports of Russia taking out gold bars out of Venezuela and part of the national patrimony going to Russia, the realities of Turkey's banks being used to flush the cash out of Venezuela and try to evade our sanctions. Are you familiar with those elements?

Mr. NICHOLS. Yes, Mr. Chairman, and the broad efforts by China, Russia, Iran, Turkey, others, to work around the sanctions

regime that exists is deeply worrisome, and I think that the—those of us who wish to see democracy in Venezuela need to aggressively challenge those actions and work to ensure that the profits of their criminal activities are not returned to the regime.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

One last question for you. President Bukele in El Salvador—we had President Bukele here. We met with him before after he was elected but before he took office. He said all the right things then. He has done all the wrong things since then.

His firing of the attorney general, his elimination of the—all of the judges of the Constitutional Court, have all of the elements of a massive power grab consolidation in an autocratic way.

You know, he probably thinks that if we do not just go along with him he will turn to China. How should we face the challenges there?

Because I think beyond El Salvador it is going to send a hemispheric message that is very bad if we do not, you know, stand up for the principles of observance of the Constitution, rule of law, and other elements.

Mr. NICHOLS. As I said, Mr. Chairman, it is not enough to win office democratically or win elections democratically. Our friends and our rivals need to respect the rule of law and govern democratically and we need to hold them to account when they fail to do so.

El Salvador is a country that has been a long-time ally. I served there from 1991 to 1993. We, as a nation, have sacrificed much and provided a great deal of assistance to El Salvador to try and put it on a path towards success, and we need to use all of the tools that we can to ensure that El Salvador remains on a forward path and that the challenges that it faces can be overcome.

And I look forward to working on those issues, if confirmed.

The CHAIRMAN. Mm-hmm.

And finally, Ambassador Sison, I do not want you to feel that I have no affection for your position. So our legislation that Senator Risch and I put together on a bipartisan basis here passed the committee 21 to 1.

The Strategic Competition Act creates a special representative for advancing U.S. leadership in the United Nations.

That person would be responsible for, among other things, promoting U.S. leadership and participation in the U.N. system with a particular focus on issue areas in which authoritarian countries are increasing their influence and steering the U.N. agenda.

We are alarmed, as you have heard here from several members, about the increasing influence and role of authoritarian countries in U.N. bodies. What is your assessment as to how we can best counter those efforts?

And I know that there has been within your department to be a section that has been created. How do you see the role of this Special Representative playing within it?

Ms. SISON. Thank you, Chairman, for this question and also thank you to the members of this committee for the bipartisan focus on this need for the U.S. to engage vigorously in this strategic competition, and if confirmed, this is at the top of my agenda.

Indeed, the International Organizations Bureau is in the process of establishing and launching a new Multilateral Strategy and Personnel office. You mentioned the Special Representative position, and I look forward, if confirmed, to working with all stakeholders in this space.

The Special Representative, the IO Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel, what are we going to focus on? A, making sure that we get independent qualified U.S. candidates or like-minded candidates if there is no U.S. appropriate individual into these top U.N. leadership positions.

This is critical running the State Department and the Secretary of State, have put their weight behind, for example, an excellent U.S. candidate at the International Telecommunication Union, focused on that issue of candidates' long game, looking ahead at investing in the U.N.'s Junior Professional Officer program one to two years, having young Americans gain this experience and then be set up for mid-level and beyond positions to bring in our core U.S. values—adherence to democratic norms, protection of human rights.

China uses this program extensively. We need to be in there. Work with our embassies abroad, our ambassadors and chargés, our USAID missions, to make sure we are looking into the weeds as well.

We do not want to see U.N. agency documents coming out of these field offices that have Belt and Road Initiative or Communist Party of China language in their strategic program strategy documents out in the field. We need to be alert to this.

And I would add to this list of priorities preserving this space for Taiwan's participation at the expert technical level in the World Health Assembly, which is coming up next week up at ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and at Interpol.

These are transnational threats: global health security, civil aviation safety and security, transnational crime. Taiwan's experts' input should be heard.

Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, and I strongly support your views on Taiwan being included at those levels internationally.

Finally, for you, it was reassuring to hear Ambassador Greenfield reiterate her commitment to countering anti-Israel bias and unilateral Palestinian actions in international fora and multilateral organizations like the U.N. and U.N. agencies.

I think such a commitment is more pressing than ever as we search for ways to deescalate the current conflict and return to a two-state solution process.

If confirmed, will you work to counter anti-Israel bias at the U.N. and other multilateral organizations?

Ms. SISON. Yes, Senator, I will. I will push back, if confirmed, as I have done in the past in many different tours of duty against the de-legitimization of Israel, unfair bias, discrimination against Israel, anti-Semitism.

Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Well, Senator Risch?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that, we appreciate your testimony. This record will remain open two business days. So right at—close of business Thursday.

Okay, I have to check with my ever-ready staff.

This record will remain open until the close of business on Thursday. There may be questions for the record that are submitted by members.

I urge both of you to answer them fully and expeditiously as soon as possible so that your nominations may be considered at a business meeting.

And with the thanks of the committee for your presence, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:57 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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### **Additional Material Submitted for the Record.**

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* Canada is a NATO ally, a NORAD partner, a member of the Five Eyes, and a top trade partner to the United States, and our two countries have worked in close strategic partnership around the world in recent decades. However, the Trump Administration introduced unnecessary friction into this important relationship, including imposing Section 232 tariffs on Canada. What is your assessment of the U.S.-Canada relationship and what steps will you take to repair this important bilateral partnership?

*Answer.* Our relationship with Canada is very strong. Relations with the United States remain the centerpiece of Canada's foreign policy. President Biden and PM Trudeau issued the "Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership" at their February virtual meeting. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the roadmap priorities, which include combatting the pandemic and cooperating on economic recovery, accelerating climate ambitions, advancing diversity and inclusion, bolstering security and defense, and building global alliances.

Our two governments coordinate daily at multiple levels and across multiple agencies on matters ranging from major global issues to our shared border, rivers, and lakes, our trade relationship, and joint security through NORAD and NATO. If confirmed, I look forward to furthering that cooperation.

The United States and Canada enjoy the most extensive and integrated economic partnership of any two nations in the world. While the Section 232 actions were deeply unpopular in Canada, the almost 400,000 people in pre-pandemic times and the nearly \$1.7 billion worth of goods and services that crossed our border daily are a testament to the importance and scale of our economic relationship. Canada is the primary foreign market for more than 30 U.S. states. Millions of U.S. and Canadian middle-class jobs—including well-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector—depend on our partnership. Given the thousands of businesses and the various, complex sectors operating across our borders, disagreements arise from time to time. That is understandable and expected. If confirmed, I would commit to working with our U.S. interagency colleagues to resolve these issues with Canada in a fair and transparent manner and ensure we put the interests of U.S. workers, farmers, ranchers, and businesses at the forefront of our foreign policy so that they are treated fairly under the terms of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

*Question.* The Government of China arbitrarily detained two Canadian citizens—Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor—in retaliation for Canada's decision to detain Meng Wanzhou at the request of U.S. prosecutors. For two years, Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor have been held in substandard conditions and routinely denied consular access by the Canadian Government. What is your assessment of the detention of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor and how will you work with the Trudeau Government to help secure their release?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would make clear that the United States stands with Canada in calling on Beijing to immediately release Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor. I will work closely with my counterparts in the Canadian Government to help secure their

release. The United States rejects the PRC's use of arbitrary detention as a political tool. Human beings are not bargaining chips.

The United States has endorsed the Canada-led multilateral Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations, together with over 60 countries. We are in discussions with Canada and other likeminded partners through the Partnership Action Plan to coordinate collective action against the practice of politically motivated, arbitrary detentions of foreign nationals to exert pressure on their governments.

*Question.* Mexico was the deadliest country in the world for journalists in 2020, accounting for almost a third of journalists killed this year, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Despite President Lopez-Obrador's pledge to tackle violence against journalists in 2018, his government continues to underfund the Federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists. How will you engage on the issue of press freedoms in Mexico and advocate for increased protections for journalists?

*Answer.* Respect for human rights is fundamental, and a free and active press is an integral part of a healthy democracy. The killing of journalists and human rights activists undermines freedoms of expression and association, as well as regional security.

The Department is committed to supporting efforts to increase respect for human rights and press freedom. Through USAID, the Department supports Mexico's National Protection Mechanism for Journalists and Human Rights Defenders and works with state-level counterparts to expand the protection measures available for these groups. USAID also supports the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Freedom of Expression to investigate and sanction aggressions against journalists and defenders.

If confirmed, I will strongly promote respect for human rights and the rule of law and end impunity. We will continue to urge Mexican authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes against journalists and human rights activists wherever they occur.

*Question.* Arms trafficked from the United States into Mexico have reached disturbing levels and, in some cases, transnational criminal organizations operating in Mexico possess more sophisticated weapons than those of Mexican law enforcement, all of which is enabling dangerous groups to expand their influence and activities in the country. If confirmed, what steps would you take to address international arms trafficking from the U.S. into Mexico?

*Answer.* U.S.-Mexico security cooperation remains a top national security priority. It is critical that the United States and Mexico work together to dismantle transnational criminal organizations and their operations, reduce impunity and corruption, and strengthen the rule of law in Mexico. I recognize that illegal weapons trafficking from the United States constitutes a major source of the arms used by criminal organizations in Mexico. If confirmed, I commit to working with you and other members of the U.S. Congress, my U.S. interagency colleagues, and Mexican Government officials to address border security and arms trafficking.

*Question.* Central America's Northern Triangle struggles with widespread insecurity, weak rule of law and extreme levels of poverty. These challenges are the main causes pushing people to leave their countries. If confirmed, what priorities will you establish to address citizens security, strengthen democratic governance, and facilitate conditions for equitable economic growth in the Northern Triangle?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will prioritize programs that directly impact everyday Central Americans to improve citizen security, strengthen democratic governance, and create the conditions for equitable economic growth, especially in areas prone to high emigration. To build political will, I will work across the U.S. Government to utilize a broad range of tools of diplomacy, public diplomacy, sanctions and visa revocations, and targeted foreign assistance programs to combat corruption, strengthen judiciaries, and promote transparency.

Our citizen security programs seek to transform the relationship between police and the communities they serve. We will work with civil society and partner governments to address community needs, including health and education, promote transparency, and hold government institutions accountable. Finally, if confirmed, I will work with our interagency partners to help create conditions for equitable economic growth, including by supporting businesses owned by women and disadvantaged groups.

*Question.* Across Central America, citizens have fled their homes and migrated from their countries in search of safety and opportunity. Additionally certain un-

democratic leaders have facilitated the criminality that leaves many Central Americans unable to see a future in their country. If confirmed, how will you prioritize the use of foreign assistance to support democratic civil society and struggling citizens, while also holding accountable certain leaders that have facilitated criminality and placed their own interests above their citizens?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support assistance programs to strengthen civil society and their efforts to denounce corruption, promote justice, protect human rights, and advocate for the needs of vulnerable populations. I will seek to build on administration efforts to consult with civil society representatives, both throughout the region and in the United States, to ensure their perspectives and input inform our policies and program design. It is critical that we work to guard civic space that allows for the free exercise of rights, and use all available tools to promote accountability for corrupt actors in the region.

*Question.* In November 2020, more than 7 million people were affected and hundreds of thousands were forced into shelters after two devastating hurricanes struck Central America, positioning already vulnerable individuals at greater risk. If confirmed, how will you prioritize support for recovery and relief efforts from these hurricanes and how will this align with a broader, longer-term effort to aid Central America in mitigating the impacts of climate change?

Answer. If confirmed, I will coordinate closely within the Department and the interagency, including by supporting international engagement efforts led by Vice President Harris to internationalize the effort and secure more donor commitments for responding to the immense humanitarian needs in Central America. The Department, together with USAID and others, provided immediate humanitarian relief in the aftermath of the hurricanes and continues to remain actively engaged in rebuilding efforts. In April, the U.S. Government announced an additional \$310 million in humanitarian support to the region and is working to secure increased donor commitments to address acute needs. We will continue to work to address the immediate needs while strengthening the capacity of Central American Governments for disaster risk mitigation and preparedness.

*Question.* Since taking office in 2007, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega has conducted widespread, systematic attacks against civilians, including murder, torture, and arbitrary detentions. Moreover, in recent weeks and months, the Ortega Government has taken a number of steps to undermine the possibility of free, fair and transparent elections in November 2021. If confirmed, how will you prioritize support for Nicaraguan civil society in light of the enactment of these troubling laws and how will you work with international partners to promote a free, fair and transparent electoral process in Nicaragua?

Answer. The United States is deeply concerned by a series of repressive laws that have been passed since October 2020 which aim to suffocate civil society in Nicaragua and quash freedom of expression. The regime has taken repressive action against several media outlets, and the administration has publicly denounced these actions. President Ortega's actions against civil society, the media, and the democratic opposition will only further distance him from the global community. If confirmed, I will actively work to defend Nicaragua's civil society groups, and will continue to work through diplomatic efforts, coordinated multilateral pressure, support for pro-democracy actors, and targeted economic measures, as appropriate, to advocate for free and fair presidential and legislative elections in Nicaragua. The administration will continue to work closely with partners in the OAS, EU, and elsewhere to urge the Nicaraguan Government to implement free and fair elections.

*Question.* During his campaign, President-elect Biden characterized Colombia as a "keystone" of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America, pledging that restoring the partnership our countries would be a priority. If confirmed, what would be your priorities for and approach to strengthening the U.S.-Colombia relationship?

Answer. I agree with President Biden that Colombia is a vital strategic partner. If confirmed, I will support efforts to advance the many priorities we share with Colombia, including promoting sustainable peace and reconciliation; combatting narcotics trafficking and the transnational criminal groups that threaten hemispheric security; coordinating an effective diplomatic and humanitarian response to the crisis in Venezuela; protecting human rights; addressing the climate crisis; assisting Colombia to strengthen its health system; expanding economic ties, and promoting inclusive economic growth that will benefit the citizens of both countries.

*Question.* Five years ago, Colombia signed a historic peace accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). However, there have been delays in implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Venezuela crisis, and the eco-



conomic impacts of both, as well as continued security challenges. How will you support Colombia as it implements the accord amidst these many growing challenges?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support the efforts of the Colombian Government and people as they continue to work towards a just and lasting peace and a more prosperous future. I believe that successful implementation of the 2016 peace accord is vital to sustainable progress on a broad range of priorities, including security, stability, counternarcotics, human rights, justice, and economic development. I will ensure that the United States continues to support the implementation of the accord through diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance programming. Our priorities include assisting Colombia to extend the benefits of the accord to vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas.

*Question.* In recent weeks, Colombia has confronted nationwide protests. While the majority of the protests have been peaceful, there have been incidents of violent protests, vandalism, and blockades—which have had a negative impact on the broader population. There also have been acts of violence and excessive use of force committed by Colombian security forces. Additionally, there have been incidents of citizens taking up arms and firing on protesters. What is your assessment of the protests, the acts of excessive force committed by security forces, and the attacks by armed citizens? How can the United States best support Colombia during this difficult period?

*Answer.* Colombia is a long-time and close partner. I am saddened by the loss of life during protests in Colombia this May. Citizens in democratic countries have the unquestionable right to protest peacefully. Violence and vandalism is not acceptable; nor are acts of vigilantism. If confirmed, I will encourage the Colombian Government to continue investigating all allegations of police misconduct and address any violations of human rights. I will also support the efforts of the Colombian Government and people as they continue to engage in dialogue to resolve the current situation and work together toward a more prosperous and peaceful future, particularly through continued implementation of the 2016 peace accord.

*Question.* Over the past four years, the U.S.-Ecuador relationship has improved significantly. After a decade of tensions, both countries have advanced multiple security, development, and economic agreements. What is your assessment of the U.S.-Ecuador relationship and if confirmed, what steps will you take to support the U.S.-Ecuador partnership?

*Answer.* Over the last few years, the United States and Ecuador have improved relations and built a cooperative bilateral relationship based on shared values related to democracy, sustainable development and prosperity, transparency, security, and the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime, and corruption. Ecuador is a steadfast regional partner. The United States seized this opening to increase bilateral cooperation across the board.

If confirmed, I will continue to pursue increased cooperation with the Ecuadorian Government in areas of mutual benefit for both our countries. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. interagency to ensure we are exploring all areas of cooperation with Ecuador and seeing where the U.S. can strategically provide assistance. The United States will continue supporting Ecuador's efforts to implement much-needed economic reforms to strengthen the economy, balance public finances, and revive growth in Ecuador, which is imperative given the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States is proud to stand with the Ecuadorian people as they continue on the path to sustainable prosperity.

*Question.* The Bolsonaro Government in Brazil has been highly criticized for its role in deforestation and forest destruction. While annual deforestation has increased over the past 11 years, the spike seen in 2019 is, according to many experts, was a direct result of the Government's actions. President-elect Biden has been outspoken about the need for a better approach to deforestation in the Amazon. If confirmed, do you commit to prioritizing environmental issues as a core agenda item for our bilateral relationship with Brazil and how will you approach the issue of Amazon deforestation?

*Answer.* Addressing deforestation is key to achieving Brazil's climate and development goals. If confirmed, I look forward to prioritizing efforts to combat the climate crisis and other environmental issues. We want to work with the Brazilian Government, Indigenous and Quilombo communities, and civil society to build economic value for Brazilians through forest management and protection rather than deforestation and to explore ways to increase investment into forests, combat conservation crimes, improve land titling, and create sustainable value chains to conserve biodiversity.

*Question.* As the crisis in Venezuela poses continued risks for U.S. national security and regional stability, what priority will you place on strengthening coordination with our closest partners to improve the effectiveness of our sanctions, humanitarian aid, and diplomacy?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that the State Department continues to prioritize strengthening coordination with our closest partners to improve the effectiveness of our sanctions, humanitarian aid, and diplomacy. The United States needs to work with partners and allies to build multilateral pressure on the illegitimate Maduro regime, promote accountability for regime officials' and their enablers' criminal activities, implement appropriate sanctions against those who undermine democracy or abuse human rights, and provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

*Question.* Given the Maduro regime's fraudulent legislative elections in December 2020 and the seating of a new, illegitimate National Assembly, what diplomatic efforts will you pursue to support Interim President Juan Guaidó and Venezuela's democratic opposition, as well as their ability to address the suffering of the Venezuelan people and counter Maduro's dictatorship?

*Question.* If confirmed, I will remain committed to working with our Venezuelan and international partners to foster an environment where all Venezuelans can chart a peaceful course out of the current crisis, with full respect for the freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and an end to attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, and political opposition actors.

I will work with partners and allies to increase multilateral pressure on the illegitimate Maduro regime, promote accountability, including through the use of appropriate sanctions, of regime officials and their enablers for their criminal activities, undermining democracy, or abuse of human rights. If confirmed, I will also prioritize providing humanitarian aid to ease the suffering of people affected by the Venezuelan regional crisis.

*Question.* What is your assessment of efforts by our geopolitical competitors and adversaries—Russia, China, and Cuba—to prop up the Maduro regime in Venezuela?

*Answer.* I understand Russian support for the Maduro regime includes military advisors and proxies, disinformation mechanisms, political influence on the world stage, and financial backing. PRC companies such as ZTE support the Maduro regime by providing technology to surveil Venezuelans and reward regime supporters while punishing critics. Cuban military and intelligence advisors actively support Maduro through the provision of security forces, intelligence officers, and providing direction to regime actors. Collectively, these efforts provide substantial and worrisome support to the Maduro regime, which I will work to counter, if confirmed.

*Question.* China's presence in Latin America has grown over the past four years amidst a combination of U.S. neglect and aggression towards the region, as well as increased Chinese economic, diplomatic, and military engagement. How will you improve cooperation with our hemispheric partners, so as to reassert our leadership, deepen our ties with partner governments, and improve our competitiveness in the region?

*Answer.* The People's Republic of China (PRC) represents a serious challenge to U.S. interests in the region, with its growing security ties and infrastructure investments. If confirmed, I will lead our team to meet this challenge by advancing our positive agenda for the hemisphere. We will build on our shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We will welcome our allies and partners' expertise and resources to support the region's COVID-19 response, entrepreneurship, and sustainable infrastructure. We will support high-standard investment in infrastructure and transparent economic development that creates jobs essential for regional pandemic recovery. If confirmed, I will work to broaden our diplomatic presence, promote increased educational and cultural exchanges, and help our partners face rule of law challenges.

*Question.* As the Government of China has expanded its presence in Latin America, aspects of its engagement have been characterized by predatory foreign investment, unsustainable loans to the region, or even through aggressive violations of international boundaries as we saw in the case of large Chinese illegal fishing off of the coast of the Galapagos Islands. What is your assessment of these aspects of China's engagement in Latin America and as Assistant Secretary of State what tools will you utilize to strengthen U.S. engagement and competitiveness in the region?

Answer. The hemisphere faces longstanding challenges of economic inequality, corruption, and weak democratic institutions, all of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and make the region more vulnerable to aggressive and coercive practices, including by the People's Republic of China (PRC).

If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to work with partners and share resources and expertise to support COVID-19 response, entrepreneurship, and economic development that creates jobs essential for regional pandemic recovery. With likeminded partners and allies, I will continue efforts to offer higher-standard, transparently governed infrastructure alternatives and push back on PRC economic pressure. I will also continue to raise concerns and distinguish ourselves from PRC infrastructure projects to advocate for the highest environmental, social, and labor standards to ensure investments are beneficial, sustainable in the long term, transparent and respect the rule of law. If confirmed, I will support the continued engagement of constructive actors who share our values, such as Taiwan.

I will also continue to work with the interagency and partners in our region to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which impacts local fisheries and national economies, including through developing a coordinated regional response to increase regional capacity to counter IUU fishing activities by PRC fleet and those of other flag states.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Has the Biden administration determined a specific timeline to complete its ongoing review of U.S. policy in Venezuela?

Answer. I understand the interagency is working diligently on the Venezuela policy review, which remains ongoing. There is widespread agreement on the need to restore democracy through free and fair elections, and to adopt a multilateral approach toward a negotiated solution to the crisis caused by the illegitimate Maduro regime. If confirmed, I will continue our work to encourage free and fair elections, urge the release of political prisoners, confront the escalating humanitarian crisis, and bring relief to the Venezuelan people, including the millions who have fled Venezuela.

*Question.* Do you commit to thoroughly and promptly brief the committee on the outcome of this policy review as soon as it is complete?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress as we seek to address the Venezuela crisis.

*Question.* In your view, how would you describe the nature of the Maduro regime?

Answer. The United States does not recognize Maduro's dictatorial regime as the Government of Venezuela. His repression, corruption, and mismanagement have created one of the worst humanitarian crises this hemisphere has seen. The Maduro regime enables criminal and terrorist networks and openly cooperates with many malign actors, which poses a serious threat to U.S. national security.

*Question.* What would you say are the pitfalls and potential incentives that could persuade such a regime to peacefully give up control of Venezuela?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support a negotiated solution to the Venezuelan crisis that leads to free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections and a return of the rule of law and democracy in Venezuela. The United States stands ready to support such a negotiation, led by the Venezuelans themselves. I am committed to work with our partners inside Venezuela and in the international community to pressure Maduro to commit to a serious process. Recognizing the difficulties of engaging with such a regime, a potential incentive would be the lifting of economic sanctions and acknowledgement of the legitimacy of a Government in Venezuela—which, as the administration has noted previously, can and will only occur if democracy is restored. A pitfall of engaging with the Maduro regime is that the regime continues to buy time while dividing the opposition and the international community, seeking only minimum concessions to obtain some domestic and international legitimacy without addressing the main issues that will lead to the restoration of democracy in Venezuela. I commit to remaining clear-eyed about these risks, if confirmed. I will seek to engage with Interim President Guaidó and other Venezuelans who wish to promote democracy and the international community to promote positive change and mitigate the risks laid out above.

*Question.* To what extent is the Maduro regime providing safe haven to transnational criminal organizations, including U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations?

*Answer.* The illegitimate Maduro regime allows and tolerates the use of its territory by terrorist organizations and non-state armed groups, including the National Liberation Army (ELN) and dissident members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, among others. The regime's practically nonexistent international drug control cooperation, usurpation of the judicial system and military and security services for its own illicit ends, public corruption, and cooperation with criminal elements have provided ideal conditions for transnational criminal organizations to thrive.

*Question.* To what extent do senior members of the Maduro regime support and protect various transnational criminal groups operating within the borders of Venezuela?

*Answer.* I understand that, at times, regime officials have openly welcomed transnational criminal groups' presence in Venezuela. During the closing remarks of the 2019 Sao Paulo Forum in Caracas, Maduro stated that Iván Murquez and Jesús Santrich (former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) leaders who were at that time missing and widely presumed to have left the peace process and returned to terrorist activities) were both welcome in Venezuela. The regime leverages drug trafficking, illegal and illicit gold mining, and a variety of black-market financial transactions to enrich its leaders and evade sanctions, necessarily working with transnational criminal organizations. These operations could not take place without acquiescence or approval at the highest levels.

*Question.* In your view, what is the nature of the relationships between senior members of the Maduro regime and transnational criminal organizations?

*Answer.* I understand the regime is complicit with transnational criminal organizations, including dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Colombian-origin National Liberation Army (ELN), and Hizballah sympathizers. Maduro and his associates use criminal activities to help maintain their illegitimate hold on power. Profit-seeking networks between FARC dissidents, ELN, and other Venezuelan non-state armed groups facilitate the regime's public corruption and graft schemes, to include those involving senior members of the Maduro regime.

*Question.* In your view, what is the nature of the relationships between Venezuelan security forces and transnational criminal organizations?

*Answer.* Profit-seeking ties between dissident members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Colombian-origin National Liberation Army (ELN), and Venezuelan paramilitary groups facilitate the public corruption and graft schemes of the regime to include other members of the armed forces. According to the Department of Justice indictments of Maduro and 14 other regime officials unsealed in March 2020, some senior Venezuelan political, intelligence, and military officials have facilitated drug trafficking through the country since at least 1999. Venezuelan security services have also clashed with transnational criminal organizations, such as FARC dissident groups and the ELN. While Venezuelan security services do occasionally confront and even kill non-state armed group members, it is difficult to know if that reflects national strategy or local conflicts of interest on the part of regime commanders.

*Question.* Do actions by the Maduro regime related to transnational criminal activities undermine U.S. counter-narcotics cooperation with Colombia? Do actions related to transnational criminal activities undertaken by the Maduro regime undermine the 2016 Colombian agreement with the FARC?

*Answer.* The historically weak government presence at the border between Colombia and Venezuela has allowed terrorist groups to operate, particularly Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dissidents, the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other criminal networks involved in trafficking and smuggling. A number of FARC dissidents engage in terrorist and other criminal activities, particularly in border regions and areas previously controlled by the FARC. Colombian drug-trafficking organizations—including various dissident FARC factions, the ELN, and other criminal groups—orchestrate the shipment of illicit drugs through Venezuela.

*Question.* Is the National Electoral Council named on May 5, 2021, a credible step to advance a negotiated and peaceful solution to Venezuela's political, economic, and humanitarian crises?

**Answer.** The goal of the United States is a peaceful, stable, and democratic Venezuela. While the National Electoral Council (CNE) that was named was slightly less imbalanced than others in recent memory, it is no substitute for a comprehensive process leading to free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections and other guarantees, which are long overdue. The CNE in question was composed by an illegitimate body—a national assembly Maduro installed based on fraudulent elections on December 6, 2020. The real test is whether the CNE guarantees the right of Venezuelans to freely choose their representatives, not merely its composition. Given Maduro's track record, if confirmed, I will work assiduously with our international partners to continue to press for the fundamental changes needed, including lifting bans on political parties, the unconditional release of political prisoners, invitations to credible international electoral observers, a public electoral calendar, and the unhindered access and distribution of humanitarian aid.

*Question.* Can the humanitarian crisis affecting Venezuela be resolved under Maduro's watch?

**Answer.** Venezuelans are suffering from one of the worst economic and humanitarian crises outside of a war in modern history. Since 2017, more than 5.6 million Venezuelans have been forced to flee their country. The illegitimate Maduro regime mismanages the economy, plunders public coffers, and impedes access to critical humanitarian assistance, including lifesaving food and nutrition aid. If confirmed, I will work to open more possibilities for humanitarian workers, organizations, and assistance to reach the Venezuelan people in Venezuela and beyond. Since 2017, the United States has provided more than \$1.2 billion in humanitarian, economic, development, and health assistance to help Venezuelans, including more than \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance, both inside Venezuela and throughout the region.

*Question.* Has the Biden administration determined a specific timeline for completion of its ongoing review of U.S. policy in Cuba?

**Answer.** I understand the administration has committed to carefully reviewing U.S.-Cuba policy, to ensure it advances the goals the administration is trying to achieve in empowering the Cuban people to determine their future. I understand there is no set timeline for the review, and the administration is eager to consider views from a variety of stakeholders from various sectors and viewpoints. If confirmed, I will support the Department's review with an eye toward assessing its impact on the political and economic wellbeing of the Cuban people as well as the promotion of democracy and human rights, and I look forward to consulting with Congress regularly on this issue.

*Question.* Should Cuba be removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism (SST) while they continue to provide safe harbor to violent U.S. fugitives?

**Answer.** I understand the administration has committed to carefully reviewing decisions made in the prior administration, including the decision to designate Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the administration's review of Cuba policy and consulting regularly with Congress. Our priority in Cuba, as the rest of the Hemisphere, needs to be democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Countries should not be grandfathered because they have failed to respect those tenets.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support Cuba's removal from the SST list without verifiable assurances that it would cease to foster a permissive environment for international terrorists?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I will carefully and thoroughly review all material related to the decision to designate Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, including the underlying rationale. I look forward to supporting the administration's review of Cuba policy, if confirmed.

*Question.* The United States has extradition treaties with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. These treaties cover crimes that are often committed in relation to human trafficking activities feeding the illegal migration crisis at our southern border. If confirmed, do you commit to consider and report to the committee ways in which the U.S. could better leverage existing bilateral extradition treaties with the countries in Northern Central America to combat illegal migration from the region?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I plan to evaluate our extradition treaties with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. These treaties can be powerful tools for combatting crime, including human trafficking and migrant smuggling. I will consider all available tools at the Department's disposal to help address the root causes of irregular

migration in and from Central America, including corruption and impunity, and I will continue to consult closely with Congress on these issues.

*Question.* The United States has leveraged sanctions and diplomatic efforts, but what other actions do you think are needed to significantly ramp up pressure ahead of the November general elections in Nicaragua?

*Answer.* I believe we need to continue to work through diplomatic efforts, coordinated multilateral pressure, support for democratic actors, and targeted economic measures, as appropriate, to advocate for free and fair presidential and legislative elections in Nicaragua. The United States will continue working closely with our partners in the OAS, EU, and others to urge the Nicaraguan Government to implement free and fair elections. If the Ortega regime fails to take meaningful reforms by the May OAS deadline, if confirmed, I will work with our partners to use the diplomatic and economic tools at our disposal, and will continue to coordinate on targeted measures with Canada, the EU, and the United Kingdom. The United States will keep using our voice, vote, and influence so that international financial institution lending does not support non-democratic actors in Nicaragua. It is important that the United States and our allies clearly state that we will give credibility to and work with the winner of a free and fair election, but it will be extremely difficult to work constructively with a government emerging from a fraudulent election.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you recommend reviewing Nicaragua's continued participation in—and access to—the full benefits afforded under the Dominican Republic-Central America FTA (CAFTA-DR) should the November elections fail to meet international standards?

*Answer.* CAFTA-DR has improved the lives of the people of Nicaragua and the United States. In order to continue to build on that partnership and expand our economic partnership, the U.S. should make clear that Nicaraguans would benefit from good governance, transparency, and the rule of law. Given the deterioration of those democratic principles in Nicaragua, we are already ensuring that trade capacity building and technical assistance, including joint efforts on customs and border management, labor, environment, and agriculture, are not directed toward the Nicaraguan Government. If the November elections are not free and fair, the U.S. would continue to review the Nicaraguan Government's participation in these trade-related activities, with a view toward promoting good governance and transparency in the region.

*Question.* According to the 2019 State Department Report on Human Rights in Nicaragua, "there were numerous reports that the Government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings" in response to the April 2018 pro-democracy protests, where the Government's violent crackdown left at least 325 people dead; over 2,000 injured; hundreds illegally detained; tortured, and disappeared; and more than 80,000 exiled in neighboring countries. An Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) team concluded in July 2018 that the Nicaraguan security forces' actions could be considered crimes against humanity. The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights also describes Nicaragua as suffering from a "climate of widespread terror." If confirmed, what specific actions would you support to hold members of the Ortega-Murillo regime accountable for serious human rights abuses and crimes against humanity?

*Answer.* The administration is committed to promoting accountability for Ortega and his collaborators who undermine democracy or violate human rights, and will continue to call out abuses when they occur. The United States was a co-sponsor, along with 51 countries, of the March 2021 U.N. Human Rights Council resolution which called for justice and accountability in Nicaragua. If confirmed, I will intensify our efforts to promote and protect freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and I will urge the Ortega regime to fully and unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained persons. The United States will continue to use the economic and diplomatic tools at our disposal, including targeted sanctions and bilateral and multilateral engagement, to support Nicaraguans' calls for human rights, democracy, and justice.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to work with my office to clear the backlog of extraditions from Mexico to the United States?

*Answer.* U.S.-Mexico security cooperation remains a top national security priority. It is critical that the United States and Mexico work together to dismantle transnational criminal organizations and their operations, reduce impunity and corruption, and strengthen the rule of law in Mexico. If confirmed, I commit to working with you and other members of the U.S. Congress, my U.S. interagency colleagues,

and Mexican Government officials to ensure we are working closely together to move extradition requests as quickly and effectively as possible.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

*Question.* How can the State Department and interagency partners encourage Northern Triangle governments to promote a culture of tax compliance among their citizens and businesses? Will you commit to ensure that the State Department works with these governments to fulfill the legal and financial obligations necessary to foster an attractive investment environment and stimulate economic growth, including the timely refund of excess taxes paid by U.S. companies?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners to provide technical assistance to host governments as they pursue more efficient, transparent, fair governance, including support for e-government solutions. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the Department works with governments to foster a more attractive business environment as an important component of our efforts to address the root causes of migration.

*Question.* How can we work with Central American governments to improve the operating environment for business, including U.S. companies? What steps will you take to promote the speedy and fair resolution of commercial disputes, especially in Honduras?

*Answer.* I share your commitment to support U.S. investor and property interests in Central America. The Department urges foreign governments, including at the highest levels when appropriate, to resolve outstanding commercial disputes. The Department generally takes no position on the merits of any specific claim or dispute but advocates for a fair, transparent, and expeditious resolution. The Department will continue to assist in resolution of outstanding U.S. citizen claims as appropriate.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* What is your view of the state of democracy in Latin America?

*Answer.* Our hemisphere is overwhelmingly committed to democracy, but there are troubling signs of backsliding in the region that require sustained and serious attention. September 11 will mark the 20th anniversary of the 2001 Inter-American Democratic Charter, which reflects the commitment of OAS member states to promote and defend democracy in the region. Through public diplomacy, increased engagement by civil society, and coordination with like-minded partners, the United States is promoting accountability for the actions of the Maduro regime and Cuba that undermine democracy and human rights; using diplomatic and economic measures and working multilaterally with partners to urge Nicaragua to hold free and fair presidential and legislative elections in November; and holding the government of Haiti to its commitment to hold free and fair legislative and presidential elections in 2021 to put an end to Haiti's prolonged rule by decree and facilitate a peaceful transfer of power to a newly elected president in February 2022.

The weakening of democratic institutions in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, is troubling. If confirmed, I will join the administration's commitment to supporting the rule of law and democracy in these countries, including through the use of Congressionally mandated corrupt actors lists to designate and sanction those responsible for the degrading of democracy in Central America. If confirmed, I will intensify efforts to work with allies and partners to further strengthen democratic institutions and support democracy throughout the region.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to bolster our democratic partners in the region?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work toward our strategic goal of a more inclusive, secure, prosperous, and democratic hemisphere aligned with U.S. values and interests. I will lead our team to support independent civil society throughout the region, and will encourage governments to support and promote press freedom and the safety of journalists and to counter those who may seek to undermine democracy and security. We will seek to work with allies, partners, and multilateral institutions to

promote a shared vision to respect human rights and fight corruption and impunity, such as we do with our support of the Citizen Corruption Observatory. This initiative stemmed from the 2018 Summit of the Americas and builds the capacity of civil society to monitor governments' implementation of anticorruption efforts. In addition, we will work with USAID to enhance the region's anti-corruption efforts by bolstering the capacity of stakeholders to engage in advocacy, oversight, and monitoring.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to supporting ongoing U.S. programs which promote democracy and human rights in Cuba, such as through funding the office of Cuba Broadcasting?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that support for democracy and human rights is at the core of our efforts to empower the Cuban people to determine their own future. I will also ensure the U.S. continues its steadfast support and engagement with Cuban human rights defenders, activists, and civil society members to bolster their important work; promote human rights, fundamental freedoms, and democracy; and facilitate the Cuban people's uncensored access to information.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensure that the U.S. does not lift restrictions or sanctions on Cuba until conditions are met pursuant to U.S. law?

*Answer.* The administration has committed to carefully reviewing U.S.-Cuba policy, including how it implements relevant legislation and our posture regarding economic sanctions on Cuba, to ensure they advance the goals the administration is trying to achieve in empowering the Cuban people to determine their future. We will do so in adherence to U.S. law. If confirmed, I will support the Department's review of the policy with an eye toward assessing its impact on the political and economic wellbeing of the Cuban people and the promotion of democracy. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting regularly with Congress on this issue. Throughout my career, I have worked diligently to promote respect for the rule of law, human rights and democracy. Democracy and support for human rights will be at the core of our policy toward Cuba.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to prioritize Venezuela, and continue to work with regional allies, to hold the Maduro regime and his cronies accountable?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with international partners and regional allies to promote accountability for the Maduro regime by building multilateral pressure and implementing appropriate and coordinated sanctions against regime officials and their enablers who undermine democracy, abuse human rights, or engage in other corrupt or criminal activity. A secure, democratic, and prosperous Venezuela would mean a more secure, democratic, and prosperous region. In this fundamental aspect, Venezuela is a top priority for the region.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to supporting the legitimate government of Venezuela under President Juan Guaidó and working to unify the opposition to the Maduro regime?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my team and I will continue to support the efforts of the interim government led by Juan Guaidó to peacefully restore democracy and rule of law in Venezuela via free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections. We are encouraged by and will continue to support unity on the fundamental goal of free and fair elections, and the pursuit of the guarantees required to restore democracy and rule of law to the country.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you propose the United States do to support a free and fair elections?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would seek to work through diplomatic efforts, coordinated multilateral pressure, support for pro-democracy actors, and targeted economic measures, as appropriate, to advocate for free and fair presidential and legislative elections in Nicaragua. The United States will continue to work closely with partners in the OAS, EU, and others to urge the Nicaraguan government to implement free and fair elections. If the Ortega regime fails to take meaningful reforms by the May OAS deadline, we will work with our partners to use the diplomatic and economic tools at our disposal. We will continue efforts to coordinate on targeted measures with Canada, the EU, and the United Kingdom. We will continue to use our voice, vote, and influence so that international financial institution lending does not support non-democratic actors in Nicaragua. It is important that the United States and our allies clearly state that we will give credibility to and work with the winner of a free and fair election, but it will be extremely difficult to work constructively with a government emerging from a fraudulent election.



*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to prioritizing efforts to counter vaccine diplomacy by China in the region?

Answer. COVID-19 is the most pressing challenge to our collective health, well-being, and economic security in a century. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. commitment to collaborate with partners across the globe, including Taiwan, to end the pandemic and mitigate its severe public health and economic impacts. The Biden administration has already loaned AstraZeneca vaccines to Mexico and Canada. If confirmed, I will work to support a science-based approach that prioritizes an equitable distribution of vaccines to countries in our region.

President Biden announced the United States will donate at least 80 million vaccine doses to meet global needs by the end of June, far more than any other nation has donated, including the People's Republic of China or Russia. Importantly, our shots do not come with strings attached; the United States views vaccines as a tool to end the pandemic, not a means to achieve political outcomes.

The United States is also the largest donor to Gavi for the COVAX Facility, having contributed \$2 billion with plans to donate an additional \$2 billion by 2022. I understand all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have received one or more COVAX shipments, except for Cuba and Haiti who do not participate in COVAX. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure our close coordination with COVAX and other partners to ensure safe and effective vaccines are delivered in a way that is equitable and follows the science and public health data.

*Question.* What are your views on the need to prioritize the region for distribution of excess and surplus vaccines?

Answer. Vaccine distribution is a priority in the region. If confirmed, I will work within the administration to coordinate with our partners in the region to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the distribution of vaccines. The United States has loaned Canada and Mexico 1.5 million and 2.7 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines, respectively, and the administration is currently considering the best manner in which to implement President Biden's further commitment to donate at least 80 million surplus vaccines. If confirmed, I will work to prioritize the region and advocate that it has the tools necessary, including via both bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, to bring a quick end to the current pandemic and prepare for, detect, and respond to the next pandemic.

*Question.* How might the United States support Ecuador's efforts to diversify its economy and decouple from China?

Answer. The United States remains Ecuador's largest trading partner, with \$10.2 billion in total two-way trade in goods in 2020. In December of 2020, the United States and Ecuador finalized the negotiation of a Protocol on Trade Rules and Transparency, an agreement that is a positive step forward in our trade relationship.

The United States is committed to increasing investment in Ecuador through projects that support long-term sustainable growth and prosperity. This includes enabling private sector investment in climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, as well as investments in clean energy. The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) will also look to support investments in gender equality, financial inclusion, and recovery from COVID-19. The United States has provided funding and training to help the energy ministry and electric utility adopt new regulations to attract private investment in the electricity sector, as well as design and conduct Ecuador's first-ever competitive and transparent tenders for power sector projects, resulting in awards to qualified companies. The United States also is helping women with small businesses, through programs such as the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs and providing lines of credit to Ecuadoran banks to secure loans for small and medium enterprises. USAID in Ecuador is also working to pursue the most impactful projects investing in the most underserved communities. If confirmed, I will work with Ecuador to expand our partnership.

*Question.* What steps can the administration take to support other countries that would like to develop 5G networks without Huawei or other Chinese tech support?

Answer. The Biden administration is working throughout the region to communicate the risks associated with telecommunications equipment from untrusted, high-risk vendors and to support the growing number of governments and businesses concerned with safely capturing the benefits of 5G without jeopardizing national and economic security or personal privacy.

If confirmed, I would connect countries interested in developing secure 5G networks with trusted equipment and service providers, highlight available U.S. government financing tools, and underscore the potential for emerging technologies like

open radio access networks (open RAN) to increase diversity, innovation, and transparency in 5G supply chains.

*Question.* As Colombia is facing many challenges, including the influx of almost 2 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants, in addition to violence presented in the country. What U.S. assistance to Colombia do you think would be most effective to ensure Colombia can face these challenges while also respecting the civil rights of protesters?

*Answer.* Colombia is a vital strategic partner that shares our democratic values. I recognize the devastating impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the Colombian people and economy, as well as the fiscal challenges associated with its generous reception of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. If confirmed, I will ensure the United States continues to leverage diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance to help Colombia address urgent needs, including strengthening its health system, promoting inclusive economic growth to recover from the pandemic, facilitating an effective humanitarian response to the Venezuela crisis, and expanding security, state presence, and access to justice throughout the country, including continuing human rights training for security personnel.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to encourage the government of Haiti conducts upcoming presidential elections in a manner that is free and fair?

*Answer.* I believe the Haitian people deserve the opportunity to elect their leaders and restore Haiti's democratic institutions. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to hold the government of Haiti to its commitment to hold free and fair legislative and presidential elections in 2021, and to work with Haitian political, economic, and civil society stakeholders across the spectrum, as well as international partners, in support of elections this year.

I recognize that the legitimacy of Haiti's 2021 elections and the government's credibility with the Haitian population will depend on factors such as whether there is consensus on a political accord, the participation of credible political actors, widespread voter registration, and security and voter turnout on election day. The U.S. government is providing more than \$3 million to the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes Strengthening, which includes the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, and International Foundation for Electoral Systems. The Consortium's pre-elections activities include focusing on improving electoral administration, strengthening the competitiveness of political parties, educating voters on electoral processes, promoting transparent electoral processes, and ensuring inclusive voter participation in Haiti. The United States also provides advice, training, and equipment to build the Haitian National Police's capacity to provide security. U.S.-supported training and equipment for the police's public order unit will help them prevent and respond to potential violence at voting centers.

Observers from organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) provide a regional voice and can help ensure free and fair elections. If confirmed, I will seek support from multilateral organizations, such as the OAS, and would welcome other international observers.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

*Question.* What are the Biden administration's plans to address increasing COVID-19 concerns in Central and South America considering the growing number of illegal migrants who are currently crossing the border?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration is committed to rebuilding a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system while ensuring public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the weeks ahead, working with the world's democracies, if confirmed I will help coordinate a multilateral effort to end the pandemic. The United States will continue to review non-essential travel restrictions at land borders to help protect against cross-border transmission of COVID-19 and will consider easing restrictions when it is safe to do so. The administration is considering the best manner in which to implement President Biden's further commitment to donate at least 80 million surplus vaccines. The United States is also the largest donor to Gavi for the U.N. COVAX Facility, having already contributed \$2 billion with plans to donate an additional \$2 billion by 2022.

*Question.* Do you believe that the Biden administration should prioritize providing COVID-19 vaccines to countries in Central and South America given the proximity

to the United States and the growing number of illegal migrants who are currently crossing the border?

*Answer.* Vaccine distribution is a priority in the region, and if confirmed, I will work with the interagency, COVAX, and other partners to prioritize the equitable delivery of COVID-19 vaccines in a way that follows the science and public health data. The administration has loaned Canada and Mexico 1.5 million and 2.7 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines, respectively, and is currently considering the best manner in which to implement President Biden's further commitment to donate at least 80 million surplus vaccines. If confirmed, I will work to prioritize the region and advocate that it has the tools necessary, especially vaccines, including via both bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, to bring a quick end to the current pandemic and prepare for, detect, and respond to the next pandemic.

*Question.* What is the United States currently doing to counter China's growing influence in Central and South America and what can the United States do more?

*Answer.* The People's Republic of China (PRC) represents a serious challenge to U.S. interests in the region, with its growing security ties and infrastructure investments. If confirmed, I will lead our team to meet this challenge by advancing our positive agenda for the hemisphere. We will build on our shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We will welcome our allies and partners' expertise and resources to support the region's COVID-19 response, entrepreneurship, and sustainable infrastructure. We will support high-standard investment in infrastructure and transparent economic development that creates jobs essential for regional pandemic recovery. If confirmed, I will continue to work with our allies and partners in Central and South America to help the region address the pandemic and recover from the related economic crisis. We will work to ensure competitive and transparent investment environments that help level the playing field for U.S. and other trusted businesses, strengthen our security and law enforcement cooperation, and promote secure telecommunications networks. We will draw attention to and counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. We will support and expand Taiwan's bilateral relationships in Central and South America.

*Question.* Do you believe that Taiwan's ability to maintain formal diplomatic relations with countries in the Western hemisphere benefits U.S. strategic interests? Nine out of fifteen countries with formal diplomatic relations are in the Western hemisphere. As part of China's push to de-legitimize Taiwan, Beijing has used various tactics, including COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy, infrastructure assistance, elite capture, corrupt practices, to compel countries in the Western hemisphere to break diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

*Answer.* As a strong democracy, Taiwan is an essential partner in a region overwhelmingly committed to democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to support Taiwan's diplomatic and unofficial relationships across the Western Hemisphere region. Together with like-minded countries we can support good governance, transparent investments, and economic growth.

*Question.* What is the Biden's administration's plans to address the increasing COVID-19 concerns in Central and South America considering the high number of migrants that are crossing the border each day?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration remains committed to rebuilding a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system while ensuring public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the world's democracies to coordinate a multilateral effort to end the pandemic. The United States will continue to review non-essential travel restrictions at land borders to help protect against cross-border transmission of COVID-19 and will consider easing restrictions when it is safe to do so. The administration is considering the best manner in which to implement President Biden's further commitment to donate at least 80 million surplus vaccines. The United States is also the largest donor to Gavi for the U.N. COVAX Facility, having already contributed \$2 billion with plans to donate an additional \$2 billion by 2022.

*Question.* Do you agree that the Biden administration should prioritize COVID-19 vaccines to countries in Central and South America considering the proximity to the United States and the high number of migrants that are crossing the border?

*Answer.* I agree that the United States should continue to do more to help the world by taking a leading role in ending the pandemic globally and building a coordinated, multilateral effort around the world aimed at ending the pandemic. Our overarching aim is to get as many safe and effective vaccines to as many people as fast as possible. If confirmed, I will work with COVAX and other partners to

prioritize the equitable delivery of COVID-19 vaccines that follows the science and public health data.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. BRIAN A. NICHOLS BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

*Question.* The Caribbean region has abundant solar and wind resources, yet its electricity is overwhelmingly generated by fossil fuels. In 2012, Aruba set a target of 100 percent renewable energy by 2020. In 2019, 81 percent of its electricity still came from fossil fuels. Likewise, in 2011, Grenada established a goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2030. With diesel currently providing 98.5 percent of the island's electricity, it is not on track to meet its goal.

*Question.* The United States works with Caribbean partners to promote energy supply diversification, to develop cost-effective and resilient power systems, and to help create investment opportunities for U.S. and Caribbean firms.

The Department has identified diversification of energy supplies away from a single source of fuel and promotion of U.S. exports, particularly renewable energy, as two primary objectives in promoting Caribbean energy security.

If confirmed, I will redouble our commitment to these efforts. The Caribbean's high dependency on imported diesel for power generation and low reliability of electric service and frequent power outages have led to the highest average electricity prices in the Western Hemisphere.

*Question.* What are the barriers to renewable energy development in the Caribbean, and how will you work to address these barriers and expedite renewable energy development as Assistant Secretary of State of Western Hemisphere Affairs?

Answer. Barriers to renewable energy development in the Caribbean include limited economies of scale, inadequate policy and regulatory frameworks, and antiquated transmission and distribution infrastructure. Integrating clean power generation also requires significant investments in transmission infrastructure and technologies such as battery storage to accommodate variable generation.

Caribbean nations have nevertheless made progress in energy diversification and U.S. cooperation has worked to advance stronger, more resilient, and more efficient power systems.

*Question.* Would it make sense to help an initial island or two decarbonize as models for the region?

Answer. Several Caribbean islands, including Jamaica and Nevis, have engaged with the United States to develop renewable energy sources. These are indeed model projects.

Our whole of government effort promotes energy diversification and resilient energy systems through improved governance, increased access to financing, and donor coordination. If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners, multilateral organizations, and Caribbean nations to advance those efforts.

We address the barrier of high-cost financing for energy project development through a \$25 million guarantee agreement with National Commercial Bank of Jamaica to help provide loans for clean energy projects across the Caribbean and a \$10 million credit guaranty to catalyze \$20 million in loans for clean energy borrowers, focused on off-grid solar projects.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. MICHELE JEANNE SISON BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* President Biden's recent Presidential Memorandum on Advancing the Human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Persons Around the World calls on the State Department to build coalitions of like-minded nations in international organizations to fight against LGBTQI+ discrimination. What more could the International Organization Bureau do to advance that mandate?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to utilizing the diversity and talent within the IO Bureau to play a leadership role in promoting the human rights and social inclusion of LGBTQI+ persons abroad. IO leads an Interagency Working Group on leveraging multilateral tools to address LGBTQI+ issues and, if confirmed, I will en-

sure this group works to advance these issues across various multilateral fora, to include the United Nations, regional organizations, international development banks, and multi-stakeholder coalitions, such as the Equal Rights Coalition as well as the U.N. LGBTI Core Group. If confirmed, I will also work to strengthen existing multilateral mandates like the U.N. Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, and advance efforts to increase Global South support for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. If confirmed, I will also work to increase civil society engagement in the IO Bureau's efforts to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ individuals.

*Question.* Debates at the U.N., and the programmatic activities of U.N. agencies, often revolve around government repression that leads to refugee flows, terrorism, and civil conflict.? Some of the populations most directly impacted by that repression are minority populations—whether sexual, ethnic, gender or racial in character. How can the U.N. be more active and impactful in heading off the causes of this repression, and in condemning it when it occurs?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will encourage U.N. leadership to enhance its advocacy as well as U.N. monitoring and implementation efforts to address such repression. I will work closely with our U.N. partners to condemn violations of international law and continue the United States' strong support for the promotion and protection of human rights, including through access to justice, and humanitarian response and durable solutions for displaced persons. I will maintain strong U.S. engagement with and support for key U.N. mechanisms and bodies such as the Human Rights Council. I will encourage U.N. partners to take concrete measures to protect minority rights and deepen partnerships with stakeholders to address the root causes of repression.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. MICHELE JEANNE SISON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* The upcoming U.N. Security Council (UNSC) Syria Cross Border mandate renewal is of grave concern to me and my colleagues in Congress. Not only should this administration work to renew the one remaining crossing, Bab Al-Hawa, but it should actively work to build consensus in the Security Council to re-open two previously closed crossings, Bab Al-Salam and Yarubiyah.

- If confirmed, how would you engage with partners in the UNSC to ensure this mandate renewal passes?

*Answer.* Unhindered access to humanitarian assistance in Syria is an urgent priority for the United States, as it should be for all nations. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department continues its sustained high-level engagement with Security Council members and regional stakeholders, as well as with U.N. leadership, to include Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, to underscore the importance of the reauthorization and expansion of the U.N. cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you recommend that Secretary Blinken and even President Biden engage at the highest possible levels on this important issue?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I will recommend that senior Department and White House officials continue to engage with key stakeholders on this issue, as that engagement is already underway. President Biden encouraged Security Council action on Syria when he hosted Permanent Representatives from the U.N. Security Council in March during the U.S. presidency of the Security Council. Also in March, Secretary Blinken represented the United States in the Syria humanitarian briefing to the Security Council and made clear the importance of this issue to help relieve the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

*Question.* How will you, if confirmed, work to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars that fund U.N. humanitarian assistance are not being used to effectively subsidize the Assad regime, which blockades assistance to innocent Syrians through seizure of cross-line assistance attempts?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I intend to work closely with Department of State and USAID colleagues, U.N. stakeholders, and NGOs to ensure that aid intended for Syrians in need reaches its intended recipients and does not benefit the Assad regime. The United States remains the single largest humanitarian donor to the Syrian people. The United States further supports all methods of delivering humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people throughout the country, including both cross-

border and cross-line deliveries; however, cross-line deliveries from Damascus alone, even if executed properly and unhindered, do not have the capacity to fully address the needs of the Syrian people.

*Question.* The recent establishment of the office of “Multilateral Personnel and Strategy” within the bureau of International Organizations structure presents new avenues to address the growing malign influence across the U.N. system.

- How will you empower this office to address the systematic Chinese and/or Russia malign influence within the U.N.?

*Answer.* I believe the establishment of the new office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs will enable the United States to more strategically engage across the multilateral system to counter authoritarian countries’ efforts to undermine its institutions, values, and principles. The U.S. approach toward China and Russia at the U.N. will derive from a clear and compelling affirmative U.S. policy agenda centered on human rights, individual freedoms, transparency, and good governance. When China and Russia seek to undermine the international rules-based order, the United States will take decisive action to oppose those efforts. If confirmed, I will work to empower the new office and look forward to working with Congress to ensure it is well-equipped to lead this work.

*Question.* What is your strategy for increasing American representation in the U.N. system including through the Junior Professional Officer program, appointments, and elections?

*Answer.* Successfully increasing the number of U.S. citizens employed at all levels of the U.N. system requires a multifaceted approach that will involve identifying and recruiting qualified candidates, providing information on the application or election process, and advocating for their selection where appropriate. If confirmed, I will institutionalize efforts to establish and expand these capabilities on behalf of qualified U.S. candidates, and to consult closely with Congress to ensure that these efforts are sufficiently resourced. I will also work with the interagency and our allies and partners to support the election of qualified, independent U.S. citizens and other likeminded candidates for key leadership roles in the U.N. system.

*Question.* Do you believe that a designated U.N. Integrity Coordinator should be appointment and empowered to work across the Department to lead this effort?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring that the IO Bureau has the resources and staffing it needs to coordinate across the Department and with our partners and allies to advance an affirmative agenda and counter efforts by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and other countries to undermine the values at the foundation of the U.N. and multilateral system. That includes working with all relevant players, and in consultation with Congress. Addressing the challenges posed by these countries requires strong U.S. leadership to defend the foundational principles, values, and rules of the international system, and to support qualified and independent candidates for key leadership roles. I understand that IO appreciates the support that Congress has provided to date on strengthening these efforts, and has already begun to adapt its structure to prioritize this work.

*Question.* Please detail your strategy for engaging with the International Criminal Court, including with relevant bureaus like Global Criminal Justice, regarding their ongoing investigations into U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Israel.

*Answer.* I strongly agree with the administration’s objection to attempts by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to assert jurisdiction over U.S. and Israeli personnel. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have been clear that the United States will continue to oppose attempts by the ICC to assert such jurisdiction. The United States and Israel are not States Parties to the Rome Statute, and the Palestinians do not qualify as a State.

*Question.* U.S. Taxpayers have sent billions to U.N. Relief and Works Agency since the 1950s when it was originally established. Given the administrations’ resumption of funds without securing much needed reform, please detail your engagement plans to ensure no more taxpayer dollars are sent to a bloated organization straying from its mandate.

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will insist that UNRWA adhere to the U.N. principles of neutrality, tolerance, anti-discrimination, and protection of human rights, as well as insist on strict UNRWA internal controls. The best way for the United States to influence UNRWA’s operations and ensure its provision of quality education, health services, and emergency humanitarian relief consistent with U.N. principles is to maintain our close working relationship with and assistance to UNRWA. This al-

lows the United States to direct funding to priority areas of focus, especially ensuring neutrality in teaching materials, staff activities, and operations, while strengthening transparency, accountability, and internal oversight. If confirmed, I commit to working with you to ensure the Agency has the capacity to fulfill its service delivery mandate from the U.N. General Assembly in line with U.N. principles, and to achieving meaningful and sustainable reforms to UNRWA's operations.

*Question.* Preparations for the next scales of assessment negotiation are underway. The Biden administration should make this a top priority by negotiating a 25% cap on peacekeeping assessments without compromising the existing fixed rate of 22% for the regular budget. No one nation should pay over 25% for either budget. What strategies will you use, if confirmed, to negotiate our assessed peacekeeping dues to 25%?

*Answer.* The next negotiations among member states on U.N. assessment rates will take place later in 2021, and I understand the administration is strategizing for engagement on this issue. If confirmed, I will work with Ambassador Thomas Greenfield and her team to advance U.S. interests in reaching agreement in the U.N. General Assembly to lower the U.S. assessment rates and to make sure other countries pay their fair share.

*Question.* Do you believe this administration should pay back arrears accrued before 2017?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to determine how best to meet our financial obligations, including addressing the substantial level of arrears that have accumulated over the past four years and the 25-percent cap on peacekeeping funding.

*Question.* U.S.-assessed and voluntary contributions to the U.N., as appropriated under the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO), Contributions for International Peacekeeping Operations (CIPA), and International Organizations and Program (IO&P) accounts, represent only a small fraction of total U.S. contributions to the U.N. system.

- If confirmed, will you assist in compiling and sharing with Congress a comprehensive report on total U.S. contributions, from all sources, to the U.N. and its specialized agencies and programs?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will lead the efforts of the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs to meet its statutory responsibility to publish annual reports to Congress on all U.S. Government contributions to international organizations.

*Question.* Will you ensure that other donors remain apprised of the full depth and breadth of U.S. contributions from all sources?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that the annual reports on contributions created by the Bureau of International Organization Affairs are published on the Department of State's public website, thereby ensuring that they are available to other donors and the public generally.

*Question.* Whereas assessed contributions are determined on a scale and provide no discretion to nations, voluntary contributions are provided to advance specific U.S. goals and objectives. Moreover, voluntarily funded agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), must compete for resources and are subject to rigorous transparency and accountability measures. If confirmed, will you seek to ensure that the Secretary General adopts a rigorous performance matrix, transparency requirements, and accountability measures that apply across the U.N. system, including to agencies and programs funded through assessed contributions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to achieve a coordinated, government-wide effort to assess the performance of, and promote transparency and accountability at, international organizations in the U.N. system, including those funded through assessed contributions.

*Question.* Last Congress, I introduced the Multilateral Aid Review Act to assess the value of U.S. taxpayer investments in multilateral entities, including the U.N. and its affiliated agencies. If confirmed, would you support a comprehensive review of U.S. investments in multilateral organizations?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this issue closely and working with Congress to ensure effective oversight of the U.N. and its affiliated agencies. I am committed to ensuring prudent management of U.S. taxpayer investments in

multilateral entities, including a constant focus on results, accountability, and the elimination of waste, fraud, and mismanagement.

*Question.* What is your view of the relationship between the United States and the United Nations (U.N.)?

*Answer.* I agree with the view of President Biden and Secretary Blinken that many of the biggest threats we face are transnational in nature and must be addressed collectively, including through international organizations. Since the U.N.'s founding 75 years ago, the United States has been critical to the U.N.'s success, and the United Nations, in turn, has been central to U.S. efforts to secure international peace and security. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with Congress to ensure the U.S. relationship with the United Nations remains constructive, continues to serve America's national security interests, and promotes our core U.S. values.

*Question.* What are your thoughts regarding the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC)?

*Answer.* The U.N. Human Rights Council plays an important role in promoting and protecting human rights, humanitarian access, and fundamental freedoms globally, but has serious flaws as well. I am committed to seeking HRC reforms, particularly regarding the Council's disproportionate focus on Israel, and to its membership. When the United States plays an active and constructive role on the Council, we can better advocate to protect Israel from unfair bias on the Council. Recently, our engagement has helped lead to a reduction in the number of resolutions targeting Israel. Our engagement also helps us in our efforts to keep some of the countries with the worst human rights records off the Council, and to encourage countries with better records to run.

- If confirmed, I will ensure the United States continues to prioritize needed reforms as part of our re-engagement with the Council.

*Question.* Now that the Biden administration has stated its intent to run for reelection to the HRC, what reforms will the Biden administration seek?

*Answer.* The United States is committed to seeking reforms of the U.N. Human Rights Council, particularly with respect to the Council's disproportionate focus on Israel and its problematic membership. When we have had a seat at the table, we have been able to advocate on Israel's behalf, and we have seen changes like a reduction in the number of resolutions targeting Israel. We have also seen that when the United States plays an active and constructive role on the Council, we have been able to engage with our allies and partners to keep off some of the countries with the worst human rights records and to encourage countries with better records to run for seats. If confirmed, I will ensure the United States prioritizes these specific reforms.

*Question.* Does the Biden administration believe the HRC devotes a disproportionate amount of attention to criticizing Israel while ignoring more pressing human rights crises?

*Answer.* Yes. The United States remains concerned about the disproportionate focus by the U.N. Human Rights Council on Israel, including Agenda Item 7. If confirmed, I will oppose efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations, including at the Human Rights Council. It is critical that the U.S. show up and engage with the Council directly. U.S. engagement at the Council can be a force for positive change and for holding countries with the worst human rights records to account.

*Question.* Understanding that the HRC has been "broken," in large part, by allowing human rights abusers to obtain seats on the Council, do you believe that conditioning U.S. participation on reform is beneficial?

*Answer.* I am committed to seeking reforms of the Human Rights Council, particularly with respect to the Council's membership and its disproportionate focus on Israel. We have seen that when the United States plays an active and constructive role on the Council, we can engage with our allies and partners to keep some of the countries with the worst human rights records off the Council and to encourage countries with better records to run for seats. We can also advocate on Israel's behalf. With U.S. engagement, we have seen changes such as a reduction in the number of resolutions targeting Israel. If confirmed, I will ensure the United States continues to prioritize needed reforms as part of our re-engagement with the Human Rights Council.



*Question.* There have been efforts to have the United States rejoin the World Tourism Organization. If confirmed, would you support the re-entry of the United States to the World Tourism Organization? What benefits would the United States receive by re-joining this organization?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure careful consideration and review before any efforts are made to rejoin the World Tourism Organization.

*Question.* What are your views on the need for management reform at the U.N.?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I pledge to look hard at U.N. and international organization management and budgeting practices, and at how agencies implement their ethics rules, including whistleblower protections.

*Question.* How will you work to address barriers to advancing U.N. management reforms, especially those created by the different priorities among member states?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to harness allies and likeminded member states who strongly support U.N. management reform to overcome any barriers that stand in the way of advancing reforms. It must be in the interests of all members to make implementation of reforms an urgent priority to make the United Nations the effective, efficient, and responsive organization it needs to be in the 21st century.

*Question.* How will you measure success in implementing management reforms at the U.N.?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my metric of success will be to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are well-spent, and that our multilateral policies and programs improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable citizens, contribute to international peace and security, and serve the American people.

*Question.* What policies does the U.N. need to implement to maintain fiscal responsibility and accountability within the U.N. system?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to ensure that international organizations within the U.N. system are accountable and responsible for the U.S. taxpayer resources they receive. This includes continuing the longstanding U.S. policy of promoting budget discipline, as well as continuing efforts to ensure that other countries pay their fair share.

*Question.* While the U.N. has taken steps to improve its efficiency, operational effectiveness, and accountability, the continuing need for reform is obvious to most observers, including strong supporters of the institution. The U.N. Secretary-General has committed to an agenda of reform. The push for reform by the United States is one of the main drivers behind the reform movement's progress to date.

- In your opinion, what are the top three reforms that the U.N. could undertake over the next two years that will have the greatest impact?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to ensure international organizations in the U.N. system adhere to the best management and oversight practices, including in the areas of protecting whistleblowers, addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, promoting zero tolerance for corruption, and ensuring financial and managerial transparency. This means greater transparency not only in budgeting practices, but also in U.N. procurement practices.

The United States expects to see tangible results from management reforms, including improved program delivery and greater accountability. Delegating more authority to U.N. teams in the field, closer to the point of mandate implementation, is also a key and necessary reform.

*Question.* The United States is the largest donor to the World Food Programme, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, and other U.N. agencies. Will you continue this pattern of voluntary donations to address some of the world's most pressing issues?

*Answer.* I am fully committed to upholding the Biden-Harris administration's promise to restore U.S. leadership and support for U.N. agencies, and to advance U.S. priorities in multilateral fora and at the United Nations. Voluntary contributions are an effective tool of U.S. leadership that allow us to ensure organizations are accountable, transparent, and responsive to humanitarian needs. The United States has long been the largest global contributor of humanitarian assistance and has increased its contributions due to the devastating impacts of COVID-19. Of course, we owe it to U.S. taxpayers and to the beneficiaries whose lives depend on U.N. programs to insist on continued reforms aimed at greater U.N. effectiveness and efficiency.

*Question.* How do you plan to monitor the activities of the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) and ensure that it is not complicit in China's campaign of coercive abortion and sterilization of Uyghur women?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue our government's due diligence through our membership on the U.N. Population Fund's (UNFPA) Executive Board, including through the Board's country program document review mechanism. UNFPA does not condone China's coercive population policies nor does it operate in Xinjiang.

*Question.* There have been credible allegations that the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights shared the names of Chinese dissidents who were attending U.N. Human Rights Council sessions with the Chinese Government.

- If confirmed, how will you investigate these allegations?

*Answer.* President Biden has said he would defend the rights of activists, political dissidents, and journalists around the world to speak their minds freely without fear of persecution and violence. If confirmed, I will ask relevant Department officials for a detailed understanding of this issue and will ensure that U.S. Government personnel prioritize this matter in engagements with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

*Question.* What reforms will you seek to ensure that this practice is never again used?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ask relevant Department officials for a detailed understanding of this issue and will ensure that U.S. Government personnel prioritize this matter in engagements with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

*Question.* The United States is the single largest financial contributor to U.N. peacekeeping activities. Congress authorizes and appropriates U.S. contributions, and it has an ongoing interest in ensuring such funding is used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

- Do you believe that any nation, including the United States, should pay more than 25 percent of the U.N. peacekeeping budget?

*Answer.* The next negotiations among member states on U.N. assessment rates will take place later in 2021, and I understand that the administration is currently strategizing on how to engage on this issue. If confirmed, my team and I will do everything we can to make sure that other countries pay their fair share. If confirmed, I commit to consulting with you and your staff on this important matter.

*Question.* What is your position on U.S. repayment of U.N. peacekeeping arrears? As memorialized in the 1999 Helms-Biden agreement, the Late Ambassador Holbrooke, then-President Clinton, then-Secretary General Kofi Anan, and then-Senator Biden all believed that the United States has no obligation to pay, and thus should not pay, the roughly \$500 million in "contested arrears" that were explicitly excluded from the \$1.6 billion Helms-Biden agreement. However, since then, the U.N. has insisted upon keeping on its books, and the Obama administration sought to pay over Congressional objections. Do you commit not to pay these "contested arrears" per Congressional intent as outlined in the Helms-Biden agreement?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to allow the United States to meet our financial obligations, including addressing the substantial level of arrears that have accumulated over the past four years and the 25-percent cap on peacekeeping funding.

*Question.* Are there any specific steps you believe the U.N. should take to reduce the overall size of the U.N. peacekeeping budget? If so, what are they?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing and assessing all existing peacekeeping missions to ensure they are still necessary for the promotion of international peace and security. I will also work to ensure they are as effective and efficient as possible, while providing they have the necessary resources to fully implement their mandates, including well-trained and well-equipped troops and police. I would press for structural changes, including aligning U.N. procurement with industry best practices, right-sizing mission support components, and reforming human resources to reduce staff costs. I would also press for the U.N. to implement financial reimbursement penalties for troop- and police-contributing countries for poor or under-performance, in line with the U.N. Security Council resolution 2436.

*Question.* Are there any specific U.N. peacekeeping missions you would support reducing or terminating in order to reduce U.N. peacekeeping costs? If so, what active and ongoing missions do you believe should be reduced or terminated?

Answer. U.N. peacekeeping operations are among the most effective mechanisms of burden-sharing in addressing the global challenges to international peace and security. We must ensure peacekeeping operations are using their resources as effectively and efficiently as possible to promote sustainable political solutions to conflict. Toward that end, I will, if confirmed, closely scrutinize missions, especially when their mandates come up for renewal by the U.N. Security Council.

*Question.* There have been numerous proposals to expand U.N. support for regional peacekeeping operations-particularly those deployed under the auspices of the African Union-ranging from providing limited logistical support to fully financing training, equipment, deployment, and sustainment costs through the use of assessed U.N. peacekeeping contributions. Whether regional missions would initially be subject to approval by the U.N. Security Council (like the AMISOM mission in Somalia was) is a topic of debate. However, using the U.N. as a financing mechanism for peacekeeping operations that do not fall under the command and control of the U.N.; lack adequate accountability measures; and place long-term political and financial obligations upon Member states absent Security Council oversight is a matter of serious concern. If confirmed, will you pledge to ensure that any peacekeeping mission funded by U.N. peacekeeping dollars is mandated and overseen by the Security Council?

Answer. The United States has long supported strengthening strategic AU-U.N. partnerships to better address collective peace and security threats on the continent. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure that any AU peace operation that receives U.N. financial support is mandated by and preserves the primacy of the U.N. Security Council and complies with applicable international human rights law and U.N. conduct and discipline standards.

*Question.* The United Nations maintains several particular bodies and departments that focus on the Palestinians. These include the Division on Palestinian Rights (DPR), the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), and the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL).

- Will you work to challenge the existence and funding of these departments?

Answer. If confirmed, I will oppose efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations.

*Question.* The United States lacks a veto over membership decisions in U.N.-specialized agencies that the Palestinians could target for membership. When the Palestinians obtain membership, the United States must cut funding to that organization as required under two laws enacted by a Democratic-led Congress in the early 1990's. U.S. Code Title 22, Section 287e note, states:

No funds authorized to be appropriated by this Act or any other Act shall be available for the United Nations or any specialized agency thereof which accords the Palestine Liberation Organization the same standing as member states." (Adopted as Public Law 101-246 in 1990.)

The United States shall not make any voluntary or assessed contribution: (1) to any affiliated organization of the United Nations which grants full membership as a state to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood, or (2) to the United Nations, if the United Nations grants full membership as a state in the United Nations to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood, during any period in which such membership is effective." (Adopted as Public Law 103-236 in 1994.)

The language in these provisions is clear and provides no discretion or waiver authority. Will you support their enforcement as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support compliance with U.S. laws.

*Question.* Over the past several years, the Palestinian Authority has received votes in various U.N. bodies to upgrade its status. Such attempts undermine the long-held belief that peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority can only come about as a direct result of direct negotiations.

- What is your plan to stop initiatives like this from even coming before U.N. entities, or the General Assembly, for a vote?

Answer. I believe that efforts by the Palestinians to join international entities are premature and counterproductive. There are no shortcuts to Palestinian statehood outside direct negotiations between the parties. If confirmed, I will continue to make

clear, both with the parties and with international partners, that the only realistic path forward to end this conflict is through direct negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace.

*Question.* How will you address future attempts by the Palestinian Authority to achieve statehood through the United Nations?

*Answer.* I believe that efforts by the Palestinians to join international entities are premature and counterproductive. There are no shortcuts to Palestinian statehood outside direct negotiations between the parties. If confirmed, I will continue to make clear, both with the parties and with international partners, that the only realistic path forward to end this conflict is through direct negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace.

*Question.* The United States has long maintained a policy of opposing many one-sided Security Council resolutions that, more often than not, criticize Israel but fail to address other issues such as Palestinian terrorism.

- Do you support the use of an American veto to block one-sided anti-Israel resolutions in the Security Council?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to uphold President Biden's strong commitment to Israel and its security. This includes opposing efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and other bodies.

Each decision to employ the veto is considered on the basis of U.S. policy interests and how they relate to the issue under consideration.

*Question.* What do you believe should be the standard employed in deciding whether to veto or not?

*Answer.* Each decision to employ the veto is considered on the basis of U.S. policy interests and how they relate to the issue under consideration.

*Question.* Do you believe that there is a disproportionate focus on Israel at the U.N.? How would you counter this at the U.N.?

*Answer.* Yes, and if confirmed I will continue the United States' opposition to efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and other bodies. If confirmed, I also look forward to working with our Israeli diplomatic colleagues to promote the election of Israel to U.N. leadership posts, inclusion in U.N. working groups, and support for qualified Israeli candidates for U.N. positions.

*Question.* In a report requested by the U.N. Human Rights Council, the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi said in September 2020 that there had been "little" in the way of "positive changes" since President Evariste Ndayishimiye "assumed office" in June 2020, and concerns remain about human rights abuses committed both domestically against Burundian citizens and through Burundi's engagements in the region.

- What are your views on the human rights situation in Burundi? Do you believe the United States is in a position to reset its relationship with Ndayishimiye's Government, given the seeming continuity in human rights abuses from the former Nkurunziza Government?

*Answer.* I am deeply concerned by ongoing serious human rights violations in Burundi, while recognizing some recent positive signs. The Government has committed to releasing over 4,000 prisoners and released some journalists jailed during the 2020 elections, convicted perpetrators of elections related crimes, started dialogue with previously banned local media, and engaged the international community. If confirmed, I will carefully assess the human rights situation in Burundi and seek to build on that progress.

*Question.* How would you evaluate the performance of Burundian troops in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)? How can the U.S. better monitor their human rights record in Somalia? Are there opportunities to build in stronger human rights reporting for AMISOM, including to better monitor the human rights record of Burundian troops in Somalia? How can the U.S. push for greater capabilities of AMISOM to monitor the human rights performance of Burundi and other peacekeeper contributing countries under mission? What can the U.N. do regarding the AMISOM Mission to decrease dependency on Burundian troops in Somalia?

*Answer.* I share your concerns about AMISOM's abilities to monitor the performance and conduct of contingents assigned to it. Somalia is a very challenging oper-

ating environment. The United States attempts to mitigate these challenges by drawing on multiple sources, including NGOs, media, U.N. agencies, intelligence reporting, and diplomatic contacts. We also regularly urge the AU to monitor contingents' performance and conduct and investigate and respond to reported abuse. If confirmed, I will work with the U.N., the Bureau of African Affairs, and AMISOM to continue to improve these efforts.

*Question.* The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon is one of the world's most neglected yet intensely brutal conflicts.

- How can the U.S. better push for the U.N. Security Council to hold regular formal briefings and discussions on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, adding it formally to its agenda? If so, how do you propose the U.S. engage member states that have worked to block previous efforts to prioritize and regularize the Anglophone crisis within the U.N. Security Council?

*Answer.* The United States engages U.N. Security Council member states regarding the need to resolve the Anglophone crisis and the severity of the humanitarian crisis in Cameroon. For example, we raise the Anglophone crisis during briefings by the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the U.N. Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) Francois Fall. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage UNOCA to engage the Government of Cameroon and ask other U.N. member states to play a constructive role to resolve the Anglophone crisis.

*Question.* Do you agree that the U.N. has a vital role in supporting inclusive internationally-mediated dialogue among the many actors in the Anglophone Crisis to find a lasting and sustainable solution to the crisis, addressing root causes and underlying grievances? If yes, what precisely should that role be, and how will you push for that within the U.N.?

*Answer.* Yes. The United States fully supports the U.N. Office in Central Africa (UNOCA)'s role in promoting inclusive political dialogue in Cameroon, which includes the resolution of the Anglophone crisis. The importance of this work was reinforced in the strategic review of UNOCA conducted in 2020. If confirmed, I will support UNOCA's role and priorities when its mandate expires on August 31, 2021. The United States also fully supports the Swiss-led mediation of the Anglophone crisis, which the U.N. also supports.

*Question.* The Cameroonian Government has consistently failed to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of atrocities committed against its civilians. It has proven itself unable to hold high-ranking government and military officials responsible for these crimes. How can the U.S. engage other like-minded countries in the U.N. to pursue accountability for atrocities committed in Cameroon, both by government and armed group actors?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the tools we have at the United Nations to press for a resolution to this conflict and to hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations and abuses. I will also seek opportunities to engage with like-minded countries that share a desire to bring this conflict to an end. If confirmed, I will also engage other U.N. member states on the importance of the rule of law and ending impunity in Cameroon and explore ways we can work together to move toward a resolution.

*Question.* How can the United States more effectively encourage France to use its significant leverage in Cameroon to encourage the government to engage in meaningful dialogue and end the Anglophone conflict?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the different tools we have to press for a resolution of this conflict, including through discussions with counterparts from France and the UK. The United States routinely raises the situation in Cameroon with French officials and will continue to pursue a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Anglophone regions.

*Question.* Russia's dominant presence in CAR is alarming on several fronts, not just as it relates to the Central African country's internal and regional security, but also vital U.S. national security interests. Will you commit to closely monitoring Russia's presence in CAR and corresponding activity at the U.N., particularly as it relates to internal and regional security arrangements and the arms embargo?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I will closely monitor Russia's presence in CAR and corresponding activity at the U.N., with a particular focus on internal and regional security arrangements and the arms embargo. Russia's close ties to the Touadera Government, involvement in CAR's security sector, and stake in its natural resources are extremely concerning. If confirmed, I will carefully review all the diplomatic tools available to respond appropriately to Russia's activities in CAR.

*Question.* How can the United States best protect its interests in CAR and the broader region while also ensuring that other members of the U.N. Security Council are prioritizing the MINUSCA mission over their own foreign military operations in the country?

*Answer.* The humanitarian situation and ongoing conflict in CAR is deeply concerning. So, too, are reports of anti-MINUSCA propaganda and allegations that foreign security actors are failing to deconflict their activities with MINUSCA, committing human rights abuses, and impeding humanitarian access. MINUSCA continues to provide crucial stabilization support, human rights monitoring, assistance to CAR's justice sector, and support for elections. If confirmed, I will engage with our partners in the region and in Europe, as well as in the U.N., to ensure that MINUSCA remains well-resourced and can fully carry out its mandate, especially the protection of civilians.

*Question.* How does the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) contribute to the peace and security of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)? How effective is MONUSCO's current mandate and what changes might you propose should you be confirmed? What should the U.S., our European allies, and the U.N. peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) be doing to support a peace process and end of the conflict in Eastern Congo?

*Answer.* MONUSCO serves U.S. national security interests by assisting the DRC Government in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts and supporting DRC's security forces to combat threats posed by armed groups and transnational criminal networks. The mission also uses its good offices to assist President Tshisekedi's efforts to end impunity for certain human rights violations and to advance security sector reform. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. engagement through our ambassador, the U.N., and regional and international partners to support efforts to stabilize the region. I will also press for the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) to implement reforms to improve performance and for MONUSCO's responsible and sustainable transition and drawdown.

*Question.* How can the U.S. better push for the U.N. Security Council to hold regular formal briefings and make statements about the ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises in Ethiopia, including but not limited to the conflict in the Tigray region? How should the US. engage member states that have worked to block previous efforts to prioritize and regularize discussion of Ethiopia by the U.N. Security Council?

*Answer.* Opposition from Russia, China, and other member states to formal meetings and public statements on the deeply troubling humanitarian and security situation in Ethiopia impedes the Security Council from speaking with one voice. If confirmed, I am committed to calling out those member states for their unwillingness to uphold the fundamental responsibility of the Security Council to address threats to international peace and security like the crisis in Ethiopia. I will also work closely with likeminded partners to raise the profile of Ethiopia in other fora and press for other U.N. bodies like the Human Rights Council to take up this important issue.

*Question.* There has been considerable discussion about modifying the mandate of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and AMISOM to better address the challenges faced in Somalia.

- In your view, how can the U.S. engage in future mandate renewal processes, including with the penholder (U.K.), to have frank discussions about what we hope to achieve through UNSOS/AMISOM and how to push the government of Somalia to make progress?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing AMISOM's mandate closely with the UK, the AU, and other key stakeholders to ensure that it advances an approach that is sustainable, holistic, and appropriately geared toward supporting stabilization, counterterrorism, and transitioning security responsibilities to more capable, professional, and accountable Somali security forces. While military operations remain critical, addressing the drivers of Somalia's persistent instability, and the evolving hybrid threat posed by al-Shabaab, will require the Somalis and the international community, including AMISOM and the U.N., to utilize a broader range of tools.

*Question.* U.N. Special Representative James Swan commented in November 2020, following Somalia's decision to forgo direct universal suffrage elections for a selection process similar to that of 2016, that "we urge Somali leaders to prepare consensually a roadmap with clear timelines and benchmarks to ensure one-person-

one-vote elections take place in 2024/25.” To what extent do you feel, in reviewing the mandate for AMISOM, that consideration should be given as to how the U.N. could play a bigger role in supporting and making preparations for universal suffrage elections in the future?

*Answer.* The U.N. plays a critical role in assisting Somalia with stabilization and democratic development reforms. Among the U.N. elements operating in Somalia, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) is mandated with advising and assisting Somalia on political reforms, and is best suited to lead U.N. efforts in preparing the country for universal suffrage in the future. If confirmed, when UNSOM’s mandate comes up for renewal in August 2021, I will work to ensure that support for democratic and electoral reforms, including supporting preparations for universal suffrage elections, remain at the core of UNSOM’s responsibilities.

*Question.* The United States voted with other members of the Security Council in December to end the mandate of the United Nations—African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), despite warnings that Sudan’s Government had not yet demonstrated its ability to protect civilians in Darfur. The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights notes “severe gaps in protection by State authorities, as well as a lack of accountability for violations.”

- What, in your view, should UNITAMS’ role be in helping to address these issues?

*Answer.* The United States is committed to supporting Sudanese efforts to address civilian protection concerns in Darfur and throughout the country. I believe UNITAMS can play an important role in supporting Sudan’s civilian-led transitional government as it works to address protection concerns, strengthen rule of law institutions, and build trust among the Sudanese people. If confirmed, I will push the Security Council to provide UNITAMS the resources and tools to support these important initiatives.

*Question.* What is your view of the request by Sudan’s transitional government to lift the U.N. arms embargo on Darfur? What changes if any should be made to the U.N. sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005)?

*Answer.* U.N. sanctions remain an important tool in the international community’s response to the situation in Darfur. With the adoption of resolution 2562, the U.N. Security Council has requested the Secretary-General to conduct a review of the situation in Darfur and to provide by July 31, 2021 a report containing recommendations for clear and well identified benchmarks that could serve in guiding the Security Council to review the measures on Darfur under the 1591 regime. If confirmed, I will carefully assess the appropriateness of adjustments to the U.N. Sudan sanctions regime.

*Question.* How does the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) contribute to the peace and security of Sudan and South Sudan? How effective is UNISFA’s current mandate and what changes might you propose should you be confirmed?

*Answer.* UNISFA has effectively prevented tensions over the status of Abyei or other border areas from escalating into conflict between Sudan and South Sudan. It has also played an important role in preventing and responding to conflict between local communities in the absence of local administration. However, both Sudan and South Sudan need to renew efforts to establish interim administrative and security bodies and restart talks on resolving Abyei’s political status. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues to ensure that UNISFA’s mandate remains appropriately focused, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians.

*Question.* One of the key lessons from the Brahimi Report was that if a peace operation is to be part of implementing a peace agreement, it should have a role in the process and a seat at the table—in South Sudan, though the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) does not. Should UNMISS’s political strategy be reexamined, and if so how, and how would you go about building support within the Council for a more robust role for the mission? Should UNMISS have a greater role in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and/or security sector reform (SSR)?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will monitor closely the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) with a view to making it as efficient and effective as possible to fulfill its mandate of protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian assistance, supporting implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement and supporting respect for human rights. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector

reform are essential building blocks for the peace process in South Sudan. If confirmed, I will evaluate the role of UNMISS in these areas.

*Question.* The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response recently released its final report, in which the authors evaluated the WHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and made recommendations to prevent future pandemics from occurring. Included were recommendations to reduce the WHO Director General's term to a single seven-year term and adopt merit-based recruitment standards for other leadership staff; refocus the WHO on its core capabilities (upholding norms, providing policy and technical guidance, collecting and sharing critical global health data, and coordinating—rather than implementing—emergency responses); strengthen the International Health Regulations, including by giving WHO the right to conduct assessments without advance approval by Member States; create a Heads of State-level Global Health Threats Council; and create a multilateral incentive fund to sustainably finance pandemic preparedness and response. Do you agree that the World Health Organization is in need of reform and, if so, what specific reforms should the United States seek to advance at the upcoming World Health Assembly?

*Answer.* Yes, the World Health Organization is in need of reform, and if confirmed I will support our efforts to make the WHO stronger, more independent and efficient. Proposed reforms will be informed by assessments of the COVID-19 response and past outbreaks, including the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response and the other two independent reviews of WHO and Member State performance. The United States is working with partners in bilateral and multilateral fora to improve WHO's functioning, transparency, and accountability. This includes a focus on core areas such as science, data collection, and evaluation and promotion of evidence-based approaches. Reform requires improved human resources and financial management practices. Reform proposals should also incorporate policies throughout the organization that are gender-sensitive and respect human rights as well as the social determinants of health. Member states also need to live up to their commitments as expressed within the International Health Regulations.

*Question.* Do you agree with the recommendations of the IPPPR? Which ones?

*Answer.* I understand that the State Department and other agencies are reviewing the IPPPR recommendations alongside those of other assessments. After so many lives lost, the global community and each country must take immediate, tangible actions to both end this pandemic and to prepare for the next by taking steps to improve preparedness and response capabilities, including by increasing sustainable financing, enhancing biosurveillance with clear "triggers" for action, and expanding pandemic-related manufacturing with rapid surge capacity. If confirmed, I will seek to strengthen the global health architecture to promote preparedness, transparency, accountability, innovation, and impact, so that the global community will be better prepared to successfully prevent the next outbreak from becoming a pandemic.

*Question.* If the U.S. is unwilling to leverage contributions, how will you ensure that far-reaching reforms are enacted?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will advance reforms at the WHO through advocacy, diplomacy, and dialogue, and will work with a broad coalition of like-minded member states to ensure that WHO reforms advance and apply lessons learned from the pandemic response. I would also seek to implement innovative approaches such as the non-binding U.S.-WHO Partnership Arrangement, a model pioneered by the United Kingdom, to include defined metrics and timelines for improvement. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with you and your staff on this important matter.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. MICHELE JEANNE SISON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* If confirmed, what will you advise the Biden administration do regarding UNRWA?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will advise that the administration continue to make clear to UNRWA that adhering to the U.N. principles of strict neutrality, tolerance, anti-discrimination and protection of human rights is non-negotiable. UNRWA's mandate is set by the U.N. General Assembly and is to provide essential services directly to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. U.S.



resumption of aid allows the Department to ensure UNRWA provides cost-efficient and effective services to its beneficiaries and that UNRWA upholds the highest level of transparency, accountability, tolerance, and neutrality. If confirmed, I would work with others in the Department to advise the administration on meaningful and sustainable reforms to UNRWA's operations, including strengthening UNRWA internal controls and the Advisory Committee's oversight of UNRWA management.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you continue U.S. efforts to push back against international organizations, like the U.N., as they single out and attack Israel?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue the United States' work in opposing efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and other bodies. If confirmed, I also look forward to working with our Israeli diplomatic colleagues, to promote the election of Israel to U.N. leadership posts, inclusion in U.N. working groups, and support for qualified Israeli candidates for U.N. positions.

*Question.* Iran was recently elected to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. Given Iran's treatment of women, this election damages the credibility of this institution. If confirmed, will you actively work to oppose Iranian membership in such international bodies?

*Answer.* I deeply share the concern that is the premise of your question, which is that some U.N. bodies include countries that do not live up to the objectives of the organization. In some cases, this is because the objectionable country runs on a clean regional slate which the majority of U.N. member states are unwilling to oppose.

For the CSW, the United States wants to see member state candidates who champion gender equality, oppose discrimination against women, promote women's empowerment, and further their well-being. In the case of this election, the U.S. called for a vote despite a clean regional slate due to the presence of countries on the slate that do not uphold these values. If confirmed, for each particular election, I will ensure we examine the entire list of candidates and determine who we should support and who we should oppose.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to direct U.S. representatives at international organizations to oppose growing Russian and Chinese influence at these institutions?

*Answer.* At the U.N., the People's Republic of China drives an authoritarian agenda that stands in opposition to the values of the United States and is inconsistent with the founding documents and principles of the U.N. itself, including on human rights, labor rights, transparency, and coercive economic practices. The PRC's efforts harm international organizations and their transparency, efficiency, values, and influence. If confirmed, I commit to work with U.S. representatives to international organizations to oppose the influence of the People's Republic of China, Russia, and others and to work with our partners and allies to lead on an affirmative agenda that strengthens the international rules-based order and its foundational values and principles.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. MICHELE JEANNE SISON BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* Do you agree that international organizations and multinational forums have become a key battleground in the strategic competition between the United States and China?

*Answer.* Yes, and strategic competition with the People's Republic of China is one of the central challenges of the 21st century. The United States is able to respond to this challenge from a position of strength when we are engaged and leading international organizations, not pulling back and ceding the terrain to China to write the rules and norms that animate international institutions. If confirmed, I will use our engagement in the U.N. system to push back against the influence of China, and any country that seeks to undermine the rules-based order. I will steadfastly oppose activities that undermine the values, principles, and rules of the U.N. and other international organizations, and I will promote U.S. values and interests alongside our allies and partners.

*Question.* The United States has repeatedly been boxed out by China's comprehensive strategy of whipping votes for leadership positions of specialized agencies: how

would you lead the IO Bureau to ensure that the United States is laying the groundwork years in advance of vacancies to increase American or allied representation of these agencies?

*Answer.* The integrity of the U.N. and other international organizations is vital to U.S. multilateral interests. If confirmed, I will ensure that the IO Bureau, including the new Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel, prioritize and implement a robust and timely strategy to identify opportunities across the U.N. system to increase the representation of qualified and independent American and likeminded candidates at all levels. I will also coordinate closely with our allies and partners to plan for and support the election of qualified, independent candidates who will uphold the U.N.'s foundational principles, values, and norms, including a focus on human rights and economic transparency.

*Question.* What lessons can be learned by the 2020 election for the Director General role at the World I.P. Organization—or, WIPO—and how the United States proactively helped win support for the Singaporean candidate, beating out a Chinese official?

*Answer.* The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) 2020 election was a powerful example of the strength of U.S. diplomacy and the importance of ensuring strong leadership in standard-setting bodies. Coordinating with partners and allies to rally support for qualified and independent candidates who promote transparency, accountability, and the rule of law is and will continue to be a recipe for success in future leadership elections within U.N./international bodies. We also need to emphasize that the PRC is driving an authoritarian agenda that stands in opposition to the values of the United States and the U.N.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. MICHELE JEANNE SISON BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

*Question.* What more should the United States do to ensure China does not achieve its objective of reshaping and dominating international institutions? PRC nationals now lead four of the United Nations' 15 specialized agencies and groups, and have added many Chinese nationals to the staff of these organizations. Some 30 United Nations agencies and institutions have signed memorandums in support of China's Belt and Road project.

*Answer.* I believe the United States must engage strategically to defend, strengthen, and revitalize the international order and its foundational values, rules, and principles, including through rebuilding and strengthening our alliances and partnerships. If confirmed, I will seek to improve the U.N.'s effectiveness and transparency, support qualified and independent candidates for key positions in U.N. agencies, advance strong reforms including whistleblower protections, and take targeted actions to oppose efforts by the PRC that undermine a rules-based international order. If confirmed, I commit to combatting PRC attempts to insert its domestic ideology and policy language into U.N. and multilateral policy documents. We must also work with the boards of U.N. organizations to increase oversight of the U.N.'s work in order to uphold the U.N.'s values rather than the promotion of a single country's flagship program.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you support standing up an office within the Bureau of International Organization to specifically address the threat of growing Chinese influence in global institutions?

*Answer.* Yes, I believe the establishment of the new office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs will enable the United States to more strategically engage across the multilateral system and uphold its foundational principles, values, and norms. Our approach toward the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the U.N. and other international organizations will derive from a clear and compelling affirmative U.S. policy agenda, and when the PRC seeks to undermine the international rules-based order, we will take action to oppose those efforts. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to consider other ways to effectively outcompete the PRC and advance U.S. multilateral priorities.

*Question.* Do you agree that China under the Chinese Communist Party is pursuing a systematic, decades-long campaign to achieve global preeminence and reshape the international order to the CCP's benefit?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) engages in conduct around the world that undermines the international system that has supported global peace and security, stability, prosperity, and human rights for more than 75 years. The PRC drives an authoritarian agenda that stands in opposition to the foundational values and principles of the U.N. and other international organizations. If confirmed, pushing back against the PRC's attempts to reshape the international system will be a top priority of mine. I will rally support with allies, partners, and other countries to oppose the PRC's efforts to undercut international institutions, values, and rules, and will ensure that the United States advances an affirmative agenda centered on human rights, individual freedoms, transparency, and good governance.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to pushing the World Health Organization to conduct a transparent and thorough investigation regarding the origin of COVID-19 as a critical step to preventing the next pandemic?

Answer. Yes. If I am confirmed, I will press the WHO to conduct a thorough second phase of the COVID-19 study in China. The world needs to understand how this pandemic originated so that we can better prepare our governments, our people and our public health institutions for future health crises. That is why we are continuing to work with the WHO and with other Member States to support a science-based and expert-driven study of the pandemic's origins that is free from interference or politicization.

*Question.* Do you believe it is prudent for the United States to support gain-of-function research in China?

Answer. As underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic, all nations, including China, must commit to cooperation that is rooted in openness, transparency, and scientific independence. As a general matter, I believe scientific cooperation between nations is crucial to addressing transnational threats to global health.

On the particular matter of research funding, I would defer to the relevant authorities, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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