

**NOMINATIONS OF THE 113TH
CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

—
JANUARY 16 THROUGH DECEMBER 2, 2014
—

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

**NOMINATIONS OF PETER ZUMWALT; ROBERT
YAMATE; VIRGINIA PALMER; RABBI DAVID
SAPERSTEIN**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

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

James Peter Zumwalt, of California, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

Robert T. Yamate, of California, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Union of the Comoros

Virginia E. Palmer, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi

Rabbi David Nathan Saperstein, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:05 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher A. Coons presiding.

Present: Senators Coons, Kaine, and Flake.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER A. COONS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE**

Senator COONS. I am pleased to chair this hearing for the ambassadorial nominees to Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar and Comoros, and Malawi, as well as for the nominee to serve as our Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom. All four individuals before us today have impressive records of accomplishment and I look forward to hearing their priorities for advancing U.S. interests and goals.

Our first nominee is to serve in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Senegal has a strong record as a stable democratic partner, a regional ally in peacekeeping and counterterrorism. Especially since the election in 2012 of President Sall, Senegal has also been a partner in countering corruption and promoting growth. In contrast, Guinea-Bissau has faced numerous challenges, including civil war, coups, and narcotrafficking, that have contributed to instability.

James Zumwalt, nominee for the post in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, is a career Foreign Service officer currently serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Japan and Korea. He has experience with difficult circumstances which have well prepared him for this post. He led the interagency team that managed the U.S. response to the 2011 tsunami and previously served in the DRC.

Next we consider Malawi, a country that recently experienced elections that were successful and is working to improve development and governance and growth. Malawi has been a strong contributor to regional peacekeeping missions and is an MCC partner.

Virginia Palmer, our second nominee, is a career member of the Foreign Service with a distinguished record, most recently serving as DCM in the Embassy in South Africa. I had the privilege, indeed the joy, of visiting Ms. Palmer and seeing her leadership firsthand during a CODEL last year and was impressed with her broad understanding of regional dynamics, including the importance of AGOA and the U.S. economic relationship.

Next we consider Madagascar and the Comoros. Madagascar is finally emerging from 5 years of unrest and transitioning to a democratically elected government. Resumption of its eligibility for AGOA is an indicator of its recent progress. Challenges remain and the next U.S. Ambassador will have to work on continuing to rebuild our ties.

Meanwhile, Comoros has a strong relationship with the United States, particularly as it relates to security. Robert Yamate, our nominee to serve in both countries, has experience serving in Madagascar in addition to other valuable African posts. His experience on the continent, most recently as DCM in Senegal, makes him a strong candidate for reestablishing and strengthening our ties with Madagascar and Comoros.

Finally, we consider Rabbi David Saperstein, our nominee for Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, a critically important issue as religious minorities face grave threats around the world. Just yesterday Senator Kirk and I cochaired the first Senate Human Rights Caucus event, focusing on the brutal human rights violations perpetrated by ISIS in Iraq and Syria, including violence against Christians, Yazidis, Shia, Sunnis, and others.

As religious minorities face persecution globally, I am pleased President Obama has nominated Rabbi David Saperstein for this important post. As the first chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, he has ably demonstrated his ability to defend and advance U.S. values and protect religious freedom.

I would like to welcome all our nominees and encourage them to introduce their families. These positions require a whole-of-family effort and we are grateful for your sacrifices and ongoing support. But first I would like to invite Senator Flake to give his opening statement.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Senator Coons.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF FLAKE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA**

I appreciated the opportunity to meet all of you in my office earlier this week and last week. I really appreciate the sacrifices that

the families go through, for a lot of these far-away posts in particular. Some of you have been doing it actually a long time. I enjoyed meeting Ms. Palmer also last year on a different CODEL and look forward to hearing from you, and I appreciate your willingness to serve.

Thanks.

Senator COONS. I would now like to invite each of our four nominees to make your opening statement and to introduce your families. Let me start with Mr. Zumwalt.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES PETER ZUMWALT, OF CALIFORNIA,
NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF
SENEGAL AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT
ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR TO THE RE-
PUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU**

Mr. ZUMWALT. Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, I am honored to appear before you today. I wish to thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the trust and confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for United States Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my wife, Ann Kambara, who is sitting behind me, and until last month also served her country as a Foreign Service officer. Since we met 31 years ago, we have worked together in a variety of countries and in Washington. Ann has been my anchor, my sounding board, and my inspiration. She has supported me enthusiastically as I prepared for this new opportunity to serve.

I also wish to acknowledge my mother, who I think is watching this hearing. She is the person who first stimulated my interest in foreign cultures and she supported my career choice to join the Foreign Service, even though she knew it would mean that we would live far apart. So, Mom, thanks so much for your love and your support all of these years.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission I have a written statement that I would like to submit for the record.

Senator COONS. Without objection.

Mr. ZUMWALT. Thank you.

As a regional leader, Senegal has helped to resolve conflicts by deploying peacekeepers across Africa, and we have worked together with Senegal to combat religious extremism, transnational crime, and infectious diseases. If confirmed, I would work closely with the government and civil society in Senegal to sustain and build upon this partnership.

Senegal is one of our most important African partners. As you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, the 2012 Presidential election reinforced Senegal's role as a model of stable democracy. We share common values, including religious tolerance and respect for ethnic and cultural diversity. President Macky Sall's visit to Washington, DC, for the U.S.-Africa Leaders summit underscored the importance of our partnership. If confirmed, I would look forward to strengthening our close ties.

Senegal is also a leading U.S. development partner, where the United States Agency for International Development, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Peace Corps, and other U.S. agen-

cies build regional infrastructure, improve food security, and strengthen education and health care services. If confirmed, I would continue these efforts to help Senegal achieve inclusive economic growth, including through expanded bilateral trade and investment flows.

As you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, Guinea-Bissau has suffered from decades of poor governance and widespread corruption, which have weakened state institutions there. However, we do see signs of progress. Guinea-Bissau held parliamentary and Presidential elections in April and May of this year. Bissau-Guineans voted in large numbers, highlighted the people's desire for domestic and responsive government.

Following the inauguration of a democratically elected president, President Jose Mario Vaz, the United States lifted restrictions on foreign assistance. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and our international partners to support this democratic process. In order to break its cycle of instability, the Guinea-Bissau Government must address reconciliation, combat trafficking of narcotics and natural resources, and implement economic reforms. But if confirmed I would travel frequently to Bissau to build strong relationships with the government, with civil society, business, and religious leaders, and with the people of Guinea-Bissau in order to advance U.S. interests there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Flake, for your continuing interest in Africa. We are truly fortunate to enjoy strong bipartisan support from the Congress for our efforts to promote democratic values, sustainable economic development, and to strengthen people-to-people ties. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, with your committee, and other Members of Congress to represent the interests of the American people in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

I would be happy to answer your questions. Thank you.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Zumwalt follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES PETER ZUMWALT

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I wish to thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the trust and confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my wife, Ann Kambara. Ann, until last month, also served her country as a Foreign Service officer. We met 31 years ago when we both worked at our mission in Japan. Since then we have worked together to advance U.S. interests in a variety of countries and in Washington. When we worked together far from home, Ann became my anchor, my sounding board and my inspiration. She has supported me enthusiastically as I prepare for this new opportunity to serve. If confirmed, it would be a great honor and privilege to promote again U.S. interests in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

Senegal is one of our most important African partners. The transparent, free, and peaceful 2012 Presidential election reinforced the country's role as a model of stable democracy in Africa. We share common values, including democracy, religious tolerance, and respect for ethnic and cultural diversity. President Macky Sall's visit to Washington, DC, to participate in the U.S.-Africa Leaders summit last month—where he agreed to play a leading role to establish the Partnership on Illicit Finance, an anticorruption and transparency initiative—and President Obama's visit to Senegal last year further underscored the importance of our bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our shared democratic values and our close ties.

Senegal is a leading U.S. development partner in West Africa, where investments by the United States Agency for International Development, the Millennium Chal-

lenge Corporation and other U.S. agencies are helping to build rural infrastructure, improve food security, and strengthen education and health care services. In addition, 220 American Peace Corps Volunteers play an important role in grassroots development and building people-to-people ties. To reinforce these efforts, the Government of Senegal this year unveiled an ambitious development plan, which aims to accelerate economic reforms, and mobilize private sector investment in order to boost economic growth. If confirmed, I will continue these efforts to help Senegal achieve inclusive economic growth, including through business climate reforms to facilitate private sector-led growth. Senegal is well-positioned to build on its role as a regional business hub, and, if confirmed, I would engage U.S. and Senegalese Government and business leaders to promote bilateral trade and investment.

As a regional leader, Senegal has helped to resolve conflicts across the continent—most recently by deploying peacekeeping troops to the U.N. Mission in Mali. As a result of Senegal's commitment to promoting peace and security, Senegal was selected as one of six countries to participate in the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, a \$110 million, 3–5 year initiative announced at the U.S.-Africa Leaders summit. Senegal also serves as an important partner for the United States as we work together to combat religious extremism, transnational crime, and infectious diseases in West Africa. If confirmed, I would work closely with the government and civil society in Senegal to sustain and build upon our regional partnership to promote democracy, economic development, and combating transnational threats.

Under President Sall's leadership, we have seen significant progress in the Casamance peace process—Africa's longest running conflict. Negotiations continue and we hope the remaining obstacles to a long-lasting peace agreement will be resolved. We support the peace process through our Casamance advisor, based at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar. In addition, the United States Agency for International Development, the Department of Agriculture and the Millennium Challenge Corporation are also engaged in programs and projects which contribute to regional stability and prosperity. If confirmed, I would continue to prioritize the Casamance peace process in our engagement with Senegal.

Guinea-Bissau has suffered from decades of poor governance and widespread corruption, which have weakened state institutions and rendered the government ineffective in providing basic services to its citizens. However, we are beginning to see progress. Guinea-Bissau held parliamentary and Presidential elections in April and May of this year, 2 years after a military coup. Bissau-Guineans went peacefully to the polls in the large numbers, highlighting their strong desire for democracy and responsive government.

Following the inauguration of democratically elected President Jose Mario Vaz, the United States lifted coup-related restrictions on foreign assistance to Guinea-Bissau. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and our international partners to determine how best the United States can support democratic progress. In order for Guinea-Bissau to break its cycle of instability, its government must address reconciliation, combat trafficking of narcotics and natural resources, and implement multisector economic reforms, which would increase investment, spur sustainable development, generate employment, and reduce poverty. If confirmed I would continue to promote U.S. interests in Guinea-Bissau from the U.S. Embassy in Dakar. Embassy Dakar officials, including one position dedicated full time to Guinea-Bissau, will continue to play an invaluable role by traveling frequently to Guinea-Bissau to build strong relationships with government, civil society, business, and religious leaders, to inform our policy, and to advance U.S. interests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Flake, for your continuing interest in the United States relations with Africa. We are fortunate to have the strong bipartisan support for our efforts to promote democratic values, sustainable economic development, and vibrant partnerships through people to people ties. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your committee and other Members of Congress in representing the interests of the American people in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

I would be happy to answer your questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Zumwalt.
Mr. Yamate.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT T. YAMATE, OF CALIFORNIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR TO THE UNION OF THE COMOROS

Mr. YAMATE. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Flake, I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee as Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our relationships with the Government of Madagascar and the Government of the Comoros.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me at this time to introduce to you my wife, Michiko, who has been my partner and confidante through almost 30 years of Foreign Service assignments.

My career with the Department of State, particularly my postings in Africa, has given me the expertise and experience that will enable me to lead our relationships with Madagascar and the Comoros effectively. I particularly enjoyed my assignments in the region, in Dakar, Abidjan, Harare, and, most significant in today's discussion, Antananarivo, where I served over 20 years ago.

This is a critical time in our engagement with Madagascar. The 2009 coup resulted in sanctions and restrictions during the regime of the de facto government. After nearly 5 years of international isolation, President Rajaonarimampianina's win in the 2013 democratic elections has given us to opportunity to engage with the new government in support of the country's domestic, development, security, and economic improvement.

The new Government of Madagascar outlined in their general state policy its principal priorities: alleviating poverty and instability, strengthening rule of law, combating corruption, increasing foreign direct investment, and developing the private sector.

Mr. Chairman, Madagascar has unique and abundant flora and fauna, 80 percent of which are endemic to this island nation. Madagascar is known for its rosewood as well as its diverse wildlife, including lemurs and tortoises. Due to illegal harvesting and export, this valuable natural heritage is under threat. With our assistance restrictions lifted, USAID has allocated \$2.5 million in fiscal year 2014 funds to help protect the country's unique ecosystem, working toward the United States aim of conserving global biodiversity.

In June of this year, the U.S. Government reestablished Madagascar's eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act, creating new opportunities for employment for thousands of Malagasy and improving the business and investment climate. Strengthening the economy is crucial to Madagascar, where the latest figures for 2012 show that 81 percent of the population lives on less than \$1.25 per day. Natural disasters, including periodic cyclones, droughts, and locust infestations have further compromised the living standard of the Malagasy people. USAID's development assistance programs continue to play a significant role in preserving the health and welfare of millions of Malagasy.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed I will also serve as Ambassador to the Union of the Comoros. Our aim is to expand positive relationships in these strategically located islands, which are home to moderate Sunni Muslim communities and a fledgling democratic state.

Comoros is in its second decade of democratic rule, with peaceful transfers of power since 2001.

While we lack a full-time U.S. presence in the Comoros, we maintain a close relationship with our public affairs programming, mil-to-mil cooperation, and regular weekly visits by a full-time Comoros action officer resident in Madagascar. If confirmed, I plan to visit the Comoros regularly.

Looking ahead, if confirmed I look forward to the opportunity to serve as Ambassador to Madagascar and the Comoros, to advance and strengthen our relationships with both countries in a number of areas, notably development, stability, and economic cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, I thank you for considering my nomination and I look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yamate follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT T. YAMATE

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee as Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar and the Union of the Comoros. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our relationships with the Government of Madagascar and the Government of the Comoros.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me at this time to introduce to you and the rest of the committee my wife, Michiko, who has been my partner and confidante through almost 30 years of Foreign Service assignments.

My career with the Department of State, particularly my postings in Africa, has given me the expertise and experience that will enable me to lead our relations with Madagascar and the Comoros effectively. I particularly enjoyed my assignments in the region, in Dakar, Abidjan, Harare, and, most significant in today's discussion, Antananarivo where I served over 20 years ago.

This is a critical time in our engagement with Madagascar. The 2009 coup resulted in sanctions and restrictions during the regime of the de-facto government. After nearly 5 years of international isolation, President Rajaonarimampianina's (Ra-Jo-Nar-Mam-PYANN's) win in the 2013 democratic elections has given us the opportunity to engage with the new government in support of the country's democracy, development, security, and economic improvement.

The new Government of Madagascar outlined in the "General State Policy," its principal priorities: alleviating poverty and instability, strengthening rule of law, combating corruption, increasing foreign direct investment, and developing the private sector. The U.S. goals in Madagascar align well with Madagascar's and also include promoting good governance and respect for human rights. President Rajaonarimampianina has taken steps in the right direction. The Ministry of Justice's recent assessment of anticorruption efforts, carried out in conjunction with the United Nations Development Program is one such step. Early in his Presidency, Rajaonarimampianina also dismantled two military units that were believed to have committed human rights abuses and illicit activity. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work with my counterparts to increase the capacity of the Malagasy maritime forces and law enforcement entities.

Mr. Chairman, Madagascar has unique and abundant flora and fauna, 80 percent of which are endemic to this island nation. Madagascar is known for its rosewood, as well as its diverse wildlife, including lemurs and tortoises. Due to illegal harvesting and export, this valuable natural heritage is under threat. With our assistance restrictions lifted, USAID has allocated \$2.5 million in FY 2014 funds to help protect the country's unique ecosystem, working toward the U.S. aim of conserving global biodiversity.

The U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo is committed to supporting the National Export Initiative in Madagascar, increasing exports from America. The best prospects for exports and investment lie in the extractive, construction, tourism, and textile sectors. In June of this year, the U.S. Government reestablished Madagascar's eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), creating new opportunities for employment for thousands of Malagasy, and improving the business and investment climate.

Strengthening the economy is crucial in Madagascar, where the latest figures from 2012 show that 81 percent of the population lives on less than \$1.25 per day. Natural disasters—including periodic cyclones, drought, and locust infestation—have further compromised the living standard of the Malagasy people. USAID's development assistance programs continue to play a significant role in preserving the health and welfare of millions of Malagasy. In FY 2014, we intend to provide \$63 million for food aid and health programs.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will also serve as Ambassador to the Union of the Comoros. Our aim is to expand positive relationships in these strategically located islands, which are home to moderate Sunni Muslim communities and a fledgling democratic state. From the time Comoros gained independence from France in 1975 until 2000, Comoros suffered 20 coups or attempted coups. Today, I am happy to note, Comoros is in its second decade of democratic rule, with peaceful transfers of power since 2001. President Dhoinine (dwah-hee-NEE-nee) came into power in 2011, and welcomes increased U.S. Government engagement with Comoros to improve the capacity of government operations, provide English language instruction, encourage U.S. direct investment, and enhance security cooperation. While we lack a full-time U.S. presence in the Comoros, we maintain a close relationship with our public affairs programming, mil-to-mil cooperation, and regular weekly visits by a full-time Comoros officer resident in Madagascar. If confirmed, I plan to visit the Comoros regularly. In addition, the Department of Defense supports an English-language military training facility and medical clinic.

Looking ahead, if confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to serve as Ambassador to Madagascar and the Comoros, to advance and strengthen our relationships with both countries in a number of areas, notably development, stability, and economic cooperation. Mr. Chairman, I thank you and the committee for considering my nomination, and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Yamate.

Ms. Palmer.

STATEMENT OF VIRGINIA E. PALMER, OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

Ms. PALMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake. It is a very great honor and privilege to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi. I appreciate the confidence that the President and Secretary Kerry have expressed in me by putting my name forward for your consideration.

I am also truly grateful for the support of my husband and fellow Foreign Service officer, Ismail Asmal, who is here with me today, my daughters, Aliya and Nadia Asmal, who have served for five tours overseas with us—Nadia is here today and her sister is watching online from California—and my parents, Richard and Becky Palmer, who first exposed me to the international world and allowed me to take those grandbabies far away. My mother is here today.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and Congress to promote U.S. interests in Malawi, including strengthening Malawi's democratic institutions, encouraging economic growth, and improving health and education there. In many jobs since joining the Foreign Service in 1986, but particularly in overseas assignments as DCM in South Africa and Vietnam, as economic counselor in Nairobi, and political chief in Harare, I worked to promote good governance and private sector-led economic growth. If confirmed, this is the experience I will draw on to lead the terrific team that we have at the Embassy in Malawi to advance U.S. interests there.

Over the last 20 years, Malawi has had multiple democratic transfers of power from one political party to another. When former

President Bingu wa Mutharika died unexpectedly in 2012, principled leaders demanded and achieved a constitutionally correct handover of power, a triumph for Malawi. Malawi's 2014 elections marked another democratic milestone for Africa. The election of President Peter Mutharika was unambiguous and power again passed peacefully from one party to another.

If confirmed, I will work to further develop democratic institutions in Malawi. I look forward to supporting priorities shared by the United States and Malawi of improving Malawi's public financial management, modernizing the civil service to increase government accountability, and ending corruption.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with per capita GDP of only \$226. Over 45 percent of Malawians are under the age of 15, presenting daunting economic and educational challenges as Malawi strives to meet the Millennium Development Goals. If confirmed, I will support U.S. Government efforts to encourage private sector-driven sustainable economic growth to help alleviate this crushing poverty.

A member of the New Alliance for Food Security, Malawi has committed to improving its investment climate and to expanding its markets. Our Feed the Future program, which focuses on crop diversification and enhanced trade, is directly supportive of the new alliance and will make Malawi more food secure. Our \$350 million Millennium Challenge Corporation compact, which will help with infrastructure improvements and power sector reforms, will expand access to much-needed electricity and encourage private sector investment.

Our broad economic engagement in Malawi is complemented by our strong commitment to health and education assistance, vital to helping Malawi's human capital. The United States is the largest bilateral donor to the Malawi health system, with a 2014 budget of \$155 million. If confirmed, I will work to maximize the effectiveness of our PEPFAR and other health care programs in Malawi.

Improvements in Malawi's education system are likewise essential if Malawi is to achieve its full potential. If confirmed, I will be proud to lead the United States efforts to bolster the quality of primary education, a \$20 million annual investment to promote literacy and encourage children, particularly girls, to stay in school.

Finally, our security cooperation with Malawi is outstanding. In recent years, the United States has trained six battalions of Malawian peacekeepers who have been deployed in the DRC and in the Cote d'Ivoire. In 2013 and 2014, Malawi hosted the largest counterterrorism exercise on the African Continent and a regional peacekeeping exercise, both sponsored by the U.S. Africa Command. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our strong security cooperation to advance our shared objective of peace and stability in Africa.

Despite its challenges, Malawi holds great promise and is a strong partner of the United States. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the momentum of the U.S.-Africa Leaders summit and to working with the Government of Malawi and its people on our shared goals of a healthier, more prosperous Malawi with an even stronger partnership with the United States.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, and I would be happy to take any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Palmer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VIRGINIA E. PALMER

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake and members of the committee, it is a great honor and privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi. I appreciate the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have placed in me by putting my name forward for your consideration. I am also deeply grateful for the support of my husband and fellow Foreign Service officer, Ismail Asmal, my daughters, Aliya and Nadia Asmal, and my parents, Richard and Becky Palmer.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and Congress to advance U.S. interests in Malawi, including strengthening its democratic institutions, encouraging economic diversification, and building its health and education capacities.

I most recently served as Deputy Chief of Mission to the Republic of South Africa. There, I helped manage one of the largest U.S. missions in Africa. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1986, I have served as the Department's Director for Economic Policy in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, as the Economic Counselor at Embassy Nairobi, and as a political officer at Embassy Harare—positions in which I promoted democracy and encouraged economic growth and better governance. If I am confirmed, I will draw on these experiences to lead our team in advancing U.S. interests in Malawi.

During its first three decades as an independent country, Malawi was a one-party state. Since 1994, when the people of Malawi voted in their first democratic, free, and fair elections, Malawi has undergone peaceful transfers of power among political parties. When former President Bingu wa Mutharika died unexpectedly in 2012, principled leaders demanded and achieved a constitutionally correct succession—a triumph for Malawi. Malawi's 2014 elections marked another democratic milestone for Africa. In the election of President Peter Mutharika, power again peacefully and democratically passed from one party to another. Despite these successes, there still is work to be done. If confirmed, I will work to further develop democratic processes and strong governing institutions in Malawi. I look forward to supporting priorities shared by the United States and Malawi of improved public financial management, civil service modernization, reduced corruption, and increased government transparency and accountability.

A major U.S. Government priority in this nation of 16 million persons, with a per capita GDP of only \$226 dollars, is to encourage private-sector driven, sustainable economic growth. As a member of the New Alliance for Food Security, Malawi has committed to improving its investment climate and to expanding its markets. Our Feed the Future program, which focuses on crop and nutritional diversification, value addition, and enhanced trade, is directly supportive of the New Alliance, and strengthens Malawi's resilience and food security. Our \$350.7 million Millennium Challenge Account Compact will expand access to electricity and encourage private sector investments through infrastructure rehabilitation and energy sector reforms. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing this objective.

Our broad economic engagement in Malawi is complemented by our strong commitment to health and education assistance, vital to building Malawi's human capacity. Nearly 60 percent (\$153 million) of the United States \$257 million in assistance to Malawi in FY 2013 went to combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases. If confirmed, a priority for me will be to maximize the effectiveness of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program (PEPFAR) in Malawi. Malawi can only achieve its full potential if it enjoys improved basic education. If confirmed, I will be proud to lead the United States support to bolster the quality of primary education—a \$20 million annual investment—to promote literacy and encourage children, and particularly girls, to stay in school.

Malawi maintains outstanding security cooperation with the United States. Malawi has been a peacekeeping partner in the State Department's Africa Contingency Operations and Training Assistance (ACOTA) program since 1998. Four battalions of ACOTA-trained Malawian peacekeepers deployed to Cote d'Ivoire in 2012 and 2013 and two battalions deployed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2013 and 2014. In 2013, Malawi hosted Epic Guardian, the largest counterterrorism exercise on the African Continent, with 1,000 U.S. and Malawian military, police, and civilians. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our strong security coopera-

tion and assistance, to advance our shared objective of supporting peace, stability, and respect for human rights in Africa.

Malawi faces significant challenges. Over 45 percent of Malawi's population is under the age of 15, presenting daunting economic and educational challenges for the Malawi Government, as it strives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, Malawi has a nearly 11 percent adult HIV prevalence rate and a very high degree of risk for major infectious diseases. U.S. partnership is integral to combating these problems so Malawi can keep moving toward achievement of the MDGs.

Despite these challenges, Malawi holds great promise. Malawi is a strong partner of the United States. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the momentum of the U.S.-Africa Leaders summit, advancing youth leadership in programs such as the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, and working with the Government of Malawi and its people on our shared goals of a healthier, better educated, more prosperous citizenry that embraces democratic values.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Palmer.
Rabbi Saperstein.

STATEMENT OF RABBI DAVID NATHAN SAPERSTEIN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Rabbi SAPERSTEIN. Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, I thank you also for this hearing to consider my nomination as the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. I am honored to appear before you, just as I am honored by the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me.

First, if you will allow me, I would like to pause and remember for a moment those we lost 13 years ago on this date. We honor all the survivors of those tragic events. We stand with the families and loved ones of those who perished. As we say in the Jewish tradition, [*zichronom livracha*], "May their memories ever be for a blessing."

I want to acknowledge today and introduce the presence of my wife, Ellen Weiss, a distinguished journalist; one of my sons, Daniel, a wonderful musician and ceramist. Another son, Ari, is watching online from California, himself a writer and painter. My remarkable colleagues are here from the Religious Action Center of Reformed Judaism, and the superb and dedicated staff of the International Religious Freedom Office at the State Department, and an array of religious leaders from varied faith traditions and political persuasions, who have long been my partners in our work for justice and religious freedom.

Like most Jews, I know all too well that over the centuries the Jewish people have been the quintessential victims of religious persecution, ethnic cleansing, and demonization. We have learned all too painfully the cost, the terrible cost, when good people remain silent in the face of religious oppression.

This is just one key reason why I cannot remain silent today, when we see the historic Christian, Yazidi, and other communities in Iraq and Syria being devastated; when we see Baha'is in Iran, Tibetan Buddhists in China; Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Bahrain; Rohingya Muslims in Burma; all victims of either governmental or societal discrimination, harassment, persecution, or physical attacks. And even in Western Europe we are witnessing an alarming resurgence in anti-Semitic discourse and vio-

lence against Jewish communities. Sadly, this list is far from exhaustive.

Religious freedom faces daunting and alarming challenges worldwide. Recently we have all witnessed the nightmare unfold of tragic violent attacks by ISIL against Yezidis, Christians, Alawites, Shabak, Turkmen, Shia, and others, including members of their own sect, Sunni Muslims, in parts of Iraq and Syria. Using claims of religion to justify their abhorrent behavior, we see ISIL terrorize vulnerable groups based on religious and ethnic identity with death by beheading, crucifixion, stonings, ethnic cleansing, desecration and destruction of religious properties, forced conversions, forced marriages, rape. It is a symptom of a worldwide challenge.

Our goal must be to ensure the internationally recognized right of religious freedom for everyone. It is an urgent task and the needs are great. Toward that end, if confirmed I will do everything within my abilities and influence to engage every segment of the State Department and the rest of the U.S. Government to integrate religious freedom into our Nation's statecraft and foreign policies. Counterterrorism, conflict stability efforts, economic development, human rights—all these foreign policy goals and more require the stability, security, and contributions of members of religious majorities and religious minorities in countries across the globe if we are to further and achieve our Nation's values, interests, and agenda.

If confirmed, I pledge to ensure the integrity of the annual International Religious Freedom Report. I expect to regularize annual review of country designations for Countries of Particular Concern, which I believe are key instruments in motivating progress on religious freedom. And if confirmed I commit to continue the close working relationship that I had when I chaired the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), with USCIRF and the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Office and to consult closely and fully with Congress, for I know full well that we do the best work when the legislative and executive branches are reinforcing each other's respective efforts.

In sum, religious freedom was essential in the founding of America. Our magnificent Bill of Rights began with religious freedom, knowing without it all freedoms were imperiled. So to the religiously oppressed in every land who live in fear, afraid to speak of what they believe in, who worship in underground churches, mosques, or temples lest authorities discover and punish them for devotion to an authority beyond the state, who languish in prisons, bodies broken, spirits too often disfigured, simply because they love God in their own way or question the existence of God, who feel so desperate that they feel forced to flee their homes to avoid killing and persecution because of their faith, to all of them together, the State Department, the Congress, you and I, if you confirm me, can be a beacon of light and hope. I pray that contributing to that dream will be my legacy if you confirm me.

Thank you again for your consideration. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Rabbi Saperstein follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RABBI DAVID NATHAN SAPERSTEIN

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, and members of the committee, thank you for this hearing to consider my nomination as Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom. I am honored by this opportunity to appear before you, as I am honored by the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me to serve our Nation in advancing the right to freedom of religion around the world.

First, I want to pause and remember those we lost on September 11, 13 years ago. On this day, we stand with their families and loved ones, and honor all survivors of those tragic events. As we say in the Jewish tradition: "zichronom livracha—may their memories ever be for a blessing."

I want to acknowledge the presence today of my wife, Ellen Weiss, a distinguished journalist, and my son, Daniel; my remarkable colleagues from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; and an array of religious leaders from varied faith traditions and political persuasions who have been my partners in the vital work we have done to help ensure that religious freedom and our shared values of human dignity, justice and peace flourish more fully in our nation and around the world.

Indeed, it has been one of the great opportunities of my life to have had the opportunity to play a leadership role in interfaith coalitions that span many, diverse faith groups around the world, and faith groups in the United States with a broad range of theological views. To current events, efforts to isolate extremist groups willing to use force to impose their views on others must include, among other things, empowering and strengthening civil society actors (including religious communities) that subscribe to the rule of law, freedom of religion, and principles of religious tolerance and coexistence. I hope I can draw on those long relations and experiences in this urgent task.

I want to express, as well, my abiding appreciation to the members of this committee, and to the Congress, for consistently elevating international religious freedom issues and concerns. Enacting the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) sent a clear and strong signal that the universal right of religious freedom would be a priority in U.S. foreign policy. I was honored to have worked closely with key Senators and other Members of Congress of both parties in the shaping of that legislation as part of the broad coalition of religious organizations and denominations who so staunchly supported the passage of IRFA.

During my career, my mandate has covered a wide range of issues. I believe that the ability to see the interconnected relationship of varied issues will be an asset for the work of the International Religious Freedom office. But there are few issues that have been as central to my career as that of religious freedom, and with it the universal freedoms of thought, conscience, and belief—including freedom to change one's religion or beliefs, and to manifest one's beliefs not only through worship but through teaching, preaching, practice, and observance—as well as the right to hold no religious beliefs.

I started young in my exposure to these issues in that my father, a beloved congregational rabbi for 60 years and my mother, herself active in varied social justice causes, managed to travel to some 80 nations, sometimes bringing my brother and myself, visiting Jewish communities and engaging with other religious leaders wherever they could. Both spoke widely to community forums on issues of Jewish and religious life across the globe. They were outspoken advocates for Soviet Jewry long before it became the norm. My older brother, Marc Saperstein, a leading Jewish historian, has written extensively on the history of Jewish-Christian relations.

Like most Jews, I know all too well that, over the centuries, the Jewish people have been a quintessential victim of religious persecution, ethnic cleansing, and demonization. We have learned, first hand, the costs to the universal rights, security and well-being of religious communities when good people remain silent in the face of such persecution.

This is just one key reason why I cannot remain silent today, when we see historic Christian, Yezidi, and other communities in Iraq and Syria being devastated; when we see Bahais in Iran; Tibetan Buddhists in China; Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Bahrain; Rohingya Muslims in Burma—all victims of governmental or societal discrimination, harassment, persecution or physical attacks. And even in Western Europe we are witnessing a steady increase in anti-Semitic discourse and violence against Jewish communities. Sadly, this list is far from exhaustive but shows the broad range of very serious threats to religious freedom and religious communities in nearly every corner of the globe.

It was these passions that led, 16 years ago, to my engagement with passage of IRFA. And, I suspect, my track-record of engagement with religious freedom issues led in 1999, to the honor of being appointed to the first USCIRF—and the subse-

quent honor of being chosen unanimously by my colleagues to serve as its first Chair.

This nomination comes at a time when forces aligned against religious freedom have grown quite strong. Encouragingly, in many countries, such freedoms flourish. Yet in even more, religious freedom faces daunting and alarming challenges. Seventy-five percent of the world's population lives in countries where religious freedom remains seriously limited, and many religious minorities face persecution, intimidation and harassment.

Recently, we have all seen the tragic violent attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against Yezidis, Christians, Alawites, Shabak, Turkmen Shia, Sunnis, and others, in parts of Iraq and Syria. ISIL, and groups like it, use violence to impose their views on others who do not share them, and use the claims of religion to justify their abhorrent behavior as they target vulnerable groups based on religious and ethnic identity. They terrorize their neighbors and offer nothing but death, forced conversions, forced marriages and rape. ISIL's attacks illustrate, in real time, just how vulnerable religious minorities can be to violence, displacement, marginalization, gender based violence, and property destruction. This, Mr. Chairman, to say nothing of the unspeakable atrocities they have committed against members of their own sect, Sunni Muslims, who make up the majority of the Syrian population. We have witnessed ISIL crucify members of their own Sunni sect in public squares in Raqqa and stone to death Sunni women accused of adultery, proudly tweeting and posting these horrific acts on YouTube and other social media. Indeed, ISIL's brutality spares no one.

Our goal should be to ensure the internationally recognized right to religious freedom for everyone. It is an urgent task, and the needs are great. With President Obama, Secretary Kerry, Under Secretary Sarah Sewall, and Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Tom Malinowski, we have gifted leadership deeply committed to this agenda. I am well aware that the strong leadership of an Ambassador at Large is more important now than ever, and we should participate in this important work both because it is the right course of action, and because it is in our national interest. Toward that end:

- If confirmed, I commit to using this position fervently (and fiercely) to advocate for the rights of individuals to choose, change, and practice their faith safely, to end blasphemy and apostasy laws, and without government interference or the threat of violence or marginalization, to ensure that people are free and safe to assemble, worship, teach, learn, and share their faith with others.
- If confirmed, I will seek to engage every segment of the State Department and the rest of the U.S. Government, to integrate religious freedom into our Nation's statecraft: counterterrorism, conflict stability efforts, economic development, human rights—all these foreign policy goals need the stability, the security, the contributions of members of religious majorities and religious minorities, in every country, to further our Nation's values, interests, and agenda.
- If confirmed, I pledge to ensure the integrity of the annual International Religious Freedom Report. I expect to regularize annual reviews of country designations for Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs) to ensure timely and appropriate designation of CPCs and Presidential Actions, which I believe are key instruments in motivating progress on religious freedom.
- If confirmed, I will do everything within my abilities and influence to continue the close working relationship with USCIRF and consult closely with the Congress. I know full well from my tenure on USCIRF that we do the best work when the legislative and administrative branches are reinforcing our respective efforts.
- If confirmed, I pledge to elevate the focus on religious freedom in regional and multilateral organizations, and within the international community at large.

And if confirmed, I will work closely with all faith groups domestically and abroad, and expand efforts to coordinate with outside stakeholders and civil society groups in order to pursue our religious freedom goals abroad. To this end, I will work closely with my long-time friend, Shaun Casey, a brilliant and talented leader, appointed by Secretary Kerry to enhance the Department's engagement with religious leaders in the United States and across the globe.

In sum, religious freedom was essential in the founding of America, and the American people continue to value the freedoms of religion, thought, conscience, belief, expression, and association. We began our magnificent Bill of Rights with a commitment to religious freedom, knowing that without it, all other freedoms were imperiled. And so too today.

I am dedicated to advancing those freedoms, and hope to be able to do so from the position of Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom.

Allow me to conclude with a personal story. In 1939, my father traveled throughout Palestine and Central Europe on the eve of the Second World War. He was one of the last to see the glory of European Jewry in full bloom before the nightmare of Nazism enveloped and destroyed it. He visited Danzig, now Gdansk, just days after the Nazis had been elected in the May elections. He went with enthusiasm to see the magnificent historic main synagogue of this vibrant Jewish community. To his utter dismay; it lay in ruins, only the portal over what had been the beautiful entrance front doors was still intact. On the front lawn, there was a sign that had been erected during the election campaign by the Nazis which said "Komm lieber Mai und mache von Juden uns jetzt frei—come dear month of May and free us from the Jews." With tears welling up in his eyes and a chilling sense of the impending disaster symbolized by this scene, his glance gazed upward and then he saw the words—the ancient vision of Malachi, still inscribed over the remaining doorway: "Halo Av echad l'chulanu; halo eyl echad b'ra'anu:have we all not one Father? Has not one God not created us?" (Mal. 2:10). Two visions: one of hatred and tyranny, the other of brotherhood and sisterhood, of unity and peace; one of oppression, the other of freedom; one of darkness and despair, the other of light and hope. This is the choice we face today with a sense of great urgency.

To the religiously oppressed in every land who live in fear, afraid to speak of what they believe in; who worship in underground churches, mosques or temples—lest authorities discover and punish their devotion to an authority beyond the state; who languish in prisons, bodies broken, spirits too often disfigured—simply because they love God in their own way or question the existence of God; who feel so desperate that they flee their homes to avoid killing and persecution because of their faith—to all of them, together, you and I, the State Department and the Congress, can be a beacon of light and hope. Should you confirm me, I pray that contributing to fulfilling that dream will be my legacy.

Thank you again for your consideration and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Rabbi.

We will now go to questions in 7-minute rounds. If I might, Mr. Zumwalt, first just speak, if you would, for a few minutes about how we could continue to strengthen and broaden our security cooperation with Senegal; and if you would talk as well to how we might make progress in combating narcotrafficking in Guinea-Bissau?

Mr. ZUMWALT. Thank you. We have a very strong relationship with the Senegalese military. As you know, Senegal is a net provider of security and today they are participating in peacekeeping operations throughout Africa. So some of our engagement is involved in trying to strengthen their capabilities to provide that peacekeeping.

But we also, the Senegalese military and we, have other areas of cooperation—border security and the increasing capability to combat the narcotrafficking and the smuggling that you mentioned. Also, maritime security is important. Senegal has an important fishing industry and they need ought protect their resources.

For Guinea-Bissau, you are very correct to identify narcotrafficking as one of the key issues. The challenge really is narcotraffickers look for the weak link, the country with weak judicial systems and not having the rule of law. So I think since we now have had a democratic transition, one of the things we need to do is to look how can we strengthen the judicial system, the law enforcement capabilities, also to talk frankly about corruption and issues there to see if we can reduce the attractiveness of that country to narcotraffickers.

Senator COONS. Mr. Yamate and Ms. Palmer, both the countries to which we hope you will be confirmed, Madagascar and Malawi, are AGOA eligible, but have not really fully taken advantage of

AGOA. Would each of you in turn speak to how you might work to strengthen the opportunities they might have, given the significant challenges of poverty and underdevelopment in Madagascar and in Malawi.

Mr. Yamate.

Mr. YAMATE. Thank you. Madagascar has just recently become AGOA eligible, after 5 years of being ineligible following the coup of 2009. Prior to 2009, Madagascar utilized AGOA basically to their fullest within the textile industry. Forty-five percent of their exports for Madagascar was through AGOA in the textile area. Now, currently it is down to just over 20 percent.

Madagascar, the Government of Madagascar and President Rajaonarimampianina is very, very thankful for reestablishing AGOA benefits. There is still some work to be done in getting that process utilized. But there are approximately 50,000 individuals who lost jobs because of the loss of AGOA. This is an absolute positive again for AGOA and for AGOA eligibility, and Madagascar is very much going to benefit from it.

Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Ms. Palmer.

Ms. PALMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. About 90 percent of Malawi's exports to the United States enter duty-free under AGOA, GSP, or MFN. I think the basic problem is that Malawi is not exporting very much, and U.S. Government efforts will be, or are centered on, improving their economic standard.

We need to focus on agriculture. Eighty percent of the Malawians are working in the agricultural field. So we need to help them with crop diversification, with value addition, and with trade facilitation so that they can trade with their neighbors better and produce better for export to us.

They also need to address governance challenges that I mentioned briefly, and the President has been very committed to tackling corruption. We will also be helpful with the MCC account in helping them to have better power, which will help manufacturing in general and commercial agriculture in Malawi.

Senator COONS. What is the status of the MCC compact, which was recently restored? What do you see as the opportunities for its full restoration and progress?

Ms. PALMER. Actually, progress has been good in the year since it was begun again. They are doing the initial sort of survey work and contract-letting and they are talking to the power utility, ESCOM, about power sector reforms that are required. They have had structural engineers look at the major hydrodam to see what kind of infrastructure improvements need to be made, and they have conducted a survey to improve the transmission lines.

I think that the MCC is going to be vital to getting Malawi the electricity it needs. Only 7 percent of Malawians have access to electricity and they cannot have the economic growth that we need without having it.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Rabbi Saperstein, thank you for your stirring opening statement and for your passionate commitment to religious freedom. Like you, I am deeply troubled by the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe and

globally and by the sweep of oppressions that you cited in your opening statement.

Please tell me, if confirmed, what role would you play, first in partnership with the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism? Then second, what do you consider your priority actions, in addition to this, to take on all the different challenges you spoke about, from ISIS's barbaric actions against Christians and Yazidis to oppression of Muslims in Burma? Last, to that end, do you have the resources you need?

Rabbi SAPERSTEIN. Senator Kaine, it is good to see you, sir.

The Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism that exists in the State Department work in a fully integrated manner within the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), and particularly with the International Religious Freedom Office. Special Envoy Ira Forman has done a superb job on this, traveling tirelessly, visited 17 countries.

Just last week I attended a gathering he had of the key people throughout the State Department who work on this issue and the prominent leaders of the American Jewish community and the European Jewish community. It was a very productive meeting, mapping out the problems in more detail and what strategies would be most effective to respond to them.

So we would work very closely. It is a joint responsibility between the Religious Freedom Office and the Special Envoy's office to address this issue, and if confirmed I would be working with someone who is a personal friend that I have worked with for many, many years. Together, I think we reinforce each other. I think that is true of all the special envoys.

In terms of the enormity of the problems we face, there are certain urgent priorities simply by the facts on the ground, what is happening in the CAR, what is happening in the Near East region, and particularly in Iraq. I am prepared to travel anywhere that I can be of help to an already superb staff in the International Religious Freedom Office that is fully engaged. It was their relationships with many of these religious minorities in Iraq that provided invaluable information that helped guide the response of our armed forces and our diplomatic forces in addressing the rise of ISIL, the plight of the Yezidis, and the challenge to the Christian communities there.

We have the situation in Pakistan and other countries across the globe which are urgent challenges. I am really prepared to work as tirelessly as I can to focus on where I think we can make a real difference, or where the urgency of the moment requires a response. We cannot do everything, but if there are countries we can actually move to improve the situation that is where I want to focus my efforts.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Rabbi.

Senator Flake.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

I appreciate the answers so far. Mr. Zumwalt, when we talked in my office we talked about the trouble with Ebola a few countries away, but in the region, and Senegal's response not to have flights go, for example, to Liberia and how that kind of imperils our ability to get people there when flights do not fly, in terms of international

aid workers and others. What can we do to help them address the concerns that they have, the security concerns and health concerns, but also help out the international community here?

Mr. ZUMWALT. Thank you very much for that question. Ebola is a very serious problem that requires a sustained, coordinated U.S. Government effort to help countries who are affected by Ebola to deal with the issue. I think from the perspective of the Embassy in Dakar, if I were confirmed I would have four priorities for dealing with Ebola. The first would be to make sure that the United States Government were approaching the problem in Senegal with a whole-of-government response. We have many talented, good people from CDC, Department of Defense, AID, and other places who each are doing good work, but we have to make sure we are presenting a very coherent approach toward the government.

The second priority would be coordinating with other donors to make sure that we are not leaving gaps or overlapping or overwhelming the host government with requests for information. So the donors would need to work together, and it is ideally suited in Dakar to do that because all the donors are present there.

Third would be the relations with Senegal, and really we would have three aspects to that. One is assessing the situation and making sure that policymakers back in Washington understood the situation on the ground. Senegal, as you know, has had one Ebola case they are working hard to prevent others from occurring.

But the second is to understand the government and what it is trying to do. You mentioned the reaction the Senegal Government had is to close off flights, which we do not think is the right action. But we need to understand why they are taking this action and help them deal with the concerns they have about the public health situation in Senegal.

Then finally, the last priority in our communications would be influencing Senegal's actions. I think you have laid out one important area where perhaps we would prefer a different approach, and so we need to engage and talk to the government.

Then finally, the fourth priority as a mission I would have is the safety, welfare, and security of American citizens. We have about 6,000 Americans living in Senegal. Many of them are in remote places. So if I were at the mission I would want to make sure that American citizens had the information they needed to make the right kind of decisions to protect their own health and welfare of themselves and their families.

Thank you.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. Yamate, you mentioned the unique flora and fauna that Madagascar has. It is certainly envied by a lot of places. We have committed, you mentioned, \$2.5 million, USAID, to help them conserve and protect their ecosystem. How can we leverage that? That is not a lot, but can we leverage that with other partners and with the host government to help out?

Mr. YAMATE. Absolutely, sir. Leverage is necessary and we need collaboration, cooperation with all the different sectors, nongovernment organizations, the government itself, and all members of society, to work in preserving this ecosystem which exists nowhere else in the world.

Senator FLAKE. Do you think the government values that sufficiently now?

Mr. YAMATE. Yes, they do. In their general state policy that they have just brought about about a month and a half ago, this is one of their main priorities, is preservation of the environment, which includes flora, fauna, animal life, rosewood. Rosewood logging, illegal logging, is ongoing. There is very strong ongoing effort by the government of President Rajaonarimampianina to try and offset the rosewood logging. My understanding is that most recently within the last week there have been individuals at the highest level that have been identified and we are hopeful of arrests in the near future.

But again, this is a concerted effort led by the Government of Madagascar, but also with the assistance and with the acknowledgment of the international community.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you. Last, and my confirmation for you hinges on this, can you spell the President's name? [Laughter.]

Mr. YAMATE. I will have to get back to you about that. [Laughter.]

Senator FLAKE. It is only 19 letters. Come on.

Ms. Palmer, you mentioned education and 45 percent of the population under the age of 15. That is something important, and particularly for young girls. What percentage of young girls make it through the primary education system there?

Ms. PALMER. Just over 50 percent, I believe, sir. And even fewer then complete high school. Apparently, a Malawian girl has a 50 times higher chance of being married in her late teens than she does of going to university.

Senator FLAKE. Do we have programs to help? Do we think that we can push that number higher?

Ms. PALMER. Absolutely, sir. We are working primarily on teacher preservice and in-service training and providing textbooks and then doing work with communities to encourage the cultural values necessary to keep girls in school.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. Saperstein, I just wish you were a little more passionate about the issue that you are facing here. [Laughter.]

I am completely kidding, for anybody who did not get that. But we had a great discussion in my office and here again it is evident that you care very much about the topic. We spoke at length in my office about the challenges you face, particularly with countries that we have other relationships with, and it is difficult to pressure them on these particular issues, but to find ways, and I think you have identified some ways, that we can elevate these religious freedom issues into the other discussions that we have. So I look forward to supporting your nomination. In the interest of time, I will not ask you to go into any of those. I know that you have thought deeply and have worked a lifetime on this.

I appreciate all of you have devoted your careers to representing the United States around the world and I really appreciate what you are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Flake.

Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Chairman Coons.

Thank you to the witnesses. Congratulations on your nominations and thank you for your service. I visited last week American consuls and Embassies in North Africa and Spain, and I always try to meet with first-term FSO's when I do. I am always just struck by we have some great capital "A" Ambassadors; we also have some spectacular small "a" ambassadors all over the world. You are lucky to be working with such a good organization and we are lucky to have you serving in this way that involves some significant personal sacrifice.

I am going to focus my questions on Rabbi Saperstein. Let me start off by putting a lot of pressure on you. I heard the historian Gary Wills speak once and he said that every great idea in the American Constitution had been in some other constitution and we were just good scavengers of picking really good ideas and putting them together, save one. And the one that was really uniquely American was the protection of free religious exercise, and also the absence of an established religion, that all could worship as they please or not and there would not be any punishment or preference because of how you made that choice.

That was a conceptual idea that could have led to a society indifferent to religion. Instead, it has led to a society that is very spiritual in nature. Look at this accident of who you have up on the stage here, the dias: Senator Coons worked with the Council of Churches in South Africa; Senator Flake did missionary service with the Mormon Church in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia; I worked with Jesuit missionaries in Honduras.

We have a society that tolerates free exercise, but it does not lead to an indifference. It leads to a real flourishing of spirituality and religious organizations. It has had to mature. The Mormons were subject to significant prejudice. Catholics have been at times. So it has not all been smooth, and it is not smooth today.

The United States still has such a leadership role to play in the world. In the 20th century it was our industrial might and military might in World War I and World War II that played such an important role in our global leadership. In the 21st century we still have a leadership role to play, an important one, and one of the important, maybe one of the most important, things we can do is be a beacon or example to nations of a place that tolerates a diversity of religious feeling and opinion and has had a flourishing culture where we live and work and go to school with people of different religious backgrounds and we make it work.

As we see these challenges that you alluded to in your testimony in any part of the world, we just have such a leadership role to offer. I think your position as Ambassador for this first freedom, we call it in Virginia—it was put in the First Amendment for a reason when Madison was drafting the Constitution. We can hold ourselves out as an example of hope where people of different backgrounds can live together productively and happily.

I really was excited that you as the first chair of the U.S. Commission in International Religious Freedom have taken this post, because you have this in your DNA and your bloodstream. I really just want to encourage you. We should raise the profile of religious freedom issues and raise our, in a humble way, our example of a

society that gets it right more often than not on this. We should raise this across the board in everything we do, in foreign policy and structurally throughout the Department of State. And you have the profile to do that.

We talked yesterday in my office and one of the things I did not know and I was interested in was your discussion of how the Department of State's report to Congress on international freedom is now not just used by the United States, but other nations who do not have the ability to do their own are actually using that report in positive ways. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Rabbi SAPERSTEIN. Well, the Framers of the U.S. Constitution had the revolutionary idea that our rights would not depend upon our religious identity, our religious practices, or our religious beliefs, and that our rights came from within and were not just granted by the state. This is an idea that has helped reshape the world. Slowly, steadily, though it has ebbed and flowed, we are making progress.

So take the religious freedom issue. We created this idea. We, you, the Congress of the United States, created this idea of an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. Now there are a score of countries around the globe that either have their own ambassador, minister, special offices, or councils designated for advocating for religious freedom. And it is spreading across the globe. It is not just western countries now. Morocco is undertaking this effort. The President of Senegal has announced that he is going to be gathering Muslim leaders and scholars from sub-Saharan African to talk about religious freedom and minority religions.

This is a model that is spreading across the globe. One of my priorities will be to actually reach out to these representatives, because if we can coordinate and reinforce our efforts can be far more effective than what any one of us could do alone.

So that vision really has begun to transform the world. It will not be an easy task to get where we want to go, but, working together, we will achieve much more than any of us alone.

Senator KAINE. I look forward to working with you in that regard.

Again, I thank all the witnesses.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Kaine. I always enjoy your questions. I wish you could come to every one of our hearings.

If you will forgive me, as all the witnesses know, given the pending briefing for all Senators on ISIS, although we have many more questions we wish we could force you to ask, your written statements, your personal testimony, your answers to our questions have been compelling and engaging, and thank you very much for your willingness to serve, for your long records of service both in advancing the principles of religious freedom and in representing our Nation in many places around the world.

I would also like to thank Ann, Michiko, Ismail, Nadia, Becky, and Ellen, as well as Daniel, who have all shared your wonderful parents with us, your spouses, your children with us, over so many years. We are grateful to your families for their support.

We will leave the record open until Tuesday, September 16, for any members of the committee who were not able to join us today who may wish to submit questions for the record. With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:49 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]