

## NOMINATIONS

---

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2021 - p.m.

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:05 p.m., via video-conference, Hon. Chris Van Hollen, presiding.

Present: Senators Van Hollen [presiding], Rounds, and Hagerty.

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

Senator VAN HOLLEN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We apologize to all involved that we are a little late in starting. We have a vote going on in the floor of the United States Senate. I just voted and we may have another one during the course of this hearing and we will just have to juggle things to keep things going.

I want to thank my colleague in this hearing, my Republican colleague, Senator Rounds. We also serve together as the chairman and the ranking member of the Subcommittee on African Global Health Policy, and I want to thank him for his leadership.

I am going to welcome all seven of our nominees here. We have two panels. The first panel will include Ambassador Patricia Mahoney to be Ambassador to the Central African Republic; Ambassador Peter Vrooman, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Mozambique; Mr. Peter Haas, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Bangladesh; and Ms. Julie Chung, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Sri Lanka.

Our second panel will consist of Mr. Brian Shukan, to be our Ambassador to the Republic of Benin; and Ms. Elizabeth Fitzsimmons to be Ambassador to the Togolese Republic; and Ambassador David Gilmour, to be our Ambassador to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Congratulations to all of you on your nominations. I have had the chance to meet with some of you in the past, to connect with some of you via Zoom, and to review the backgrounds of everybody here. And I just want to thank all of you for your service to the United States, as Foreign Service officers.

As some of you may know, I come from a Foreign Service family and I am really grateful to you and your families for serving our country. For those of you who have been ambassadors, you know this, and for all of you who have already served in the Foreign Service, you know that serving as an ambassador overseas as the representative of the President of the United States is a very im-

portant responsibility and it will be your task to coordinate all U.S. policy and be the go-between, between the United States Government and the governments in the countries where you will be assigned, assuming all are confirmed.

So, I just want to thank all of you. You have the responsibility of bringing together all the sort of tools of American diplomacy and influence, from the military to developmental tools, and, of course, diplomatic tools, and others, to improve, strengthen our relations with the countries in which you will represent the United States, to make clear to those countries, U.S. interests, and importantly, as President Biden has really worked to emphasize, support the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

That is, of course, a challenge around the world, especially as many of our adversaries continue to export their models of authoritarianism, using all the tools at their disposal. So, we are at a challenging moment, but I know all of you are up to the challenge.

And so, I am pleased to see Mike. Senator Rounds, I mentioned our partnership earlier. It is great to see you. Thank you for your leadership on a range of foreign policy issues.

And with that, let me turn it over to my colleague, Senator Rounds.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROUNDS,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA**

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I most certainly appreciate that, and I do appreciate the working relationship that we have. I know we voted at exactly the same time; it just took me a little longer to get back to my office, because I have got further to go.

But, first of all, thank you, and good afternoon to all of you. As career diplomats, I agree with Senator Van Hollen that much of your lives and those of your families have been spent far from home. You have made great sacrifices in the service to your country.

Thank you and your families for your lifetimes of service and your work, which is critical in maintaining and advancing America's influence throughout the world.

Ambassador Mahoney, thank you for your service as a U.S. Ambassador to Benin and for your eagerness to continue to serve in the Central African Republic. CAR remains beset by violence and ongoing humanitarian crisis. Russia's malign influence on the country poses additional concerns. We need to take a hard look at our policy toward CAR and how we can be proactively engaged. So, you have your work cut out for you.

Now, the U.S. Embassy in the Central African Republic is one of the most difficult environments in which to live and work in this entire world. I appreciate your willingness to serve there.

Ambassador Vrooman, thank you for your service as an Ambassador to Rwanda and your long history of service in Africa and the Middle East. I am happy to see an experienced ambassador like you as a nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Mozambique.

The violent extremist insurgency in the northern province of Cabo Delgado has threatened and delayed the construction of a

large-scale, onshore, L & G processing complex. The threats posed by Mozambique's northern insurgency have prompted deployments of military assistance forces from other African countries and security cooperation and military training from the U.S. and European Governments.

I look forward to hearing how you plan to further the U.S.-Mozambique relationship in the face of these significant challenges.

Mr. Haas, Bangladesh like many places, is facing the rise of Islamist militancy, a relatively poor nation with 160 million people living in a land area the size of Iowa. It is one of the most densely populated countries on Earth; nevertheless, Bangladesh has opened its borders to nearly one million Rohingya, fleeing persecution in neighboring Burma, and is working with the international community to support the humanitarian response.

Additionally, ties between Bangladesh and China have recently, significantly improved. In short, if confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh, you will head to a post at a time when Bangladesh is of increasing bilateral and global importance.

Ms. Chung, bilateral relations between the United States and Sri Lanka are facing critical challenges. As Acting Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere Affairs, you helped focus our Western Hemisphere efforts on countering maligned Chinese influence in the region. This will be useful in Colombo.

Attempts to renegotiate a Status of Forces Agreement faced unexpected opposition, while the Millennium Challenge Corporation discontinued a \$480 million compact, aimed at reducing poverty after a Sri Lankan special committee recommended its rejection. Some say that pressuring Colombo on human rights could push it closer to China, which is partnering on a number of big-ticket infrastructure projects in the country.

I am delighted to meet you all today and I look forward to your comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

And in my earlier comments, I indicated the countries to which each of you has been nominated as our ambassador, now I am going to provide a little bit more background for each of you, and I think all of our colleagues, well, should be impressed with the depth of your experience and expertise.

Beginning with Ambassador Patricia Mahoney, who is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, who currently serves as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, previously, she served as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and as Office Director in the Office of Mainland Southeast Asia.

Her previous experience also includes posts as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Uganda, Deputy Chief of Mission at U.S. Embassy in Nepal, and Director for South Asia at the National Security Council.

Ambassador Mahoney is the recipient of multiple State Department awards and she earned her ab cum laude from Harvard College; her MA from the University of Hawaii; and her MS from the National War College. Welcome.

Ambassador Peter Vrooman, Peter Vrooman is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and has been Ambassador to the Republic of Rwanda since 2018. He previously served as Charge d'Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia. He has a former Director for Iraq on the National Security Council staff and was Deputy Political Counselor at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York.

Ambassador Vrooman has also served as the spokesperson at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, as a senior advisor for Northern Iraq at our embassy in Baghdad, and as Deputy Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Israel.

He is the recipient of 20 State Department awards and has earned his ab from Harvard College and his MS from the National Defense University's Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Welcome to you.

Mr. Peter Haas is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as both, Acting Assistant Secretary of State and principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs.

Mr. Haas has previously served as a senior advisor and Deputy to Assistant Secretary for Trade Policy and negotiations for the State Department.

Over his career, he has served in positions across five geographic bureaus at the State Department, including Consul General at the Consul General, at U.S. Consulate in Mumbai. He is the recipient of multiple State Department performance awards, including the James Clement Dunn Award for Excellence and the Cordell Hull Award for Economic Achievement by Senior Officers.

Mr. Haas received his BA from Illinois Wesleyan University and holds advanced degrees from the London School of Economics, where he studied as a Marshall Scholar. Welcome to you.

Ms. Julie Chung is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and most recently served as the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the State Department. She has held positions in both, Baghdad and Bogota, and her other previous assignments include positions as the Director and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Japan in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs; as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Cambodia; and Economic Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Thailand.

Ms. Chung is a Pickering Fellow and has received numerous State Department awards, including the Secretary's Distinguished Honor Award.

She earned her BA from the University of California, San Diego, and her MA from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs.

And on a note of personal privilege, I mentioned I was a member of a Foreign Service family. The last overseas post my father held was Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and so I did tell Ms. Chung when I had to chance to talk to her, how much I really enjoyed getting to know the people of Sri Lanka; it is a wonderful post, as are the others.

And I am grateful to her and all of you for your service. So, with that, let me turn it over. We are going to go in the order that I introduced all of you and begin with Ambassador Mahoney.

**STATEMENT OF HON. PATRICIA MAHONEY OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

Ambassador MAHONEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and members of the committee.

I feel privileged and grateful to appear before you today. I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Central African Republic.

During my time serving in the Department of State, I have worked to advance the United States' diplomatic and policy objectives as deputy chief of mission for our embassies in Uganda and Nepal, Director of South Asia for the National Security Council, and currently as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Benin. Throughout the course of my career, I have felt honored to serve the American people and to represent our nation and its democratic values.

I also appreciate the tremendous responsibility that embassy leadership has to safeguard the safety and welfare of American citizens and embassy staff abroad. I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of an embassy in a country in which the United States has suspended operations three times and carried out numerous evacuations. If confirmed, my focus will remain on the well-being and security of our citizens and our embassy staff in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the Central African Republic is a fragile country still scarred by its horrific civil war in 2013 and still battling the triple menaces of extreme poverty, armed violence, and instability. More than a quarter of the country's population has been displaced over the past decade and more than half of the country relies on humanitarian assistance for their health and basic needs.

Additionally, inter- and intra-communal violence continues over transhumance issues and control of natural resources, deepening mistrust between communities. The immediate neighborhood just outside its borders consists of six African nations all working through varying degrees of insecurity and governance challenges.

Of profound concern is the fact that we have seen the deleterious impact of Russian-supported mercenaries from the Wagner Group on the safety and security of many of the peoples in the country, which further erodes prospects for regional security and stability.

President Touadera has critical choices to make in the near term regarding with whom he chooses to partner. This choice will affect the United States' and allies' ability to stand with his government.

At this juncture, our continued engagement in concert with allies and like-minded partners is vital to ensure that President Touadera makes the right choice.

If confirmed, I will seek to continue the leadership that our current Ambassador Tamlyn has demonstrated, to show us a good-faith and reliable friend to the people of the Central African Republic that promotes reconciliation, good governance, and a reinvigorated 2019 Peace Agreement as the best path forward.

If confirmed, I will do my utmost to represent that best choice that we offer, both for the good of the people of the Central African Republic, but also for our own humanitarian and strategic interests in the region as well. I think it is important we remain engaged in the Central African Republic to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to its at-risk population, to bolster efforts toward an inclusive and legitimate national dialogue, to encourage fidelity to the 2019 Peace Agreement, to reinforce peace-building and conflict mitigation efforts, and to continue to support, as we have since 2014, the vital role played by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission, known as MINUSCA, one of the largest and most challenging U.N. peacekeeping missions in the world.

If confirmed, I will work with President Touadera, the Government of the Central African Republic, and our partners to strengthen democratic institutions, advance the rule of law, improve access to justice, enable effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, and increase transparency in the mining sector.

I will strive to promote respect for human rights, develop responsible security alternatives to malign Russian-supported mercenaries, urge further progress on combatting human trafficking, and encourage accountability at all levels of the government. My goal is to work with the Central African Republic Government and our partners to help the country begin the transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, members of the committee, I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of an embassy in a country that is contending with an array of threats to its integrity, its security, and its ability to satisfy even the most basic needs of its population. The task is enormous, the challenges complex and exigent, and the need immense.

I am grateful for your advice and counsel in this undertaking. I want to reiterate my thanks for giving me the opportunity to provide this testimony and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.[The prepared statement of Ambassador Mahoney follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. PATRICIA MAHONEY

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I feel privileged and grateful to appear before you today. I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Central African Republic.

During my time serving in the Department of State, I have worked to advance the United States' diplomatic and policy objectives as deputy chief of mission for our embassies in Uganda and Nepal, director of South Asia for the National Security Council, and currently as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Benin. Throughout the course of my career, I have felt honored to serve the American people and to represent our nation and its democratic values.

I also appreciate the tremendous responsibility that Embassy leadership has to safeguard the safety and welfare of American citizens and Embassy staff abroad. I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of an embassy in a country in which the United States has suspended operations three times and car-

ried out numerous evacuations. If confirmed, my focus will remain on the wellbeing and security of our citizens and our embassy staff in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the Central African Republic is a fragile country still scarred by its horrific civil war in 2013 and still battling the triple menaces of extreme poverty, armed violence, and instability. More than a quarter of the country's population has been displaced over the past decade and more than half of the country relies on humanitarian assistance for their health and basic needs. Additionally, inter- and intra-communal violence continues over transhumance issues and control of natural resources, deepening mistrust between communities. The immediate neighborhood just outside its borders consists of six African nations all working through varying degrees of insecurity and governance challenges.

Of profound concern is the fact that since December, we have seen the deleterious impact of Russian-supported mercenaries from the Wagner Group on the safety and security of many of the country's people, which further erodes prospects for regional stability. President Touadera has critical choices to make in the near term regarding with whom he chooses to partner. This choice will affect the United States'—and allies'—ability to stand with his government.

At this juncture, our continued engagement—in concert with allies and like-minded partners—is vital to ensure that President Touadera makes the right choice. If confirmed, I will seek to continue the leadership that our current Ambassador Lucy Tamlyn has demonstrated to show ourselves a good-faith and reliable friend to the people of the Central African Republic that promotes reconciliation, good governance, and a reinvigorated 2019 Peace Agreement as the best path forward. If confirmed, I will do my utmost to represent that best choice we offer, both for the good of the people of the Central African Republic but also for our own humanitarian and strategic interests in the region as well. I think it is important we remain engaged in the Central African Republic to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to its at-risk population, to bolster efforts toward an inclusive and legitimate national dialogue, to encourage fidelity to the 2019 Peace Agreement, to reinforce peacebuilding and conflict mitigation efforts, and to continue to support, as we have since 2014, the vital role played by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA), one of the largest and most challenging U.N. peacekeeping missions in the world.

If confirmed, I will work with President Touadéra, the CAR Government, and our partners to strengthen democratic institutions, advance the rule of law, improve access to justice, enable effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, and increase transparency in the mining sector. Further, I will strive to promote respect for human rights, develop responsible security alternatives to malign Russian-supported mercenaries, urge further progress on combatting human trafficking, and encourage accountability at all levels of the government. My goal is to work with the Central African Republic government and our partners to help the country begin the transition from lifesaving humanitarian assistance to sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of an embassy in a country that is contending with an array of threats to its integrity, its security, and its ability to satisfy even the most basic needs of its population. The task is enormous; the challenges complex and exigent; and the need immense. I am grateful for your advice and counsel in this undertaking, I want to reiterate my thanks for giving me the opportunity to provide this testimony, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Ambassador Mahoney.

Next, we will turn to Ambassador Vrooman.

Mr. Ambassador?

**STATEMENT OF HON. PETER HENDRICK VROOMAN OF NEW YORK, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE**

Ambassador VROOMAN. Chairman Van Hollen, Ranking Member Rounds, and members of the committee, it is a great privilege and honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Mozambique.

I thank the President and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me and I am also grateful for this distinguished committee's consideration. I want to recognize my wife, Johnette Iris, for her partnership and passion, and for the resilience and curiosity of my children, Zarah and Hendrick, who are in school in Rwanda this week, and my mother, Sally, for coming to visit, teaching English, and mentoring students wherever the Foreign Service leads me. Finally, I would like to thank my extended family and friends who always lay out their welcome mats when I and we are in the United States.

Thirty years ago, I began my Foreign Service career on the Indian Ocean side of Africa in Djibouti, and I am now the Chief of Mission in Rwanda. I have served in Somalia and Ethiopia, as well, and believe that my experience on the continent has provided me with a unique understanding of some of the challenges facing Mozambique, including those related to the pandemic, climate change, terrorism, and post-conflict stabilization.

If confirmed, I will further strengthen ties between the United States and Mozambique by seizing opportunities to combat infectious diseases, promote global health security, sustain wildlife and maritime conservation efforts, and deepen bilateral ties that foster job creation in both our countries. I also remain committed to promoting respect for human rights and advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities throughout our policies and programs.

Mozambique remains a strategic and important partner on the African continent. The Government of Mozambique, together with regional forces and allies, are fighting ISIS-Mozambique, which has caused violence that has claimed thousands of casualties and internally displaced more than 700,000 people in the north since 2017. This region is home to massive natural gas reserves that could lead to a once-in-a-generation economic transformation for the country and the continent, provided there is responsible public financial management, community involvement in local decision-making, and transparency in the development of a sovereign wealth fund that allows revenue from natural resources to benefit all Mozambicans.

If confirmed, I will continue our holistic approach to countering violent extremism and terrorism. The United States has committed to support the Mozambican Government in four ways: providing security assistance; strategic communication; socio-economic and humanitarian assistance; and diplomatic engagement.

And together, we are rebuilding vocational schools, promoting dialogue and exchanges with emerging leaders, and marginalized communities, and providing specialized counterterrorism training.

If confirmed, I will partner diligently with the Mozambican Government and its people to address the underlying drivers of extremism and terrorism by protecting the civilian population, addressing their development requirements, and upholding the core values of human rights, good governance, and democratic participation.

Mozambique also confronts the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has strained its health care system and disrupted economic growth. Significantly, the U.S. health partnership combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria helped Mozambique to respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19. We join



international partners not only to end the pandemic, but to build back better for global health security through the more than \$50 million in COVID assistance to Mozambique, including more than 600,000 U.S.-provided vaccines.

Finally, if confirmed, I will dedicate myself to building on the extraordinary progress that Ambassador Hearne and the U.S. Embassy have made in deepening our bilateral relations and supporting Mozambique's efforts to provide for the welfare of its citizens. It would be a tremendous honor to serve as Chief of Mission in Maputo, working at the new chancery that overlooks the same Indian Ocean where I began my Foreign Service career three decades ago.

Our embassy will be a forum for clear-eyed discussions that contribute to concrete actions that advance our shared interests in democracy, security, prosperity, and friendships.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be honored to respond to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Vrooman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. PETER HENDRICK VROOMAN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and members of the committee, It is a great privilege and honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Mozambique. I thank the President and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. I am also grateful for this distinguished committee's consideration. I want to recognize my wife, Johnette Iris, for her partnership and passion, and for the resilience and curiosity of my children, Zarah and Hendrick, who are at school in Rwanda this week. And my mother, Sally, for coming to visit, teaching English, and mentoring students wherever the Foreign Service leads me. Finally, I would like to thank my extended family and friends who always lay out their welcome mats when we are in the United States.

Thirty years ago, I began my Foreign Service career on the Indian Ocean side of Africa in Djibouti, and I am now the Chief of Mission in Rwanda. I have served in Somalia and Ethiopia as well and believe that my experience on the continent has provided me with a unique understanding of some of the challenges facing Mozambique, including those related to the pandemic, climate change, terrorism, and post-conflict stabilization. If confirmed, I will further strengthen ties between the United States and Mozambique—by seizing opportunities to combat infectious diseases and promote global health security, sustain wildlife and maritime conservation efforts, and deepen bilateral business ties that foster job creation in both countries. I also remain committed to promoting respect for human rights and advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities throughout our policies and programs.

Mozambique remains a strategic and important partner on the African continent. The Government of Mozambique together with regional forces and allies are fighting ISIS-Mozambique, which has caused violence that has claimed thousands of casualties and internally displaced more than 700,000 people in the north since 2017. This region is home to massive natural gas reserves that could lead to a once-in-a-generation economic transformation for the country, provided there is responsible public financial management, community involvement in local decision-making, and transparency in the development of a sovereign wealth fund that allows revenue from natural resources to benefit all Mozambicans.

If confirmed, I will continue our holistic approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism. The United States has committed to support the Mozambican government in four ways: 1) security assistance, 2) strategic communications, 3) socio-economic and humanitarian assistance, and 4) diplomatic engagement. Together, we are rebuilding vocational schools, promoting dialogue and exchanges with emerging leaders and marginalized communities, and providing specialized counterterrorism training. If confirmed, I will partner diligently with the Mozambican government and its people to address the underlying drivers of extremism and terrorism by protecting the civilian population, addressing their development requirements, and upholding the core values of human rights, good governance, and democratic participation.

Mozambique also confronts the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has strained its health care system and disrupted economic growth. Significantly, the U.S. health partnership combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria helped Mozambique to respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19. We join international partners not only to end the pandemic, but to build back better for global health security through the more than \$55 million in COVID-19 assistance to Mozambique, including almost 640,000 U.S.-provided vaccines.

Finally, if confirmed, I will dedicate myself to building on the extraordinary progress that Ambassador Hearne and the U.S. Embassy have made in deepening our bilateral relations and supporting Mozambique's efforts to provide for the welfare of its citizens. It would be a tremendous honor to serve as Chief of Mission in Maputo, working at the new chancery that overlooks the same Indian Ocean where I began my Foreign Service career three decades ago. Our embassy will be a forum for clear-eyed discussions that contribute to concrete actions that advance our shared interests in democracy, security, prosperity, and friendship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be honored to respond to any questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Ambassador Vrooman.

Next, we will hear from Mr. Haas.

Mr. Haas?

**STATEMENT OF PETER D. HAAS OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH**

Mr. HAAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and Members of this Committee. It is a privilege to appear before you today.

It is a privilege to appear before you today. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and support in nominating me to serve as Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I am honored by their confidence in me.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize my wife Amy, my steadfast partner over these past 30 years. I would not be here today without her continual support. We have two amazing sons together: Carsten, who is doing a PhD in German, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Cameron, who is doing a PhD in Economics, at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The three of them have been my home, as we have served the American people around the world.

My recent positions have taught me that there is no corner of the globe whose partnership is more critical to U.S. strategic interests than the Indo-Pacific, and that we have not yet reached the full potential of this partnership. A democratic, stable, and prosperous Bangladesh will benefit the entire region, and if confirmed, I will advance policies that will enhance our relationship with Bangladesh and promote a free, open, interconnected, resilient, and secure region.

The United States has been a reliable friend to and partner with Bangladesh for nearly five decades. We work together on economic development, peacekeeping, tackling the climate crisis, public health, and finding durable solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis. Our two nations also share a commitment to democratic values. Our people-to-people ties continue to grow and help to deepen our cooperation.

If confirmed, I will be a tireless advocate for America's interests and values as we seek to broaden our partnership with Bangladesh.

Our economic ties are strong and growing, demonstrated by the establishment of the U.S.-Bangladesh Business Council earlier this year. U.S. private sector investment supports Bangladesh's economic development while bringing U.S. technologies and know-how, and promoting transparency, inclusion, and market-based reforms.

Bangladesh has also long-played a leadership role in pressing for solutions to the climate crisis, and if confirmed, I will advocate for policies that promote our partnership on environmental and climate issues.

The United States is also committed to helping Bangladesh recover from the global pandemic. Through COVAX, the United States has donated 11 and a half million vaccine doses to Bangladesh, to date, and has committed to providing additional donations in the coming months.

But for the people of Bangladesh to realize their full potential, they must also be free to express themselves. The Department of State has long been committed to promoting the free operation of media, civil society organizations, workers, and members of the opposition political parties in Bangladesh, without fear of retribution or harm.

If confirmed, I intend to continue the Department's work to bolster full democratic participation in advance of the 2023 national elections and to urge the Government to protect and defend human rights.

The United States appreciates the generosity of Bangladesh for hosting nearly one million Rohingya refugees who have fled violence in Burma. The United States has supported Bangladesh and is the largest international donor in the humanitarian assistance response.

If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. Government's work to promote the voluntary, safe, dignified return of Rohingya refugees, in coordination with Bangladesh and the international community. I will also advocate for the protections of the human rights of all Rohingya, wherever they may be.

The United States cooperates closely with Bangladesh on counterterrorism. Bangladesh is one of the largest recipients globally of U.S. counterterrorism assistance.

If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen this partnership, emphasizing the respect for rule of law and human rights. The United States also recognizes Bangladesh's notable contributions to regional security and its active role in U.N. peacekeeping operations.

In 2022, the United States and Bangladesh will celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations. It is an honor to be nominated at this pivotal point in our relationship and during Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee anniversary year.

If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to work with this Committee and other Members of Congress to support the United States' interests in Bangladesh and the Indo-Pacific region at large.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I look forward to hearing your questions. Thank you. [The prepared statement of Mr. Haas follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PETER D. HAAS

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and support in nominating me to serve as Ambassador to the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. I am honored by their confidence in me, particularly during this time of unprecedented challenges—and unrivalled opportunity—in Bangladesh and the broader Indo-Pacific.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize my wife Amy, my steadfast partner over these past 30 years. I would not be here today without her continual support. We have two amazing sons: Carsten who is doing a PhD in German at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Cameron who is doing a PhD in Economics at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Together, they have been my portable “home” as we have served the American people around the world.

Most recently, I had the privilege of serving as Acting Assistant Secretary and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department’s Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. I also served as Consul General in Mumbai, India, and as Economic Counselor in Jakarta, Indonesia. These positions taught me that there is no corner of the globe whose partnership is more critical to U.S. strategic interests than the Indo-Pacific, and that we have not yet reached the full potential of this partnership. A democratic, stable, and prosperous Bangladesh will benefit the entire region, and if confirmed, I will advance policies that will enhance our relationship with Bangladesh and promote a free, open, interconnected, resilient and secure region.

The United States has been a reliable friend to and partner with Bangladesh for nearly five decades. We work together on economic development, peacekeeping, tackling the climate crisis, public health, and finding durable solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis. Our two nations also share a commitment to democratic values. Our people-to-people ties continue to grow and help to deepen our cooperation. If confirmed, I will be a tireless advocate for America’s interests and values and broadening our partnership with Bangladesh.

Economic development, climate, and health are important cornerstones of the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship. Our economic ties are strong and growing, demonstrated by the establishment of the U.S.-Bangladesh Business Council this year. U.S. private sector investment supports Bangladesh’s economic development goals by bringing U.S. technologies and know-how and promoting transparency, inclusion, and market-based reforms. Bangladesh has also long played a leadership role in advocating for solutions to the climate crisis, and if confirmed, I will advocate for policies that promote our partnership on environmental and climate issues. The United States is also committed to helping Bangladesh recover from the global COVID-19 pandemic. Through COVAX, the United States has donated 11.5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Bangladesh to date and has committed to providing additional vaccine donations in the coming months.

For the people of Bangladesh to realize their full potential, they must also be free to express themselves. The Department of State has long been committed to promoting the free operation of media, civil society organizations, workers, and members of opposition political parties in Bangladesh, without fear of retribution or harm. If confirmed, I intend to continue the Department’s work to bolster full democratic participation in advance of the 2023 national elections and to urge the government to protect and defend human rights.

The United States appreciates the generosity of Bangladesh for hosting nearly one million Rohingya refugees who fled violence in Burma. The United States has supported Bangladesh as the largest international donor in the humanitarian assistance response. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. government’s work to promote the voluntary, safe, dignified return of Rohingya refugees in coordination with Bangladesh and the international community, while continuing to advocate for the protections of the human rights of all Rohingya, wherever they may be.

The United States also cooperates closely with Bangladesh on counterterrorism. Bangladesh is one of the largest recipients globally of U.S. counterterrorism assistance. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen this partnership, while continuing to promote our emphasis on the respect for rule of law and human rights. The United States also recognizes Bangladesh’s notable contributions to regional security and active role in U.N. peacekeeping operations.

In 2022, the United States and Bangladesh will celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations. The common goals and the steadfast friendship between the American and Bangladeshi people have remained constant over these nearly 50 years. It is an honor to be nominated at this pivotal point in our relationship and during Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee anniversary year. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to work with this committee and other members of Congress to support the United States' interests in Bangladesh and the Indo-Pacific region at large.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I look forward to hearing your questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Haas.  
And next, we are going to turn to Ms. Chung.  
Ms. Chung?

**STATEMENT OF JULIE CHUNG OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA**

Ms. CHUNG. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka. I am grateful for the confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me by nominating me for this assignment.

As a first generation immigrant from South Korea, I am proud that my parents instilled in me the values of hard work, optimism, love of country, a Christian faith, and the belief that America is a country of opportunity and force for good. I am thankful for the sacrifices they made for my sister and me, and their unconditional love. I am also thankful to my husband Jose Collazo, whose unwavering support and patience have been a strong foundation for our family, including our eight-year-old son, Mateo, who still doesn't understand exactly what Mom does at work, but is proud of me anyways.

During my 25-year career in the Foreign Service, I have served in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, advocating for U.S. interests, building strategic partnerships, and engaging a diverse range of stakeholders to promote democratic values and private sector-led economic growth. My experience in China, Japan, and Southeast Asia have provided me a unique insight into the importance of American leadership to ensuring a free, open, and resilient Indo-Pacific region.

As the Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, I am proud to have led policies that supported democratic partners and strengthened their ability to counter authoritarian oppression, corruption, and terrorism. And I believe that as policy leaders, we also have a responsibility to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our workforce, something I have actively promoted since joining the Foreign Service as part of the very first cohort of the Pickering Fellowship supported by Congress.

Mr. Chairman, Sri Lanka is Asia's oldest democracy and survived the tragedy of a civil war that resulted in unimaginable violence and continued ethnic and religious divisions.

If confirmed, I am committed to speaking clearly and consistently in support of democratic values, human rights, and a strong civil society that are essential to democracies and central to our foreign policy approach. We must also be strong partners in encouraging justice, accountability, and reconciliation so that all Sri Lankans can share in the benefits of peace, security, and prosperity.

Sri Lanka is positioned in a strategic location at the heart of the Indian Ocean and its critical ports with access to global maritime lanes and trading routes play a pivotal role in a free and open Indo-Pacific and beyond.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to advocate for quality infrastructure and investment based on transparency, respect for international law, good governance, sustainable environmental and labor standards. We must also support U.S. companies doing business in Sri Lanka and utilize the tools we have with the Development Finance Corporation and the Export-Import Bank to provide alternatives to coercive lending and opaque contracts.

I believe our most important assets are American innovation, people-to-people exchanges, and education. If confirmed, I pledge to expanding and seeking creative ways to build upon these networks and connections. We must also continue to engage the many voices of the Sri Lankan diaspora in the United States, who make valuable contributions in our bilateral relationship.

Mr. Chairman, Sri Lanka offers many challenges and opportunities for the United States to grow our relationship. I will make every effort to advance our values and shared interests so that Sri Lanka meets its full potential to be a vital partner in the Indo-Pacific.

Thank you, again, for allowing me to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Chung follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JULIE CHUNG

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka. I am grateful for the confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me by nominating me for this assignment.

As a first generation immigrant from South Korea, I am proud that my parents instilled in me the values of hard work, optimism, love of country, a Christian faith, and the belief that America is a country of opportunity and force for good. I am thankful for the sacrifices they made for my sister and me, and their unconditional love. I am also thankful to my husband Jose Collazo whose unwavering support and patience have been a strong foundation for our family, including our eight year old son, Mateo, who still doesn't understand exactly what mom does at work but is proud of me anyways.

During my 25-year career in the Foreign Service, I have served in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, advocating for U.S. interests, building strategic partnerships, and engaging a diverse range of stakeholders to promote democratic values and private sector-led economic growth. My experience in China, Japan, and throughout Southeast Asia have provided me unique insight into the importance of American leadership to ensuring a free, open, resilient, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. As the Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, I am proud to have led policies that supported democratic partners and strengthened their ability to counter authoritarian oppression, corruption, and terrorism. And I believe that as policy leaders, we also have a responsibility to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our workforce, something I have actively promoted since joining the Foreign Service as part of the very first cohort of the Pickering Fellowship supported by Congress.

Mr. Chairman, Sri Lanka is Asia's oldest democracy and survived the tragedy of a civil war that resulted in unimaginable violence and continued ethnic and religious divisions. If confirmed, I am committed to speaking clearly and consistently in support of democratic values, human rights, and a strong civil society that are essential to democracies and central to our foreign policy approach. We must also be strong partners in encouraging justice, accountability, and reconciliation so that all Sri Lankans can share in the benefits of peace, security, and prosperity.

Sri Lanka is positioned in a strategic location at the heart of the Indian Ocean, and its critical ports with access to global maritime lanes and trading routes play a pivotal role in a free and open Indo-Pacific architecture. This reinforces the necessity for the United States to build constructive relationships with Sri Lanka, including with civil society, the private sector, and the Sri Lankan people. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to advocate for quality infrastructure and investment based on transparency, respect for international law, and good governance, which is mindful of sustainable environmental and labor standards. We must also support U.S. companies doing business in Sri Lanka and utilize the tools we have with the Development Finance Corporation and the Export-Import Bank to provide alternatives to coercive lending and opaque contracts.

The sinking of the MV X-Press Pearl cargo ship near the shores of Colombo a few months ago, causing its biggest marine disaster in Sri Lanka's history, points to the need for upholding such standards. U.S. humanitarian assistance, emergency response capabilities, and environmental surveillance tools helped Sri Lanka respond to this tragedy and is emblematic of how we can be a positive force and strong partner to the people of Sri Lanka.

I believe our most important assets are American innovation, people-to-people exchanges, and education. If confirmed, I pledge to expanding and seeking creative ways to build upon these networks and connections. We must also continue to engage the many voices of the Sri Lankan diaspora in the United States who make valuable contributions in our bilateral relationship. Mr. Chairman, Sri Lanka offers many challenges and opportunities for the United States to grow our relationship. I will make every effort to advance our values and shared interests so that Sri Lanka meets its full potential to be a vital partner in the Indo-Pacific.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you, Ms. Chung.

Thank you for that testimony and focusing on all aspects of our relationship with Sri Lanka and stressing the importance of the people-to-people relationships. I have a strong interest in all of the countries to which you have been appointed, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, but as I Chair the Africa Subcommittee, I am going to focus my questions on those nominations.

Ambassador Mahoney, you mentioned in your testimony the various armed groups that control different regions of the Central African Republic, contributing to a very fragmented and war-torn landscape. Among those are the Russian-supported forces, the mercenaries that continue to commit human rights abuses, that operate independently under a complicit host government.

How should the United States address the increasing presence of these Russian-sponsored and supported forces and the acute threat to stability that they represent, particularly, as the U.N. peace-keeping mission there struggles to maintain security in the capital and throughout the country.

Ambassador Mahoney: Senator, thank you for your question, and before I respond, I would just like to say that I had the privilege to serve two tours in Sri Lanka and walked by the picture of your father as Ambassador, many times a day. So thank you for his service and thank you for your service as a member of a Foreign Service family.

Senator, thank you, you put your finger on among an array of challenges, one of the most acute right now, the influence of foreign, malign actors, who are further destabilizing the situation in

the Central African Republic and not contributing to the long-term peace and stability that is so desperately needed.

And if I am confirmed as Ambassador, I would work with our partners on the ground in Bangui, and with other regional actors, like the EU and the economic community of Central African states to really highlight the risk of increased international isolation and opprobrium and further destabilization, as I said, further instability that the government of the Central African Republic is courting, in pursuing this relationship with an actor that has been sanctioned for very good reasons by our Government and others, and that does not have the long-term interests of the Central African Republic and its people at heart. It is not operating with that as a basic principle.

If I am confirmed, I would work to highlight of our existing sanctions on these Russian-supported mercenaries and do whatever I can with other agencies to enforce those sanctions. I would also highlight and raise awareness among Central Africans about the serious human rights violations that these Russian-supported mercenaries have committed, as you very rightly pointed out, who are there at the invitation of the Central African Republic Government, who are committing these violations.

And I was encouraged to see that the Commission of Inquiry Report that the Government recently released on serious human rights violations and abuses did mention the culpability of Russian quote, unquote, instructors.

I would also work, if confirmed, to counter the addition information and propaganda campaigns that are really undermining so much of the good work that is being done in the Central African Republic to support the people there. And we have some good programs right now on the ground that are working to train journalists to independently evaluate sources of news and to have a very, very critical assessment of the stories and narratives being presented to them.

I would work to expand those efforts because I think they are very, very important and can bear a lot of fruit in the long term.

I would also work, as you said, to increase those people-to-people exchanges that are so important. I was so glad to hear you talk about that, because to me, those are pure gold. For very, very little money, we make those very real connections at a very important level with the future leaders of the country.

And I know that the pandemic has probably affected our ability to continue those, but if confirmed and pandemic conditions permit, I would really want to step them up because they really are so very, very productivity and fruitful.

I would work with our U.N. mission to also call-out the irresponsible behavior of these mercenaries in New York and they have been doing a very, very robust job of that.

And, finally, I would work with our partners on the ground, including MINUSCA and the EU, to see what responsible alternatives, security alternatives we might be able to propose. I would explore that avenue so that the Government doesn't feel that it must turn to these very responsible and non-accountable actors.



And I think the mandate of renewal for MINUSCA, which is coming up next month, offers a really prime opportunity for that. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you, and thank you for your prior service including in Sri Lanka, and for mentioning my dad. It is good to see you again.

Let me turn it over now to Senator Rounds.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I most certainly appreciated the answer with regard to the influence there. I am going to turn to Ambassador Vrooman to begin with. It is good to see you again, sir, and thank you for your previous service.

Let us talk a little bit about Mozambique and, specifically, combatting the Islamic State Mozambique is among the top priorities, here for the United States, with regard to our policies in Mozambique.

What is driving the extremist insurgency in Mozambique and do you feel the U.S. is adequately engaged, given the various threats and challenges the situation in Mozambique poses to the region?

Ambassador VROOMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Rounds. It is good to see you, as well, and having seen you on the continent in recent years, it is great to see you even, virtually, at this time.

It is a very pertinent question and I think that, obviously, the situation at Cabo Delgado, we have reached, I think, an inflection point in the arrival of forces from SADC and from allies, such as Rwanda, that have enabled the Government of Mozambique to deal with military blow and to recapture some of the cities, towns, and ports that ISIS-Mozambique had taken over during that 4-year period that I mentioned in my testimony.

Now, what I think all of these combined forces are finding is a large swath of destruction. Police stations, health centers, and other government infrastructure has been destroyed. There have been reports, as well, that mines have been laid that raises some questions about returning to and getting the displaced people back to their homes, villages, so that they can resume their livelihoods.

So, really, in terms of our approach right now, it is not, it is really where we come in, in some ways as the major economic and humanitarian partner of the Government of Mozambique, to help them in that reconstruction process. It will be a challenge. The ISIS forces have, some of them have been, you know, dealt a military blow, but some of them will come back if there isn't a response that is able to hold the towns, villages, and ports that have been liberated of the ISIS-Mozambique forces.

So, it is at this stage, I think, that the U.S. engagement is very important and most of our assistance, to date, has been humanitarian in nature or to be directed in crisis response. We will now need to work on these more lasting development challenges, having to do with job creation, having to do with rebuilding, so that people have the means with which to return to their homes.

And I think that will help, moving forward, giving people a view and a stake in their future and more confidence in the security that has returned, at least for now, to Northern Mozambique.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Haas, you spent most of your career as an economic officer. Bangladesh is a relatively poor nation of increasing strategic importance and it is facing critical political and demographic changes.

What are the biggest factors limiting Bangladesh's economic growth and what can the United States do to help, also, what is your assessment of Bangladesh's anticorruption efforts and what are we going to do to promote financial transparency?

Mr. HAAS. Thank you very much, Senator, for that question.

Indeed, there are a lot of economic challenges in Bangladesh. I think their ranking on the World Bank's ease of doing business study is a pretty fair characterization of the problems that exist there. And as you mentioned, one of those problems is the issue of corruption, where, also, Bangladesh has a lot to do.

If confirmed, I will continue to promote the improvement of the economic environment there, the rule of law to make it easier for U.S. companies to compete there, and I will also work very closely with American companies who are seeking to do business there, to ensure that they are treated fairly and that they are not discriminated against and to level the playing field so that they can compete and do business. Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

And Ms. Chung, with opposition to a renegotiated Status of Forces Agreement and the cancellation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact worth nearly \$500 million, it seems that our relationship with Sri Lanka is facing some headwinds at the moment.

Do you agree, and if so, how can we turn it around?

Ms. CHUNG. Thank you for that question.

I think there are certainly challenges in the relationship, as we have seen with the MCC project and various other cooperation. I think what is needed more than ever is for us to explain why the U.S. remains a strong partner.

And in terms of issues like infrastructure and investment, to show the benefits of quality, high-quality, good governance, transparent infrastructure projects and why that benefits, directly, the people of Sri Lanka. I think we can go a long way at doing more public diplomacy and engaging with all stakeholders on the ground, beyond the Government, with civil society, with journalists, and those who feel affected by such projects in the future.

In addition, I think we can look for more opportunities with the Development Finance Corporation that already has invested more than \$200 million in small and medium enterprise lending, especially for female-owned businesses. So, I think the initiatives like these, we can reach out more directly to the Sri Lankan people, develop constructive relationships with the Government, and expand our relationship in many ways.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

And once again, thank you all for your service.

Mr. Chairman, I will turn it back to you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you, Senator Rounds.

And let me now turn it over to Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. [Audio malfunction.] That it had been an honor—let us see. Can you hear me now?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes. Good, now.

Senator HAGERTY. Okay. I just wanted to thank you for your leadership of this hearing, Senator Van Hollen.

And in honor of your father's service as our Ambassador to Sri Lanka, I would like to turn my attention, now, to our candidate for the Ambassador to Sri Lanka.

Julie, it is good to see you again. I want to thank you for your service on the Japan [inaudible - 1:05:11] when I served as U.S. Ambassador to Japan. You and I have had opportunities to talk about this region on a number of occasions.

I would like to point my attention, though, to something I am very concerned about and that is China's use of death trap diplomacy to secure interests in two very strategic ports in Sri Lanka. Back in 2017, Sri Lanka formally handed over the strategic Port of Hambantota to China on a 99-year lease, after Sri Lanka struggled to pay its debt owed to Chinese firms.

This transfer gave China control of territory just an if you hundred miles away from India and it gave China a strategic foothold along a critical sea, commercial and military sea lane.

China also has a stake in another port in Sri Lanka, at the Colombo Port City, where Chinese submarines actually docked at the harbor when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was visiting there.

China now possesses the largest navy in the world and these strategic ports that they are amassing, will allow China to project power across the Indo-Pacific Region.

The United States must take the lead in pushing back against China or else, the entire Indo-Pacific Region is in danger of following into the greater influence of the Chinese Communist Party.

So, my first question for you is, if confirmed, Julie, what steps would you take to deepen U.S. relations with Sri Lanka's leadership and work with partners, such as India, to ensure that Sri Lanka's relationship with China doesn't contribute to further intensify competition in the Indian Ocean?

Ms. CHUNG. Thank you for that question.

You are exactly right about the influence and the concerns that we have about the PRC's investment; the extent and the types of infrastructure investment they are making in Sri Lanka. I think every country wants options. No country wants to be cornered into making one decision based on one country's deliverance of and their promises.

So, if confirmed, I pledge to working, again, to work with all the tools that we have in the U.S. Government. We have the U.S. Freedom Development Agency. We have the DFC to provide alternatives and that is what is essential.

Unlike other countries, some other countries that direct more than investment and tell their countries' companies where to invest, U.S. companies go where they base on risk and benefits assessments. So, in order to encourage that investment, we have to work with the Government, with their private sector, with their civil society to build the foundations of strong governance, the anticorruption, and strong transparency standards.

And I believe that what you pointed out about India is essential. You can't do this alone and you shouldn't do this alone. The United States is not the only country who cares about robust, international

standards. We have seen this recently with a number of countries and stakeholders coming together around the world to promote the Blue Dot Network, which creates international standards for quality infrastructure.

So, working with multilateral partners, working with India, working with Japan, as we have worked before, Senator, to work with those like-minded countries and co-financing projects and raising these issues of international standards and transparency together will be essential.

Senator HAGERTY. I agree with you, Ms. Chung, and I think that your highlighting the Blue Dot Network certainly brings back a point close to my heart, because I signed on behalf of the United States when we brought Australia and Japan together with their finance development networks, along with our own, so I think that holds great potential. We have a lot more work to do there and I appreciate your keeping that in mind as you move forward.

Back to Sri Lanka. While they are staving off a major financial crisis right now and it is wallowing in debt, China has refused to bail Sri Lanka out. But helping Sri Lanka also presents other actors with a moral hazard.

So, my next question is, what can and should the United States do, including with multilateral agencies, such as the IMF, and with partner countries, such as quad members, to help Sri Lanka clean up its public finances, and how do we do so without contributing to further unsustainable debt burden on Sri Lanka?

Ms. CHUNG. Thank you for that question, Senator.

Yes, the Sri Lankan's debt-to-GDP ratio is over 100 percent and of this external debt, 15 percent is owed to the PRC. Now, 44 percent of this debt is owed to commercial banks, as well, so this is a broader problem than just owing debt to China. They also owe the Asian Development Bank, India, the World Bank, Japan, and commercial banks, as well.

So, I think in order to get into that healthy financial macro-economic situation, we should work to continue to encourage and urge the Sri Lankans to go to the IMF, to consider steps for debt restructuring, to make the essential reforms needed in the country. We certainly have had past programs in the country working with our Treasury colleagues to promote that technical assistance and the capacity-building, so that they can build that strong financial ecosystem.

So, we need to just continue to stay on that and our role in the IMF, our role in international organizations and banks will certainly play a key role in encouraging that message continuously to Sri Lanka.

Senator HAGERTY. Yeah, I think Sri Lanka is a prime candidate for what you described and I appreciate your attention to that, because getting their financial house in order is going to be a key to making certain that their strategic posture remains as we all need to see it in that region.

Thank you very much, and congratulations on your nomination.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

And I appreciate that line of questioning, as well, with respect to Sri Lanka, and I look forward to working with you and Ms. Chung, if confirmed, on those issues.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And to all our nominees, we have a vote on the Senate, which is why Senator Rounds departed momentarily, and when he returns, I am going to go vote.

But let me thank our entire first panel here. Unless we have any other senators waiting in the Zoom wings here, I just want to, again, congratulate all of you on your nominations. Thank you for your service and I look forward to supporting your nominations.

And, hopefully, we will be able to get them through the Senate in a way that gets you to post as soon as possible. Thank you, all. [Pause.]

Senator VAN HOLLEN. We are now going to begin our second panel of distinguished nominees. I indicated earlier the countries to which they have been nominated as ambassador, and now I am also going to provide a bit more about their backgrounds and experience starting with Mr. Brian Shukan, who is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and has been the Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum since 2019, and I want to thank Mr. Shukan for his leadership there and for working with Senator Coons and I during our visit to Sudan a little earlier this year. We appreciated your insights and working to make that a successful trip.

Prior to Mr. Shukan's service in Sudan, he was the Director of the Office of Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. He has also served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Port-au-Prince and Consul General in Casablanca, and Deputy Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Mr. Shukan is the recipient of numerous awards, including the James Forrestal Award for Excellence at Strategy and Force Planning from the U.S. Naval War College.

He received his BA from the University of Wisconsin Madison, a JD from Washington University in St. Louis, and an MA from the Naval War College. Welcome.

We also have with us, Ms. Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, who is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs. Previously, she served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Africa and Public Diplomacy and is Acting Deputy Spokesperson for the United States Department of State, and also has a senior advisor at the Foreign Service Institute.

In addition, she has held numerous posts across the State Department and around the world in her 26-year-long career, including posts in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Cambodia, India, and Bulgaria.

She is the recipient of a Senior Foreign Service Performance Award and a Superior Honor Award and she holds a BA from the University of Virginia and the certificate from the International Division of Waseda University in Tokyo. Welcome, Ms. Fitzsimmons.

Next, we have Ambassador David Gilmour, who is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as Chargé d'Affaires in Chad. He has also served as Ambassador to the Togolese Republic.

Previously Ambassador Gilmour held posts and Deputy Chief of Mission in Malawi, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Africa

in the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs, and Director of East African Affairs, and as an Director of Public Diplomacy for Africa. His other assignments overseas include positions in Australia, Costa Rica, and Panama.

He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the partnership excellence award from the Secretary of State's Office of Global Partnerships, and he received his BA from Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan and his MA from the University of Texas at Austin.

I, again, want to thank all of our nominees who are here. I don't know if Senator Rounds has had a chance to return yet. When he does, he may also want to provide a few welcoming remarks, but in the interests of time, let us now proceed in the order that I introduced everybody, beginning with Mr. Shukan.

Mr. Shukan?

**STATEMENT OF BRIAN WESLEY SHUKAN OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN**

Mr. SHUKAN. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Benin.

I appreciate the confidence that the President and Secretary Blinken have shown in me, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I would also like to recognize my family watching online; my wife Clare for her love and support during the last 30 years and throughout our Foreign Service journey; my daughter Abigail, who is serving in the Department of Homeland Security; and my daughter Leah, who is a graduate student in Boston.

It has been a great privilege to serve the U.S. as a Foreign Service Officer for the past 26 years, beginning at our embassy in Benin, and for the past two years as Chief of Mission in Sudan, as we supported the Sudanese people's aspirations for a democratic and prosperous future.

And I appreciate your remarks, Senator Van Hollen, regarding your visit and all the support that you and Senator Coons, and your colleagues, have shown to us as we have worked, here in Khartoum.

Benin has been a strong example of peace, stability, and tolerance. Benin is a solid partner on shared goals of economic prosperity, peace, and security.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to promote democratic governance and human rights, support a prosperous and healthy society with closer trade and people-to-people ties with the United States, and strengthen regional security to address global threats, such as violent extremism and transnational crime.

I would like to briefly highlight a few priorities, starting with democratic and human rights. And personally, I will never forget my experience in 1996, seeing Beninese citizens standing patiently

in long lines to vote in Benin's second democratic election and witnessing a peaceful transfer of power.

For nearly three decades, Benin was a model of multi-party democracy in West Africa. It adopted a democratic constitution in 1990 and has held six consecutive presidential elections with peaceful transitions. We have recently seen undue restrictions on freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, arrests of opposition members, and laws undermining electoral competitiveness. These developments contribute to our concern about anti-democratic trends in Benin.

If confirmed, I will support and encourage Benin to resume the positive role it once in promoting peaceful, democratic governance, rule of law, and human rights.

A second priority is developing a prosperous and healthy society with closer trade links to the United States. Benin remains one of the world's least developed countries; one-third of its population lives in poverty, and malnutrition has stunted the growth of a third of Benin's children under five.

If confirmed, I will work with the embassy team, Congress, and our Beninese partners to promote a healthier and more prosperous future with growing trade and investment. In 2020, the U.S. provided \$28.2 million in assistance to foster a healthier society in Benin by strengthening health services. The U.S. is also working to improve human rights and strengthen civil society.

A five-year, Millennium Challenge Corporation compact, valued at \$391 million, entered into force in 2017. This compact is strengthening Benin's electric sector, attracting private investment, and removing a major impediment to economic growth.

The U.S. has invested in food assistance, improving child literacy, and increasing class attendance. And USAID maintains programs to build regional and global trade and attract investment.

If confirmed, I will guide these and other programs to partner with Benin for a more prosperous and peaceful future.

I also want to highlight the importance of strengthening regional security and addressing global threats, such as violent extremism and transnational crime. Benin is a strong partner for peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel and has prioritized improving its counter-terrorism capacity and preventing violent extremism. Our assistance to Benin's security forces supports their participation in peacekeeping and regional security efforts, and advances Benin's ability to secure its borders and interdict maritime and transnational crime.

If confirmed, I will prioritize counterterrorism and countering violent extremism through security sector assistance, community building, and youth development.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to advance U.S. interests in Benin and would be pleased to take any questions. Thank you.[The prepared statement of Mr. Shukan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRIAN WESLEY SHUKAN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to

be the next Ambassador to the Republic of Benin. I appreciate the confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have shown in me, and I wish to thank the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify.

I would also like to recognize my wife Clare for her love and support during the last 30 years and throughout our Foreign Service journey; my daughter Abigail, who is serving in the Department of Homeland Security; and my daughter Leah, a graduate student in Boston.

It has been a great privilege to serve the United States as a Foreign Service Officer for the past 26 years, beginning with my service at the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou, Benin, and for the past two years as chief of mission in Khartoum, Sudan, as we supported the Sudanese people's aspirations for a democratic and prosperous future.

Benin has been a strong example of peace, stability, and ethnic and religious tolerance in an increasingly turbulent region. Benin is a solid partner on shared goals of economic prosperity and regional peace and security. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and Congress to promote democratic, inclusive, and transparent governance and respect for human rights; support a prosperous and healthy society with closer trade linkages and stronger people to people ties with the United States; and strengthen regional security and address global threats such as violent extremism and transnational organized crime.

I would like to briefly highlight a few priorities in each of these areas, starting with promoting democratic and transparent governance and respect for human rights. I will never forget my experience in 1996 of seeing Beninese citizens patiently stand in long lines to vote in Benin's second democratic election, and witnessing a peaceful transfer of power between political parties. For nearly three decades, Benin had been a model of multi-party democracy in West Africa. It adopted a democratic constitution in 1990 and has held six consecutive presidential elections with peaceful transitions of power. We have recently seen undue restrictions on freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, arrests of members of the political opposition, and laws undermining electoral competitiveness. These developments contribute to our concern about anti-democratic trends in Benin.

If confirmed, I will support and encourage Benin to resume the positive role it once had in promoting peaceful democratic governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights in the region.

A second priority is developing a prosperous and healthy society with closer trade linkages to the United States. Benin remains one of the world's least developed countries. Over one-third of its population lives in poverty, and malnutrition has stunted the growth of nearly a third of Benin's children under five. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team, Congress, U.S. agencies, and our Beninese partners to promote a healthier and more prosperous future with growing trade and investment. I will also engage Benin's fast-growing youth population so that they better understand our longstanding commitment to a prosperous future for their country based on shared values and interests.

In fiscal year 2020, the U.S. government provided Benin \$28.2 million in bilateral assistance for programs that foster a healthier and more inclusive society by strengthening health services delivery and resources. The U.S. is also working to improve human rights and strengthen civil society. A five-year, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact, valued at \$391 million, entered into force in 2017. This compact is strengthening Benin's electricity sector, attracting private investment to Benin, and removing a major constraint to long-term economic growth. In 2017, the USDA launched a five-year \$21.3 million investment in food assistance to Benin, improving school age children's literacy and increasing class attendance by providing healthy meals at schools. USAID's Regional Mission also maintains economic growth and trade programs focusing on policy advocacy and technical assistance to build regional and global trade linkages and attract investment. If confirmed, I will guide these and other programs to partner with Benin for a more prosperous and peaceful future.

I also want to highlight the importance of strengthening regional security and addressing global threats such as violent extremism and transnational organized crime. Benin is a strong partner for peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel and has prioritized improving its counter terrorism capacity and preventing violent extremism. Our assistance to Benin's security forces supports Benin's participation in peacekeeping and regional security efforts, and advances its ability to secure its own borders and interdict maritime and transnational organized crime. If confirmed, I will prioritize engaging with the Government of Benin on counterterrorism and countering violent extremism in the areas of security sector assistance, community building and youth development, and strategic communications.



Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to advance U.S. interests in Benin and would be pleased to take any questions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Shukan.

I see my colleague, Senator Rounds, has returned.

Senator, I didn't know if you had any opening remarks that you wanted to provide, before I turn to the next witness.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do, but if it is all right with you, why don't we have all of them offer their opening statements. I will do mine and I think you have to go vote as well, so this may be a good time for you to do your vote and when we come back, when they are finished, I will move right into my opening statements and then we can proceed from there.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. I will just hand it off to you and go vote and then come back.

Thank you very much.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thanks.

**STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH ANNE NOSEWORTHY FITZSIMMONS OF DELAWARE, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE TOGOLESE REPUBLIC**

Ms. FITZSIMMONS. Chairman Van Hollen, Ranking Member Rounds, and distinguished members of the committee, what a privilege it is for me to appear before you today as the nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Togo.

I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity. In fact, my very first chance to live outside the United States came from then-Senator Biden, who in 1989, selected me as one of two Japan-U.S. Senate scholars from Delaware and set me on the path that would lead to my diplomatic career.

If confirmed, it will be the honor of a lifetime to lead our embassy to advance the interests of the United States and the American people in Togo.

I am thankful that I get to share this moment with my family and loved ones. Diplomacy is our family business. My husband, Richard Seipert, serves as a Diplomatic Security Special Agent at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and my son-in-law, Grant Holyoak, is a first tour Foreign Service officer at Embassy Beijing. I am so grateful for a lifetime of support from my wonderful husband; my children, Taylor, Morgann, MaKaela, Tyson, and Adam; my daughter-in-law, Laura; and sons-in-law, Grant and Jake.

My grandchildren Molly, Harrison, and William are also watching and I'm thrilled that my mom, Barbara Noseworthy, is as well, because she has visited our family at every one of our postings abroad.

Throughout my 26 years in the Foreign Service, I have served across the globe and in a variety of roles in Washington, DC. As Deputy Executive Secretary, I supported two Secretaries of State as they travelled hundreds of thousands of miles projecting Amer-

ican values and engaging with citizens and Governments across the globe. As Acting Deputy Spokesperson, I helped explain U.S. policy to the world, and most recently, as the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs, I led a fantastic team to build stronger, deeper relationships with the countries of Africa to make the continent safer, more secure, more prosperous, and more democratic.

I am a dedicated and engaged mentor to dozens of colleagues and I am committed to making the Foreign Service a more diverse, resilient, and effective organization. I welcome the opportunity to continue this work, if confirmed, as the U.S. Ambassador to Togo.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Togo in 1960. Since then, the United States and Togo have built a strong relationship based on shared goals: advancing peace and security; promoting trade and economic growth; strengthening government and democratic institutions; and supporting opportunity for all Togolese citizens.

Togo is a key regional partner to maintenance of peace and security in West Africa. Togo plays an active role in mediating regional disputes, most recently in Guinea. The Government works alongside civil society, regional partners, and our embassy in Lome, to strengthen national resilience to violent extremism.

Togo currently has more than 1,300 troops and gendarmes in U.N. missions, making it the sixteenth largest national contributor.

If confirmed, I will continue to foster security cooperation between our two countries to enhance the capabilities of Togolese security forces.

The United States works closely with the Government of Togo to improve the investment climate in order to attract U.S. companies to take advantage of Togo's geographic advantages as a logistics hub, with the Gulf of Guinea's deepest deep-water port, and a regional air transport hub.

Before the pandemic, Togo enjoyed a period of steady economic expansion, fueled by international investment and a concerted effort to modernize the country's commercial infrastructure. The Togolese Government calls the Port of Lome the lungs of the economy and promotes Togo as the gateway to West Africa.

As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that the United States support partners like Togo to return to a path of economic success by promoting trade and investment opportunities for the U.S. private sector.

While Togo aspires to become a regional economic and security leader, these goals cannot be achieved without strengthening Togo's democratic institutions. Recent Togolese Government restrictions on the media, politically motivated arrests, limitations on political gatherings, and suspensions of press outlets raise concern.

If confirmed, my embassy team and I will work with the Government of Togo, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote political reforms, reinforce democratic institutions, and strengthen electoral institutions and processes to promote free and fair elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, for this opportunity.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and my colleagues across the U.S. Government to strengthen our relationship with Togo.

I welcome any questions you may have and hope you and your colleagues will visit Togo to witness the growing bilateral partnership firsthand. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fitzsimmons follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH ANNE NOSEWORTHY FITZSIMMONS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and distinguished members of the committee, what a privilege it is for me to appear before you today as the nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Togo. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity. In fact, my very first chance to live outside the United States came from then-Senator Biden, who in 1989 selected me as one of two Japan-U.S. Senate scholars from Delaware and set me on the path that would lead to my diplomatic career. If confirmed, it will be the honor of a lifetime to lead our Embassy to advance the interests of the United States and the American people in Togo.

I am thankful that I get to share this moment with my family and loved ones. Diplomacy is our “family business”—my husband Richard Seipert serves as a Diplomatic Security Special Agent at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and my son-in-law Grant Holyoak is a first tour Foreign Service officer at Embassy Beijing. I am so grateful for a lifetime of support from my wonderful husband, my children Taylor, Morgann, MaKaela, Tyson, and Adam, my daughter-in-law Laura and sons-in-law Grant and Jake. My grandchildren Molly, Harrison, and William are also watching and I’m thrilled that my mom, Barbara Noseworthy, is as well since she has visited our family at every posting abroad.

Throughout my 26 years in the Foreign Service, I’ve served across the globe and in a variety of roles in Washington, DC. As Deputy Executive Secretary, I supported two Secretaries of State as they travelled hundreds of thousands of miles projecting American values and engaging with citizens and governments across the globe. As acting Deputy Spokesperson, I helped explain U.S. policy to the world. And most recently, as the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs, I led a fantastic team to build stronger, deeper relationships with the countries of Africa to make the continent safer, more secure, more prosperous, and more democratic. I am a dedicated and engaged mentor to dozens of colleagues and I am committed to making the Foreign Service a more diverse, resilient, and effective organization. I welcome the opportunity to continue this work, if confirmed, as the U.S. Ambassador to Togo.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Togo in 1960. Since then, the United States and Togo have built a strong relationship based on shared goals: advancing peace and security; promoting trade and economic growth; strengthening government and democratic institutions; and supporting opportunity for all Togolese citizens.

Togo is a key regional partner to maintain peace and security in West Africa. Togo plays an active role in mediating regional disputes, most recently in Guinea. The Government works alongside civil society, regional partners, and our Embassy in Lomé to strengthen national resilience to violent extremism. Togo currently has more than 1,300 troops and gendarmes in U.N. missions, making it the 16th largest national contributor. AFRICOM General Townsend’s recent visit to Togo highlights the importance the United States places on Togo’s partnership in promoting regional peace and stability. If confirmed, I will continue to foster security cooperation between our two countries to enhance the capabilities of Togolese security forces.

The United States works closely with the Government of Togo to improve the investment climate in order to attract U.S. companies to take advantage of Togo’s geographic advantages as a logistics hub, with the Gulf of Guinea’s deepest deep-water port, and a regional air transport hub. Before the pandemic, Togo enjoyed a period of steady economic expansion fueled by international investment and a concerted effort to modernize the country’s commercial infrastructure. The Togolese Government calls the Port of Lomé the “lungs” of the economy and promotes Togo as the gateway to West Africa. As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that the United States support partners like Togo to return to a path of economic success by promoting trade and investment opportunities for the U.S. private sector.

While Togo aspires to become a regional economic and security leader, these goals cannot be achieved without strengthening Togo’s democratic institutions. Recent To-

golese Government restrictions on the media, politically motivated arrests, limitations on political gatherings, and suspensions of press outlets raise concern. If confirmed, my Embassy team and I will work with the Government of Togo, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote political reforms, reinforce democratic institutions, and strengthen electoral institutions and processes to promote free and fair elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee for this opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and my colleagues across the United States Government to strengthen our relationship by promoting peace, stability, democracy, and economic growth in Togo. I welcome any questions you may have and hope you and your colleagues will visit Togo to witness the growing bilateral partnership firsthand.

Senator ROUNDS [presiding]. Thank you, Ms. Fitzsimmons.  
Ambassador Gilmour, please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID R. GILMOUR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

Ambassador GILMOUR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify today. It is a great honor to appear before you as the nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and I am grateful for the confidence that President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me with this nomination.

And if confirmed, I will do my best to uphold this trust and advance U.S. national interests and priorities.

I would like to mention a couple of important people, without whom, I would not be here today. The first is my wife, Judith Martin, who has spent a lifetime in the Foreign Service; first, with her parents. Her father, S. Douglas Martin, was a career State Department Officer, and later, as my cherished partner, as we traveled the world together and raised our three children, doing service in 10 overseas posts and in Washington in the 35 years of my Foreign Service career.

Judith is a civil service employee at the State Department, where she works in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

I would also like to acknowledge my 93-year-old father, John Gilmour. He worked 34 years in local government, serving as the City Manager in the small town where I grew up in Michigan. Everything I know about respect, integrity, and dedication to public service, I learned from my dad.

Mr. Chairman, I believe my service as Ambassador to Togo, as Chargé d'Affaires in Chad, and in senior positions in the Bureau of African Affairs in Washington, as well as postings elsewhere in the world, have prepared me for this assignment.

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

Now, since its independence, there have only been two presidents in Equatorial Guinea, and one of whom has ruled for over 40 years. Presidential term limits were established in 2011, but were not applied retroactively to President Obiang, who could remain in office until 2030. Though multiparty elections are technically allowed, the non-ruling political parties faced legal restrictions, and opposition leaders have reportedly faced torture, harassment, intimidation, and politically motivated detention.

And if confirmed, I will raise our concerns with Equatorial Guinea's leadership about human rights and the rule of law, and I will urge Government leaders to enable a true multi-party democracy and to allow the growth of a civil society. I will stress that promoting transparency and ending corrupt practices are key to Equatorial Guinea's long-term growth and stability, and critical to strengthening our commercial ties.

The United States is Equatorial Guinea's largest trading partner and the U.S. Embassy plays a critical role in promoting these American companies' interests.

And if confirmed, I will continue to work to improve the investment climate for U.S. companies in Equatorial Guinea.

Maritime security is Equatorial Guinea's primary security challenge, and since 2019, there have been multiple incidents of piracy and kidnapping in and around Equatorial Guinea's waters that, if left unchecked, could impact U.S. commercial interests.

And if confirmed, I will promote bilateral security cooperation and investment to protect those interests and regional stability.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds, I understand that such cooperation must undergo stringent review to ensure that it does not come at the expense of promoting respect for human rights and does not inadvertently enable corruption.

And, if confirmed, no goal will be more important to me than protecting the lives, interests, and welfare of American citizens living and traveling in Equatorial Guinea. I promise to work closely with you and the Members of this Committee in this endeavor.

So, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I would be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Gilmour follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID R. GILMOUR

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

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

Mr. Chairman, I believe my service as Ambassador in Togo, as Chargé d'affaires in Chad, and in senior positions in the Bureau of African Affairs in Washington, as well as postings elsewhere in the world, including as Deputy Chief of Mission

in Panama, have prepared me for this assignment. If confirmed, I will draw upon these experiences to advance U.S. interests in Equatorial Guinea and the Central African region.

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

Since its independence, there have only been two presidents in Equatorial Guinea, one of whom has ruled for over forty years. Presidential term limits were established in 2011 but were not applied retroactively to President Obiang, who could remain in office until at least 2030. Though multiple party elections are technically allowed, the non-ruling political parties faced legal restrictions, and opposition leaders have reportedly faced torture, harassment, intimidation, and politically motivated detention. If confirmed, I will raise our concerns with Equatorial Guinea's leadership about human rights and the rule of law, including the value of democracy and transparency. I will urge government leaders to enable true multi-party democracy and to allow the growth of a strong civil society. I will stress that promoting transparency and ending corrupt practices are key to Equatorial Guinea's long-term growth and stability, and critical to strengthening our commercial ties.

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

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

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

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

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

I promise to work closely with you and the members of this committee in this endeavor.

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

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Ambassador Gilmour.

I would expect that our Chairman will be back shortly and, as I indicated earlier, we seem to have this in the afternoons where our votes are being cast, so we try to tag team those votes.

Let me just begin. As I said for panel one, as career diplomats, much of your lives and those of your families, have been spent far from home. You have made great sacrifices in the service to your country. Thank you and your families for your lifetimes of service and let me just assure you, we understand your work is critical to maintaining and advancing America's influence in the world.

Mr. Shukan, you served ably as Chief of Mission in the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum in a very critical and transitional period in the

U.S.-Sudan relationship. If confirmed, you will serve as Ambassador in a region that is rapidly changing for the worse.

Benin remains one of the world's poorest countries. Countering violent extremism is an emergent focus of U.S. engagement and Benin's standing as a Democratic leader in Africa, has rapidly deteriorated under President Talon, whose Government has arrested opposition leaders and implemented restrictive, new electoral rules.

Ms. Fitzsimmons, much of what I just said about Benin could also be said about its neighbor, Togo. On top of it all, and contributing to Togo's woes, is that one family has dominated Togo's politics for 60 years. I believe your recent tenure as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Africa and Public Diplomacy, and then as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Africa Bureau, will be very useful, if confirmed.

Ambassador Gilmour, you are one of the most experienced U.S. Ambassadors currently serving in Africa. Equatorial Guinea is a small, oil- and gas-rich country of increasing strategic importance. It is notorious for its kleptocratic system of governance.

President Obiang took office in 1979, making him one of the world's longest serving heads of state. Equatorial Guinea requires a perceptive and experienced ambassador to lead the U.S. operations. I am glad that you have been nominated for this post.

I am delighted to meet all of you today and I look forward to, you know, continuing to work with you and I most certainly appreciate the comments that you have shared with us today.

And with that, I am not sure if our Chairman has returned or not yet, but if Senator Van Hollen has not returned yet, I would be happy to begin the questioning at this time. And I just looking to see if he has actually come back yet or not, and I don't see him on the list yet, so let me just turn right to the questions and I will begin with Mr. Shukan.

Your experience in Khartoum as the Charge d'Affaires will contrast in several ways to your new position. If confirmed as the new Ambassador to Benin, you are going to be busy.

Sudan has received significant attention from Washington since the Democratic transition began in 2019 and has been a sustained priority across the Trump and Biden administrations. Benin, despite many challenges, will compete for attention with major economic partners in West Africa and the violent extremist threat in the Sahel.

What lessons will you take from your time in Sudan to Benin and what are you looking forward to that will be different?

Ambassador GILMOUR. Well, thank you, Senator Rounds.

And let me first express my appreciation for the comments that you made about the Foreign Service families. I am glad that I have mine joining me online in this virtual hearing. For me, this has very much been a family affair from the very beginning.

I also share the concerns that you have expressed concerning both, the violent extremist threat and Democratic backsliding. I spent the last 2 years, here in Khartoum and the 2 years prior to that working on Sudan from Washington. And it has really been a privilege and a challenge to support Sudan's efforts to really get their democracy moving, to support this transition, and we have

appreciated all the help that we have received from Members of Congress on that.

The Benin situation is different. As I mentioned in my opening comments, I served in Benin in my first assignment. It really was a formative experience for me to witness a young democracy and seeing the value that Beninese citizens placed on exercising their right to vote on participating in a democratic process and seeing peaceful transitions of power.

And, you know, it is certainly something of a disappointment to see the backsliding that has taken place since that time. We are also concerned about media, restrictions on media freedom and the fact that there are some political prisoners in Benin at this time.

So, I think it is important that as a Chief of Mission, we speak both, privately and publicly about democracy and human rights, about our values. It is important, if confirmed, that we encourage Benin to resume the leadership role that it had in the past.

I think this is very much linked to the vulnerability to violence extremist ideology in areas like Northern Benin. People need to feel that they are being heard, that their government is accountable. So, I see a direct relationship between democracy and governance, and security, as well as economic development.

I think it is important to engage all political groups including the [Audio malfunction.] And I think that one of the lessons I have learned from here in Sudan, but also in my previous assignments is the importance of having a whole of mission approach to these things.

And I think that means working with our team to support these values. I know that public affairs and USAID are going to play a critical role, as well as the security assistance that we are providing to the Beninese military and to the police.

Supporting civil society, youth, even engaging with local radio; all of these things are important and provide good flora to talk about our values and advance our interests.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Ambassador GILMOUR. Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

And I have had the opportunity to visit Benin and Togo. And, Ms. Fitzsimmons, like Benin, the U.S. mission in Togo is relatively small and Togo commands significantly less attention from Washington than many of its close neighbors.

If confirmed, how will you leverage your public diplomacy background to garner more attention to Togo; conversely, how will you use your public diplomacy background to engage with the Togolese people in new and different ways?

Ms. FITZSIMMONS. Thank you so much for the question, Senator Rounds.

I am delighted at the idea that, if confirmed, I will get to go lead the embassy team at Embassy Lome and think about creative ways that we can use public diplomacy programming, particularly, the Young African Leaders Initiative, which, as you know, is now a decade old, 750,000 strong across the subcontinent. And I think there are tremendous opportunities there to support young African leaders both, in Togo, and network them more effectively with their like-minded colleagues and counterparts, not only in Benin.



I think it is fortuitous that Mr. Shukan and I are on the panel today. I think there are tremendous opportunities to work within the Coastal West African Subregion and across the entire African continent to make sure that young leaders, whether they are in the media, whether they are entrepreneurs, whether they are young educators, have opportunities to hear from, learn from, and teach each other.

There is no question in my mind that an activist in Zimbabwe, for example, has much to teach a young Togolese activist. And I think one of the very effective ways that I would hope to work, if confirmed as Ambassador, is to use my background as someone with experience and exchanges to connect young Africans, so that they can be force multipliers in the many challenges that you have rightly pointed out.

I think, also, it is critically important that we speak clearly when we are talking to the Government, to President Faure, that he understands that things like the current Millennium Challenge Threshold Program in Togo are wonderful opportunities to leverage the Togolese Government's desire to be the gateway to West Africa. But there are very important benchmarks that will need to be met in democracy and governance for that program to move forward successfully and lead, perhaps, ultimately, to a compact for Togo.

So, I would ensure that public and private messaging at the embassy, if confirmed, reinforced the U.S. opportunities in the logistics and services sector in Togo, if Democratic governance space can be maintained and expanded. Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

And my time has expired, Mr. Chairman, so I will turn it back to you. I have not had the opportunity to ask Ambassador Gilmour one question, but I will leave it up to you. If you want me to just proceed with it or if you would like me to come back?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. [Presiding.] Sure. Do you want to go, proceed. That would be fine.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Gilmour, several top members of the Obiang administration and his family have been implicated in large-scale corruption and other financial crimes, especially tied to oil revenues.

If confirmed, how will you balance multiple U.S. strategic interests, including combatting this kind of corruption that could provide a gateway for a malign, foreign influence?

Ambassador GILMOUR. Well, thank you, Senator Rounds.

And it is nice to see you once again. I don't know if you recall, I hosted you when you came to Togo, along with Senator Inhofe, on a delegation a few weeks back.

Senator ROUNDS. Yes.

Ambassador GILMOUR. And, thank you, again, for your very kind comments about the Foreign Service.

Corruption in Equatorial Guinea is certainly one of the most important priorities for the United States, and as you mentioned, certain senior figures in the Government there have been implicated in corruption cases, both in the United States and in numerous countries.

In fact, just recently, there was a case settled with the vice president and some seized assets, about \$30 million had been negotiated

and a happy ending in sense that about \$20 million of those seized assets will be used to purchase COVID vaccines for the people of Equatorial Guinea.

So, I think, if confirmed, I would certainly want to continue along our lines of speaking out about corruption in the country and, certainly, these kinds of cases, I think, coordinating with our partners, the U.K., the Europeans, Brazil, South Africa, other countries that have had these kinds of cases, it is very important to continue these efforts to highlight official corruption in the country.

At the same time, there have been some signals from the Government that they want to address this problem. There is some new legislation that has been passed in the country that is still pending, as I understand, is still pending implementation, but that is a positive signal.

Also, the country has made representations to rejoin the Extracted Industries Transparency Initiative, which would bring some transparency and accountability to the oil and gas and mining sectors in the country.

So, I think we have to take the Government, you know, take a step-by-step approach with this and kind of judge the political will of this Government and see where it takes us, and see where we can collaborate with them to reduce the official corruption. But, you know, given the track record, as you mentioned, of this Government, we have to proceed cautiously.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

And, Mr. Chairman, thank you for your indulgence.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator.

And Ms. Fitzsimmons, thanks for mentioning the YALI program. Senator Rounds and I have been working together to provide a regular authorization for that program, as has Congresswoman Karen Bass in the House.

And I am pleased to report that just yesterday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed out a 5-year authorization. So, it will now be codified and we want to also expand it to other areas. So, thank you for mentioning that.

Mr. Shukan, I want to take advantage of this hearing, really, to ask you some questions about where you are now in Sudan, because as I mentioned, you know, and, again, thank you for your good work there and for helping Senator Coons and myself during our visit. And we found it a very promising visit. We recognized that we are now 2 and a half years since the fall of Bashir, and we recognize it is a fragile process.

I will say, in recent days and weeks, it is looking even more fragile. And I wondered if you see the most recent events as just more bumps on the road, along the way to a stable and Democratic Sudan, or is there something more serious going on now that is disrupting the path to progress?

Mr. SHUKAN. Senator, thank you for the question.

It is a good question and I think if you look at where we are, it is 2 years into the Sudanese transition since they signed their constitutional declaration on August 2019 and formed the transitional government. They have made some progress. They have made some pretty major progress in terms of signing a peace agreement and getting off of the state sponsors of terror list, and also

implementing economic reforms that have brought about some improvements on the macroeconomic side, like improved inflation, gotten rid of subsidies on tea commodity.

But they also, there are some key benchmarks that have not yet been met and especially on the security side in terms of progress to integrate the various armed groups that exist, including those represented by Juba Peace Agreement signatories, the formation of a transitional legislative council, for example.

And then, I think despite the economic positives, there is also a gap between improvements on the macro side and the very, very serious difficulties that the ordinary Sudanese man and woman on the street are experiencing.

So, yeah, I do share your concern about the seriousness of the situation right now. We are expecting to see some large demonstrations tomorrow. What we expect is to see a large contingent coming out in support of democracy, in support of civilian leadership. And that is what makes me optimistic, even though we are at a very fragile moment in Sudan.

They really are going to have to redouble their efforts, the various components of this transitional government to work together. There are divisions between civilians and military that got a lot of attention, but the divisions between the different civilian groups, between JPA signatories and the forces for freedom and change, those are very important.

So, the prime minister did form a committee a few days ago to address this kind of situation and it includes the military and it includes the FFC. It includes some of the JPA signatories. That is really positive, but I think we are going to have to just keep pushing. We are doing it in public. We are doing it in private.

There is really no other path forward, except working together and recommitting to implementation of those principles of freedom, peace, and justice from that August 2019 constitutional declaration.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, I appreciate that, because I think we have a continuing important role to play in trying to support the Sudanese people in this move toward democracy.

We saw the failed coup recently. The good news is that it failed. But we have also seen some protests, as you know, in support of the military, probably organized by Bashir forces. So, I am hoping to see a big outpouring of support for the continue to march toward democracy in the days ahead.

And I think Prime Minister Hamdok continues to be a good leader, but I am worried, as I know you are, about the developments in the area. I just want to be clear that we are all united in trying to make sure that we support the success of this peaceful revolution.

I just have one other question for Ambassador Gilmour. As you know, Equatorial Guinea is currently ruled by a regime characterized by Freedom House as, quote, highly authoritarian, unquote, and they further state that it frequently detains the few opposition politicians in the country, cracks down on civil society groups, and censors journalists.

They also point out, quote, the Judiciary is under presidential control and security forces engage in torture and other violence with impunity. That is from Freedom House.

So, my question is this, and I say this as somebody who supports U.S. efforts to professionalize militaries around the world, as a supporter, generally speaking, of the IMEP program, but also one who has seen that in certain cases, those who were trained through the IMEP program or other U.S. efforts to professionalize militaries have participated in coups and in anti-democratic conduct.

The Biden administration requested \$500,000 to support IMEP programs in Equatorial Guinea. Can you talk a little bit about that request and how you would balance that request with our concerns over the direction of the country and the issues that I raised.

Ambassador GILMOUR. Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, thank you, by the way, for your comments about the YALI program. I happen to have the honor to be part of the team that created the Mandela Washington Fellowship, which is the centerpiece of the YALI program. So, thank you for your support for that and, particularly, for continuing to finance it, because it is a tremendous and valuable tool and all of our embassies make great use of it.

And thank you for the question. I think, certainly, it is not a pretty picture in terms of governance and democracy in Equatorial Guinea and it never has been. And as you mentioned, Freedom House, I think since the 1990s, has ranked Equatorial Guinea as not a free country. So, this is a challenging partner to work with.

In the last couple of years, there have been some efforts by the Government to improve, in certain areas, and notably, in trafficking in persons, and you may be aware that they were able to raise their ranking in the annual trafficking of persons survey to the Tier 2 watchlist, and that, then, opened the possibility for some collaboration with the United States in terms of foreign assistance programs, which I believe led to the IMEP request that you mentioned.

I think what is certainly driving the IMEP request and a desire on the part of the United States to increase engagement with Equatorial Guinea on security issues are the very serious security problems going on in the Gulf of Guinea. As I mentioned in my opening statement, there have been, particularly in the past couple of years, many serious incidents of piracy and kidnapping, and, of course, we have, the United States has commercial interests in Equatorial Guinea, but also all around in the surrounding countries, as well; most notably, Nigeria, which is very close to Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon.

So, there are many Americans working in that region. Enormous investments in, particularly, oil and gas, and particularly offshore platforms, which have been the target of many of these piracy attacks.

So, we, the United States, we need Equatorial Guinea to be a responsible player in terms of security, maritime security in that region. And so, I think, certainly, our concept is we want to work with them to begin to develop their capacity or increase their capacity to be able to respond to some of these attacks. Equatorial Guinea, actually even had one pirate attack in the outskirts of the

capital. There was an attack against a gas-processing facility in 2020.

So, it is a very serious problem and something that we need to work with them on. But, at the same time, we have these very serious concerns about human rights and governance and democracy that we have had for a very long time.

So, my approach, if confirmed, would be to go very cautiously in this direction. We want to work with them, but we need to see what is their political will for reform. We need to be very cautious in terms of not enabling corruption.

There have been allegations of corruption in the military forces; of course, we have the [inaudible - 1:56:44] vetting process and if we are to work with security force members there, we need to be very cautious and very thorough in that process to know who we are dealing with.

So, if confirmed, I would take a very cautious approach, a very measured approach, and I think a very step-by-step approach with any engagement we are going to do, in terms of working with their security forces. And I think we need to go slowly, and I think we need to set benchmarks and take a very cautious approach.

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

And, right, we all will be working with you and rely on your good judgment on how to best balance all these factors.

Senator Rounds, do you have any other questions, comments?

Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Chairman, I do not.

I have most certainly appreciated the responses that we have received today.

And, once again, it is the fact that we have these qualified individuals before us for these really challenging posts, is appreciated. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, let me add my thanks and appreciation, as well, to all of you for your current service in the Foreign Service and for, you know, taking on the responsibilities for which you have been nominated.

And I will certainly support your confirmation. We have a group here with deep expertise and experience. So, many thanks to all of you and to your families.

And with that, this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:44 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

---

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

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. PATRICIA MAHONEY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* Various armed groups control regions of the Central Africa Republic (CAR), contributing to a fragmented and war-torn landscape. How can the U.S. work with the Government the Central Africa Republic, the United Nations, and like-minded partners to bring parties to the negotiating table, and return to dialogue on a peace process that will lead to a sustainable peace?

*Answer.* Understanding political grievances where they exist, including through a robust and inclusive Republican Dialogue, and strengthening implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (Khartoum Accord), which the United States has championed, are important factors in bringing signatories

back to the peace process. The United States, working with other international partners, should also support initiatives which improve relations with neighbors, reduce cross-border movement of arms and combatants, and enable CAR to secure its borders. Strengthening CAR's security institutions to consolidate control over government-controlled areas is critical, as is deployment of state services to populations and eventually supporting local elections. If confirmed, I will leverage all the tools at my disposal to support these initiatives.

*Question.* On October 15, President Touadéra declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities against the rebel coalition.

- How has this affected the security situation on the ground and humanitarian access, if at all?
- What prospects are there for negotiations with rebel leaders, and what might such negotiations address?
- What are the implications for the 2019 Khartoum Accord?

*Answer.* President Faustin-Archange Touadéra's unilateral ceasefire is something we and regional partners, including the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) pressed for and welcomed, including through a statement the Embassy and its G-5 partners (African Union (AU), European Union (EU), Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), France, the World Bank, and the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA)) issued in the wake of Touadéra's declaration. International partners are encouraging the Government to stand up a monitoring mechanism as soon as possible, and humanitarian actors are assessing the situation on the ground, which remains dynamic.

It is my understanding that through the ICGLR initiative, discussions are ongoing with armed group leaders with a view to having them return to the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (Khartoum Accord). Touadéra's initiative is an indication he is cognizant the only way out of the current crisis is through dialogue leading to a political settlement. It is my hope that armed groups will return to the framework of the 2019 Accord which offers opportunities for political representation, decentralization, and more equitable management of natural resources.

*Question.* As the people of the Central Africa Republic struggle to cope with multiple crises while attempting to restore basic governance, how can the U.S. most effectively support humanitarian needs and civil society efforts to build the foundations of democracy?

*Answer.* CAR presents a complex relay of urgent challenges, including ongoing violence and instability, weak state institutions, and lack of government control over much of its territory; a dire humanitarian crisis; and now the influence of malign actors.

At the heart of these challenges lies the CARG's inability to exert effective control over its territory. That inability to control and provide essential services allows for the violence and instability of armed groups vying for territory and resources; which in turn leads to increased human rights abuses and constricts humanitarian access; and leaves space for malign actors like the Russia-supported private military company (PMC) Wagner Group (Wagner), and other U.S. sanctioned entities associated with Yevgeny Prigozhin. These actors have demonstrated clearly they do not have the long-term interests of CAR as an operating principle.

Engaging a Russian PMC to help gain the upper hand may seem like a short-term fix to some in the CAR Government, but it is doing long-term damage to the goals of peace, national reconciliation, and rule of law, which are linchpins to CAR's ultimate stability, without strengthening government institutions or capacity that would make the CAR Government able to hold and maintain effective control over additional territory.

The United States, working with international partners, needs to support those diplomatic, security and peace initiatives which are most likely to reduce the violence, and enable CAR to secure its borders. It is important in this context to remember that Security Council members recently agreed to significantly increase MINUSCA's troop strength.

Working with other members of the G-5, if confirmed, I would support the ceasefire recently announced by President Touadéra. In concert with international and regional partners, I would press all stakeholders to recommit to and reinvigorate the peace process under the 2019 Accord. The CARG's recent steps to initiate a national dialogue on peace and reconciliation are an encouraging step.

I would also re-emphasize the perils of working with an entity sanctioned for sound reasons not only by the United States but by other governments (EU and UK) as well. In the long term, I would continue our ongoing efforts to strengthen CAR

Government institutions—most critically in the justice sector but also in the CAR Government’s stewardship of national resources.

Further, if confirmed, I would seek out ways to expand the U.S. Government’s myriad of successful health initiatives in Africa to improve CAR’s ability to respond to health issues including measles, malaria, and infant mortality, if security conditions in country permit increased programming.

*Question.* CAR’s Government has pledged to investigate allegations by U.N. human rights officers that state security forces and allied security personnel—including Russian military instructors and private military contractors—are responsible for grave human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture of detainees.

- What is the status of these investigations, and how credible have they been to date?
- How might the allegations, and the CAR Government’s response, affect the scope of U.S. security assistance in the future?

*Answer.* Minister of Justice Abazene’s mid-October sharing of the summary of the CAR Government commission of inquiry report is a useful step toward accountability in these matters. Abazene mentioned that proceedings related to the human rights abuses enumerated in the report were ongoing in civilian and military courts. Embassy Bangui is gathering more information on the precise number and status of these cases, including through engagement with Abazene, and, if I am confirmed, I will continue to press him and President Touadera to ensure all are pursued to conclusion and perpetrators held accountable.

Human rights considerations factor into all aspects of our security sector cooperation with CAR and are a critical determinant of its breadth and scope. As indicated, and as we have done in the past, we will scale back work if human rights concerns arise.

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* Throughout my Foreign Service career, I have worked to advance U.S. policy to support and promote democracy and respect for human rights. I regard that work as not only essential to my mission as a diplomat representing the values of the United States but also among the most personally rewarding aspects of my career. The impact of those efforts has often been incremental (as in a counterpart government’s long-term efforts to institutionalize accountability mechanisms for its military) or part of a broader team effort (as when colleagues across the U.S. interagency worked to support members of civil society as they advocated against anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in Uganda). As Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, I advocated both publicly and privately for increased space for dissent; greater media freedom; and fair process and equitable treatment for detainees, including those detained on political grounds. If confirmed, I commit to continue promoting and supporting democracy and respect for human rights in the Central African Republic.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in the Central Africa Republic? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* Following consultations with colleagues and experts, I see the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in CAR being threefold and interrelated: fragile institutions, ongoing violence that stymies development and progress, and a lack of access to justice by much of the population. Stemming from these foundational challenges, we see troubling symptoms including but not limited to 1) malign influence by Russia, which further erodes the country’s stability and respect for the rule of law; 2) a moribund peace process; 3) corruption in the mining sector; and 4) a worsening humanitarian situation throughout the country, which is impacting millions of Central Africans.

If confirmed, I will strive to provide honest counsel to President Touadera and his Government, while ensuring good stewardship of the Department of State’s and interagency’s resources in concert with the UN, EU, AU, France, regional organizations, and others to strengthen the country’s democratic institutions, advance the rule of law, improve access to justice, end impunity, enable effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, and increase transparency in the mining sector. Additionally, I will seek to increase the capacity of Central Africans to identify and call out hate speech, disinformation, and propaganda through education and outreach to civil so-

ciety. One of my primary goals as ambassador, if confirmed, will be to support a viable path for the Government to begin moving from lifesaving humanitarian assistance to sustainable development.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in the Central Africa Republic? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support democracy in CAR in coordination with the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, the Office of Global Criminal Justice, and other Department of State colleagues and the interagency to strengthen CAR's judicial and security institutions to make them more responsive to Central Africans' needs. Additionally, I commit to spotlighting reports of human rights violations and abuses and governance concerns to my CAR Government counterparts, and spotlighting these concerns through Embassy Bangui's reporting, in collaboration with NGOs and civil society.

The objectives I hope to accomplish through my engagement, if confirmed, would be increased capacity by the Government to serve more Central Africans throughout the country; security and law enforcement officials who respect the rule of law and human rights; and a more stable environment in which Central African entrepreneurs could begin to make economic progress. Although we need to see further concrete actions to hold those who commit human rights violations and abuses accountable, I think the Government's commission of inquiry into human rights abuses—which released a summary of its report on October 2 and named CAR Armed Forces and "Russian instructors"—represents a potential mechanism in the fight against impunity.

The country's fragile and undeveloped institutions, ongoing violence, and corruption impede the United States' ability to achieve these goals in collaboration with the Central African people. I think it will be important to work with the CAR Government and our international partners to develop innovative solutions to these complex and interrelated issues.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* While the Democracy Commission Small Grants program is only for countries in Europe, if confirmed, I will strive to make sure all U.S. Government democracy and governance assistance for CAR is used effectively and efficiently. I will do my utmost, if confirmed, to ensure Department of State and USAID democracy and governance funding is prioritized in ways that are coordinated, mutually reinforcing, and will advance U.S. Government interests and strategic goals in CAR, including strengthening institutions; increasing civilian security; promoting respect for human rights, and enhancing transparency and accountability in government. In coordination with the CAR Government, civil society, and international partners, I will seek to make U.S. funding responsive to local needs and aligned with our objectives in CAR.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in the Central Africa Republic? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to building on and expanding Embassy Bangui's strong relationships with civil society members, human rights and other NGOs in the United States, and with NGOs and civil society organizations in CAR. As the United States' Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, I used the convening power of my position to create spaces for NGOs and members of civil society to gather and voice their concerns. If confirmed, I will strive to develop a robust dialogue with government and civil society actors to better understand their equities. Additionally, I will work closely with likeminded partners to ensure our messaging to the CAR government is unified in our advocacy for respect for human rights, access to justice, and stressing the importance of a free and open environment for Central Africans to express their political views without fear of retribution.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?



**Answer.** If confirmed, I commit to meeting with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties in CAR. As we look ahead to the Republican Dialogue scheduled to begin in November, as well as the first local elections in over 30 years—scheduled for September 2022, our engagement with the CAR government, political opposition groups, neighboring countries, and likeminded nations will be of utmost importance to ensure constructive political engagement and avoiding violence that has plagued the country for too long.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with the Central Africa Republic on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in the Central Africa Republic?

**Answer.** An independent Central African press is critical to the success of CAR's democracy and to countering malign influence. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with independent and local press in CAR, building on Embassy Bangui's work to maintain strong relationships with local and international journalists in CAR. I will work with Department of State and interagency colleagues to continue providing professional training and exchange opportunities for members of the press to build their resilience to disinformation and hate speech. Finally, I will continue Embassy Bangui's strong advocacy with the Central African government to protect and facilitate the work of a free and independent press in CAR.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

**Answer.** It is critical for the United States to build on efforts to counter disinformation and hate speech in CAR, which risks enflaming tensions and exacerbating existing divisions in the country. If confirmed, I will coordinate with Department of State and interagency partners—as well as likeminded nations—to expand training initiatives to empower journalists to report accurately on events and shed light on allegations of human rights violations and abuses, instances of corruption, as well as malign influence by Russian propagandists. I will also seek to support the work of community leaders who promote peace.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with the Central Africa Republic on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I will commit to actively engage with the CAR government—specifically the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Protection—on the right of workers to exercise freedom of association, including to form and join independent trade unions, and call out incidents when the government or other actors restricts that right.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in the Central Africa Republic, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

**Answer.** I commit to using my position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in CAR, no matter their gender identity, expression or sexual orientation. As I did during my service in Uganda as deputy chief of mission, I will work with colleagues across the U.S. interagency to promote respect for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in CAR, working in close partnership with local civil society. I will support civil society voices in CAR to strengthen their ability to advocate for the human rights of all persons. I will use all the tools at my disposal, including Embassy Bangui's convening power to bring together key actors from the government, civil society, private sector, and international community to discuss issues affecting LGBTQI+ persons.

*Question.* What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in the Central Africa Republic?

**Answer.** CAR's penal code criminalizes public expressions of same-sex affection, and LGBTQI+ individuals are stigmatized by societal attitudes and prejudice.

*Question.* What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in the Central Africa Republic?

**Answer.** I commit to better understanding the situation of LGBTQI+ persons in CAR and how the U.S. government can advance their cause including through our convening power, messaging, and programming.

*Question.* Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to the Central Africa Republic?

*Answer.* I commit fully to briefing Congress consistently and openly during my tenure as Ambassador to CAR, if I am confirmed.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* Yes, I agree these incidents and any threats to the health and safety of U.S. personnel must be taken seriously.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* Yes. As Secretary Blinken has said, his number one responsibility as Secretary of State is to protect the men and women representing our country around the world. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring Embassy Bangui treats any reported incident seriously. Should they occur, we will report these incidents through appropriate channels in a timely manner and ensure any affected individual receives prompt medical care.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with medical and Regional Security Office staff in Bangui to ensure I understand the full scope of threats against U.S. personnel and that all safety protocols are being followed carefully.

---

#### RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. PATRICIA MAHONEY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* Various armed groups control regions of the Central Africa Republic (CAR), contributing to a fragmented and war-torn landscape. How can the U.S. work with the Government the Central Africa Republic, the United Nations, and like-minded partners to bring parties to the negotiating table, and return to dialogue on a peace process that will lead to a sustainable peace?

*Answer.* Understanding political grievances where they exist, including through a robust and inclusive Republican Dialogue, and strengthening implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (Khartoum Accord), which the United States has championed, are important factors in bringing signatories back to the peace process. The United States, working with other international partners, should also support initiatives which improve relations with neighbors, reduce cross-border movement of arms and combatants, and enable CAR to secure its borders. Strengthening CAR's security institutions to consolidate control over government-controlled areas is critical, as is deployment of state services to populations and eventually supporting local elections. If confirmed, I will leverage all the tools at my disposal to support these initiatives.

*Question.* On October 15, President Touadéra declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities against the rebel coalition.

- How has this affected the security situation on the ground and humanitarian access, if at all?
- What prospects are there for negotiations with rebel leaders, and what might such negotiations address?
- What are the implications for the 2019 Khartoum Accord?

*Answer.* President Faustin-Archange Touadéra's unilateral ceasefire is something we and regional partners, including the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) pressed for and welcomed, including through a statement the Embassy and its G-5 partners (African Union (AU), European Union (EU), Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), France, the World Bank, and the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA)) issued

in the wake of Touadera's declaration. International partners are encouraging the Government to stand up a monitoring mechanism as soon as possible, and humanitarian actors are assessing the situation on the ground, which remains dynamic.

It is my understanding that through the ICGLR initiative, discussions are ongoing with armed group leaders with a view to having them return to the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (Khartoum Accord). Touadera's initiative is an indication he is cognizant the only way out of the current crisis is through dialogue leading to a political settlement. It is my hope that armed groups will return to the framework of the 2019 Accord which offers opportunities for political representation, decentralization, and more equitable management of natural resources.

*Question.* As the people of the Central Africa Republic struggle to cope with multiple crises while attempting to restore basic governance, how can the U.S. most effectively support humanitarian needs and civil society efforts to build the foundations of democracy?

*Answer.* CAR presents a complex relay of urgent challenges, including ongoing violence and instability, weak state institutions, and lack of government control over much of its territory; a dire humanitarian crisis; and now the influence of malign actors.

At the heart of these challenges lies the CARG's inability to exert effective control over its territory. That inability to control and provide essential services allows for the violence and instability of armed groups vying for territory and resources; which in turn leads to increased human rights abuses and constricts humanitarian access; and leaves space for malign actors like the Russia-supported private military company (PMC) Wagner Group (Wagner), and other U.S. sanctioned entities associated with Yevgeny Prigozhin. These actors have demonstrated clearly they do not have the long-term interests of CAR as an operating principle.

Engaging a Russian PMC to help gain the upper hand may seem like a short-term fix to some in the CAR Government, but it is doing long-term damage to the goals of peace, national reconciliation, and rule of law, which are linchpins to CAR's ultimate stability, without strengthening government institutions or capacity that would make the CAR Government able to hold and maintain effective control over additional territory.

The United States, working with international partners, needs to support those diplomatic, security and peace initiatives which are most likely to reduce the violence, and enable CAR to secure its borders. It is important in this context to remember that Security Council members recently agreed to significantly increase MINUSCA's troop strength.

Working with other members of the G-5, if confirmed, I would support the ceasefire recently announced by President Touadera. In concert with international and regional partners, I would press all stakeholders to recommit to and reinvigorate the peace process under the 2019 Accord. The CARG's recent steps to initiate a national dialogue on peace and reconciliation are an encouraging step.

I would also re-emphasize the perils of working with an entity sanctioned for sound reasons not only by the United States but by other governments (EU and UK) as well. In the long term, I would continue our ongoing efforts to strengthen CAR Government institutions—most critically in the justice sector but also in the CAR Government's stewardship of national resources.

Further, if confirmed, I would seek out ways to expand the U.S. Government's myriad of successful health initiatives in Africa to improve CAR's ability to respond to health issues including measles, malaria, and infant mortality, if security conditions in country permit increased programming.

*Question.* CAR's Government has pledged to investigate allegations by U.N. human rights officers that state security forces and allied security personnel—including Russian military instructors and private military contractors—are responsible for grave human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture of detainees.

- What is the status of these investigations, and how credible have they been to date?
- How might the allegations, and the CAR Government's response, affect the scope of U.S. security assistance in the future?

*Answer.* Minister of Justice Abazene's mid-October sharing of the summary of the CAR Government commission of inquiry report is a useful step toward accountability in these matters. Abazene mentioned that proceedings related to the human rights abuses enumerated in the report were ongoing in civilian and military courts. Embassy Bangui is gathering more information on the precise number and status of these cases, including through engagement with Abazene, and, if I am confirmed,

I will continue to press him and President Touadera to ensure all are pursued to conclusion and perpetrators held accountable.

Human rights considerations factor into all aspects of our security sector cooperation with CAR and are a critical determinant of its breadth and scope. As indicated, and as we have done in the past, we will scale back work if human rights concerns arise.

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* Throughout my Foreign Service career, I have worked to advance U.S. policy to support and promote democracy and respect for human rights. I regard that work as not only essential to my mission as a diplomat representing the values of the United States but also among the most personally rewarding aspects of my career. The impact of those efforts has often been incremental (as in a counterpart government's long-term efforts to institutionalize accountability mechanisms for its military) or part of a broader team effort (as when colleagues across the U.S. interagency worked to support members of civil society as they advocated against anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in Uganda). As Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, I advocated both publicly and privately for increased space for dissent; greater media freedom; and fair process and equitable treatment for detainees, including those detained on political grounds. If confirmed, I commit to continue promoting and supporting democracy and respect for human rights in the Central African Republic.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in the Central Africa Republic? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* Following consultations with colleagues and experts, I see the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in CAR being threefold and interrelated: fragile institutions, ongoing violence that stymies development and progress, and a lack of access to justice by much of the population. Stemming from these foundational challenges, we see troubling symptoms including but not limited to 1) malign influence by Russia, which further erodes the country's stability and respect for the rule of law; 2) a moribund peace process; 3) corruption in the mining sector; and 4) a worsening humanitarian situation throughout the country, which is impacting millions of Central Africans.

If confirmed, I will strive to provide honest counsel to President Touadera and his Government, while ensuring good stewardship of the Department of State's and interagency's resources in concert with the UN, EU, AU, France, regional organizations, and others to strengthen the country's democratic institutions, advance the rule of law, improve access to justice, end impunity, enable effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, and increase transparency in the mining sector. Additionally, I will seek to increase the capacity of Central Africans to identify and call out hate speech, disinformation, and propaganda through education and outreach to civil society. One of my primary goals as ambassador, if confirmed, will be to support a viable path for the Government to begin moving from lifesaving humanitarian assistance to sustainable development.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in the Central Africa Republic? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support democracy in CAR in coordination with the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, the Office of Global Criminal Justice, and other Department of State colleagues and the interagency to strengthen CAR's judicial and security institutions to make them more responsive to Central Africans' needs. Additionally, I commit to spotlighting reports of human rights violations and abuses and governance concerns to my CAR Government counterparts, and spotlighting these concerns through Embassy Bangui's reporting, in collaboration with NGOs and civil society.

The objectives I hope to accomplish through my engagement, if confirmed, would be increased capacity by the Government to serve more Central Africans throughout the country; security and law enforcement officials who respect the rule of law and human rights; and a more stable environment in which Central African entrepreneurs could begin to make economic progress. Although we need to see further concrete actions to hold those who commit human rights violations and abuses accountable, I think the Government's commission of inquiry into human rights

abuses—which released a summary of its report on October 2 and named CAR Armed Forces and “Russian instructors”—represents a potential mechanism in the fight against impunity.

The country’s fragile and undeveloped institutions, ongoing violence, and corruption impede the United States’ ability to achieve these goals in collaboration with the Central African people. I think it will be important to work with the CAR Government and our international partners to develop innovative solutions to these complex and interrelated issues.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* While the Democracy Commission Small Grants program is only for countries in Europe, if confirmed, I will strive to make sure all U.S. Government democracy and governance assistance for CAR is used effectively and efficiently. I will do my utmost, if confirmed, to ensure Department of State and USAID democracy and governance funding is prioritized in ways that are coordinated, mutually reinforcing, and will advance U.S. Government interests and strategic goals in CAR, including strengthening institutions; increasing civilian security; promoting respect for human rights, and enhancing transparency and accountability in government. In coordination with the CAR Government, civil society, and international partners, I will seek to make U.S. funding responsive to local needs and aligned with our objectives in CAR.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in the Central Africa Republic? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to building on and expanding Embassy Bangui’s strong relationships with civil society members, human rights and other NGOs in the United States, and with NGOs and civil society organizations in CAR. As the United States’ Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, I used the convening power of my position to create spaces for NGOs and members of civil society to gather and voice their concerns. If confirmed, I will strive to develop a robust dialogue with government and civil society actors to better understand their equities. Additionally, I will work closely with likeminded partners to ensure our messaging to the CAR government is unified in our advocacy for respect for human rights, access to justice, and stressing the importance of a free and open environment for Central Africans to express their political views without fear of retribution.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to meeting with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties in CAR. As we look ahead to the Republican Dialogue scheduled to begin in November, as well as the first local elections in over 30 years—scheduled for September 2022, our engagement with the CAR government, political opposition groups, neighboring countries, and likeminded nations will be of utmost importance to ensure constructive political engagement and avoiding violence that has plagued the country for too long.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with the Central Africa Republic on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in the Central Africa Republic?

*Answer.* An independent Central African press is critical to the success of CAR’s democracy and to countering malign influence. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with independent and local press in CAR, building on Embassy Bangui’s work to maintain strong relationships with local and international journalists in CAR. I will work with Department of State and interagency colleagues to continue providing professional training and exchange opportunities for members of the press to build their resilience to disinformation and hate speech. Finally, I will continue Embassy Bangui’s strong advocacy with the Central African government to protect and facilitate the work of a free and independent press in CAR.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

*Answer.* It is critical for the United States to build on efforts to counter disinformation and hate speech in CAR, which risks enflaming tensions and exacerbating existing divisions in the country. If confirmed, I will coordinate with Department of State and interagency partners—as well as likeminded nations—to expand training initiatives to empower journalists to report accurately on events and shed light on allegations of human rights violations and abuses, instances of corruption, as well as malign influence by Russian propagandists. I will also seek to support the work of community leaders who promote peace.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with the Central Africa Republic on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to actively engage with the CAR government—specifically the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Protection—on the right of workers to exercise freedom of association, including to form and join independent trade unions, and call out incidents when the government or other actors restricts that right.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in the Central Africa Republic, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

*Answer.* I commit to using my position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in CAR, no matter their gender identity, expression or sexual orientation. As I did during my service in Uganda as deputy chief of mission, I will work with colleagues across the U.S. interagency to promote respect for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in CAR, working in close partnership with local civil society. I will support civil society voices in CAR to strengthen their ability to advocate for the human rights of all persons. I will use all the tools at my disposal, including Embassy Bangui's convening power to bring together key actors from the government, civil society, private sector, and international community to discuss issues affecting LGBTQI+ persons.

*Question.* What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in the Central Africa Republic?

*Answer.* CAR's penal code criminalizes public expressions of same-sex affection, and LGBTQI+ individuals are stigmatized by societal attitudes and prejudice.

*Question.* What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in the Central Africa Republic?

*Answer.* I commit to better understanding the situation of LGBTQI+ persons in CAR and how the U.S. government can advance their cause including through our convening power, messaging, and programming.

*Question.* Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to the Central Africa Republic?

*Answer.* I commit fully to briefing Congress consistently and openly during my tenure as Ambassador to CAR, if I am confirmed.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* Yes, I agree these incidents and any threats to the health and safety of U.S. personnel must be taken seriously.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* Yes. As Secretary Blinken has said, his number one responsibility as Secretary of State is to protect the men and women representing our country around the world. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring Embassy Bangui treats any reported

incident seriously. Should they occur, we will report these incidents through appropriate channels in a timely manner and ensure any affected individual receives prompt medical care.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with medical and Regional Security Office staff in Bangui to ensure I understand the full scope of threats against U.S. personnel and that all safety protocols are being followed carefully.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. PATRICIA MAHONEY BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Beyond public messaging and diplomacy, what tools will you have at your disposal to encourage the Touadera administration to distance itself from partnerships developed with Russia and Russia-linked actors, and encourage positive political, economic and security reforms?

*Answer.* The United States supports CAR's efforts to develop strong institutions and strengthen the rule of law through capacity building and technical assistance. If confirmed, I will use my position as ambassador to enhance coordination within the Department of State, across the U.S. Government, with partners such as the European Union and France, as well as regional organizations to ensure U.S. efforts are strengthening the CAR Government's ability to mitigate conflict, stop human rights abuses and violations, and hold those responsible accountable.

To counterbalance Russia's influence, I will use the U.S. Government's wide array of instruments to call out Russian behavior, including working in collaboration with the U.S. Mission to the U.N. and like-minded partners at the U.N. The CAR Government's commission of inquiry—established to investigate allegations of human rights abuses described in an August U.N. report—acknowledged abuses and violations committed by “Russian instructors” and CAR Armed Forces (FACA). If confirmed, I will press the CAR Government to hold perpetrators responsible. I will also highlight the impact of previous sanctions on Russian entities, and individuals operating in CAR, while strengthening coordination with partner governments to ensure our activities have mutually supporting and maximum impact. Within the Department of State, I will build on ongoing collaboration between the bureaus of African Affairs, European and Eurasian Affairs, International Organization Affairs, the Global Engagement Center, and others to ensure U.S. efforts remain aligned and complementary. Additionally, if confirmed, I will ensure there continues to be robust dialogue between Embassy Bangui and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York.

Lastly, it is critical for the United States to build on efforts to counter disinformation in CAR, which risks enflaming tensions and exacerbating existing divisions in the country. If confirmed, I will coordinate with Department of State and interagency partners—as well as likeminded nations—to expand training initiatives to empower journalists to report accurately on events and shed light on allegations of human rights violations and abuses, instances of corruption, as well as malign influence by Russian propagandists. I will also seek to support the work of community leaders who promote peace.

*Question.* In your view, how does the Central African Republic rank in terms of strategic importance for the United States?

*Answer.* I think it is in the United States' national security interest to continue engaging diplomatically with the CAR Government to assist the country recover from its long history of violence and fragility. The conditions that have led to serious allegations of human rights abuses and violations against civilians, the threat of famine, unlawful child soldier recruitment and use, the malign influence of Russia, and a host of other issues will not stay localized to CAR and will continue to threaten regional peace and security if left unaddressed.

*Question.* Do you feel the U.S. level of engagement with the Central African Republic reflects this level of strategic importance?

*Answer.* Based on my consultations with Department of State colleagues, I have gained a deep appreciation for the tremendous work being done by teammates throughout the U.S. Government to address CAR's humanitarian needs, strengthen the country's institutions—particularly the justice and security sectors, and counter Russia's malign influence. If confirmed, I will explore additional opportunities for

the United States to engage diplomatically with the CAR Government—where appropriate, in consultation with key U.S. interlocutors.

*Question.* If you do not feel as if the U.S.' level of engagement with the Central Africa Republic reflects the level of strategic importance, how would you, if confirmed, work as Ambassador to address this imbalance?

*Answer.* The United States' humanitarian engagement in CAR has saved countless lives. If confirmed, I look forward to discussing with you and your colleagues innovative ways the Department of State and interagency can achieve our objectives in the Central African Republic: 1) supporting the 2019 Peace Agreement to end the Central African Republic's violence; 2) ensuring humanitarian assistance reaches those most in need, and 3) strengthening the country's justice and security institutions.

*Question.* The U.S. Embassy in the Central African Republic is a small, unaccompanied mission, in one of the most difficult environments in which to live and work in the world. As Chief of Mission, how will you work to keep staff morale high?

*Answer.* The wellbeing, safety, and security of the embassy community will be my primary concern. If confirmed, I will seek to support my team members in Bangui by fostering an environment where they feel valued, safe, and supported as they work to make progress on critical U.S. policy objectives in CAR. Serving in CAR is undeniably challenging and I will work in tandem with Deputy Chief of Mission James Hogan to ensure 1) we focus our time and resources on tasks that directly support the mission's primary objectives to prevent exhaustion or burnout; 2) create a culture that promotes clear, respectful, and honest communication among all team members; and 3) ensure colleagues are taking advantage of their leave periods so they can recover from the very significant demands service in Bangui imposes. If I am confirmed, I look forward to discussing with my U.S. and Central African locally employed staff colleagues to better understand their needs and concerns so we can explore ways to reinforce what is working well and strengthen areas of opportunity.

*Question.* How will you engage Africa Bureau leadership to support the staff in Bangui?

*Answer.* I will engage my colleagues in the Bureau of African Affairs leadership transparently and candidly to build an effective dialogue between Bangui and Washington. I will continue Ambassador Lucy Tamlyn's regularly scheduled calls with the Bureau of African Affairs and establish new engagement channels if necessary to ensure the Department of State understands the needs and challenges of the Embassy Bangui team. Further, if confirmed, I would seek the counsel of all colleagues at Embassy Bangui to better understand what engagement practices have worked and where there may be areas we can improve upon in collaboration with the Bureau of African Affairs.

*Question.* Do you believe it is the sign of a healthy democracy when a duly elected government, in consultation with its citizens, extends the term of office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power?

*Answer.* Based on my years working as a diplomat in Africa and elsewhere I think it is imperative governments respond to the needs of their people and govern from a position of trust and earned legitimacy. I think clearly defined presidential term limits are necessary to a well-functioning democracy. There are too many examples in Africa and elsewhere in the world where the extension of presidential term limits through various mechanisms has weakened institutions, diminished the public's trust in government, and driven instability. No country can thrive when much of its populace feels disaffected by its government.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you respond to the Central African Republic potentially extending the term of the current President in power?

*Answer.* If I am confirmed, building a strong and respectful working relationship with CAR President Faustin-Archange Touadera will be among my top priorities. If the CAR Government considered extending presidential term limits, I would seek out the perspectives of civil society, the political opposition, and Touadera's allies and use those insights to consult with the U.S. interagency. Once U.S. policy was defined, I would leverage my relationship with President Touadera to ensure U.S. objectives were met.

*Question.* Please provide your view on supporting U.S. funded, independent international election observation missions? Would you support such a mission for the Central African Republic's next general election?



Answer. I think there is significant value in the United States supporting independent international election observations, especially in fragile democracies like CAR that faced such destabilizing violence following its December 2020 elections. As we look ahead to the planned September 2022 local elections as well as the general elections scheduled for 2025, I will—if confirmed—consult with the CAR Government, civil society, and allies to understand the conditions on the ground, and work to develop plans and options that permit the holding of genuinely free and fair elections using open and transparent electoral processes.

*Question.* Should the United States build on its existing defense and security cooperation with the Central African Republic?

Answer. In collaboration with partners, including the European Union and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) and in accordance with all applicable U.S. regulations, I think the United States must continue its investment in strengthening the FACA. The United States, Central African region, and CAR all gain from a FACA that is professional, competent, and respects human rights. The United States' approach to security sector reform is unique in its focus on human rights, and if confirmed, I will work with allies in country and colleagues in Washington to communicate clearly to President Touadera and the CAR Government what is required for the United States and partners to build on past defense and security cooperation.

I will also press the Government to follow through on its promise to investigate reports of human rights abuses by FACA and Russian security forces and hold offenders accountable through a transparent judicial process.

*Question.* Where are the opportunities and the risks if the United States builds on its existing defense and security cooperation with the Central African Republic?

Answer. The CAR Government has consistently expressed its appreciation for U.S. security assistance, as well as a desire for additional cooperation. Further engagement between the United States and FACA—provided the CAR Government addresses U.S. concerns with violations related to transfer agreements and other issues, particularly those touching on human rights violations—may lead to a more capable security force able to project state authority throughout the country's territory for the first time in its history. Additionally, the United States' focus on promoting respect for human rights in our defense training is unique and cannot be discounted. I believe that a FACA professionalized through U.S.-provided training and other support will be a critical factor in CAR and the region's stability going forward.

I worry that as allegations of human rights violations and abuses by FACA as well as associated armed elements mount, it will become more challenging for the United States to provide defense sector training or assistance. Allegations of serious human rights abuses by Russia-supported private military company elements from the Wagner Group targeting CAR's Muslim minorities risks further marginalizing those communities and triggering spillover effects across the region. If confirmed, I will continue—and expand where appropriate—Ambassador Tamlyn's engagement with the Government alongside the European Union, MINUSCA, and allies to reiterate the importance of respecting human rights while continuing to explore African-led security alternatives to the Wagner Group's activities in the country.

*Question.* Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Bangui?

Answer. Based on my consultations with Embassy Bangui leadership and Department of State colleagues, it is my understanding my teammates in country—from Ambassador Tamlyn to the officers who serve as the mission's engine—are performing at an extraordinary level in terms of their diplomatic engagement and reporting. However, they are also dealing with a tremendous amount of stress associated with expanding mandatory reporting requirements without additional resources, insufficient staffing, and the day-to-day challenges of working in a post far removed from their families and loved ones. Despite these stressors, I understand my teammates in Bangui remain focused on their mission and wholly committed to advancing the United States' interests in the country and doing their utmost to improve the lives of the Central African people.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Bangui?

Answer. The wellbeing of my teammates in Bangui will be my paramount concern. If confirmed, I will create space for frequent one-on-one check-ins and work to restart in-person communication and community building events—COVID-19 conditions in country permitting. I have learned as deputy chief of mission for two

posts and as ambassador to the Republic of Benin how important it is to consistently and verbally express my appreciation for my colleagues' hard work and efforts to accomplish the mission's objectives. Additionally, I think there is great value in ensuring our priorities are clear and investments in time are directly tied to those priorities. I humbly acknowledge this will be an ongoing process—if I am confirmed—and I am excited to build on Ambassador Tamlyn's exemplary leadership and engage with my U.S. and Central African colleagues to create a culture that allows people to be their best and feel valued.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Bangui?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will lead regular discussions with all sections to establish and review goals and develop strategies to achieve common objectives. I will engage all teammates to conceive and articulate clearly what we aim to accomplish, and how we will achieve those objectives. If I am confirmed, I will endeavor to create a culture of inclusion in which all employees' contributions are valued.

*Question.* Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.

- How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* I would describe my management style as collaborative, respectful, and built on a foundation of trust and clear communication. I think it is critical for chiefs of mission to model effective leadership and management, and I am cognizant—as I learned as deputy chief of mission in Nepal as well as Uganda and as Ambassador to the Republic of Benin—that I set the tone for my U.S. and local team members. Lastly, I think it is important for leaders to demonstrate humility at all times and if confirmed, I commit to doing my utmost to live these ideals every day I serve as the United States' ambassador to the Central African Republic.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

*Answer.* No, I do not think it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates in public or private. I think establishing clear expectations and respectfully and constructively explaining why an action did not meet expectations while offering a path forward is the most effective means of helping colleagues reach their potential and improve upon areas of opportunity. We are all human and we will all make mistakes; I have found that delivering clear feedback with empathy leads to more optimal performance. If confirmed, I commit to treating my teammates of all rank with respect.

*Question.* What lessons have you learned from your tenure leading Embassy Cotonou?

*Answer.* From my tenure leading Embassy Cotonou, I have learned that I do not have all the ideas (or even the best ideas!) and it is important to create an environment in which all colleagues who make an embassy function feel comfortable in offering suggestions. I have also learned that even though I may know that I value my colleagues' input, they will not necessarily know I appreciate them unless I make a point of telling them clearly and consistently.

*Question.* How will your management style and approach differ from Embassy Cotonou?

*Answer.* With humility, I think the principles I aspire to (inclusivity, appreciation, clear communication) are critical to effective leadership and management regardless of the assignment. That said, there are important differences between Cotonou and Bangui such as security, freedom of movement, and the size of the embassy team. Acknowledging these differences, I will strive to be even more attentive to the morale of those I am responsible to as ambassador, and I will seek to work with the deputy chief of mission and all team members—if confirmed—to make sure we are being mindful of the stress we are carrying, and when our collective and individual wellbeing needs additional care.

*Question.* How do you envision your leadership relationship with deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* Based on my time serving as deputy chief of mission in Nepal and Uganda, and then as ambassador in Benin, I think the deputy chief of mission-ambassador partnership is one of the most important relationships to nurture in an embassy. If confirmed, I plan to develop a close and collaborative partnership with Deputy Chief of Mission James Hogan to ensure that our expectations related to priorities, operations, reporting, and engagement are aligned and mutually supportive.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* Traditionally, the deputy chief of mission is responsible for an embassy's day-to-day operations as well as management and serving as an ombudsman for colleagues to voice their concerns. With a post such as Embassy Bangui with a smaller team, I think it will be important and useful for Deputy Chief of Mission Hogan and me to begin discussing this question in the coming weeks, if I am confirmed. Considering my current distance from Bangui, I look forward to gaining a more accurate understanding of daily conditions in country and creating a partnership that works for the team and helps us to achieve our objectives.

*Question.* In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

*Answer.* I think it is critical for team members' personal and professional growth for managers to provide accurate, constructive feedback on their performance. As ambassador, if confirmed, I will do my utmost in partnership with the deputy chief of mission to ensure Embassy Bangui managers are providing specific and constructive feedback in a respectful manner to colleagues they are responsible to as leaders.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to help them be their best and incentivize those who demonstrate superior effort.

*Question.* It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the Central African Republic.

- In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

*Answer.* The Department of State faces a challenging balancing act in terms of ensuring our diplomats can engage effectively with interlocutors throughout the country they are responsible for understanding while limiting personal risk, especially in a high-threat post like Bangui. As I have expressed previously, I think my team members are the Department of State's most important resource and I take their well-being seriously. That said, if I am confirmed, I will work with my Regional Security Office in Bangui and Diplomatic Security in Washington to ensure we are balancing these two requirements to ensure our staff stay safe while effectively advancing U.S. policy objectives.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

*Answer.* Embassy Bangui's threat environment is complex and creates challenges for accessing many populations, especially outside of Bangui. If confirmed, I will use all tools at my disposal in coordination with partners, including MINUSCA, to actively support the country's 2019 Peace Agreement, the best option we have currently to reduce violence and return CAR to stability. These activities typically involve engaging local populations, something we do as often as possible and which Embassy Bangui did during September and October trips to key areas in the country's center (Bria), southwest (Bayanga), and southeast (Chinko).

*Question.* Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Central African Republic?
- What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

*Answer.* Like most institutions in CAR, the country's press is undeveloped and highly partisan. Radio dominates CAR's public messaging space with internet penetration at approximately five percent countrywide. Disinformation by malign Russian actors is also a serious threat that at times compromises the activities of key partners like MINUSCA.

In terms of strengthening our relationship with the Central African people as well as civil servants, I think we can do more to enhance the bonds between our two countries. In coordination with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, I would like to explore how we can expand the use of International Visitor Leadership

Programs to more thoughtfully engage with Central Africans who desire the same things we do for CAR, a country at peace with itself and its neighbors. In the same vein, if confirmed, I would like to explore ways to provide training for more journalists to strengthen their ability to tell fact from disinformation and report objectively on events that impact their fellow Central Africans.

*Question.* How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

*Answer.* Like most endeavors in the Department of State, open and consistent communication between colleagues leads to more effective coordination. If confirmed, I will seek to bolster the already-productive working relationship between the Bureau of African Affairs' public diplomacy office and Embassy Bangui's Public Affairs Section. As we saw following President Touadera's October 15 ceasefire declaration, there will continue to be significant opportunities for the Department of State to amplify post's messages through various media channels, and I will ensure these lanes remain synchronized and open, if I am confirmed.

*Question.* "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

*Answer.* The welfare of my teammates is the most important issue I am responsible for as ambassador, and if confirmed, I commit to taking the threat of anomalous health incidents very seriously. Working with the deputy chief of mission and regional security officer, in consultation with colleagues in Washington, I will work to better understand this threat in CAR, and develop plans and responses, as appropriate for conditions in country.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission CAR personnel?

*Answer.* I think transparency—while acknowledging the sensitivity of some information we work with—is integral for a well-functioning embassy. If confirmed, I commit to speaking as openly about anomalous health incidents as possible with my U.S. and Central African colleagues. Further, I would stress that team members should notify me, Embassy Bangui's regional security officer, and the deputy chief of mission if they experience any unexplained medical symptoms. Embassy Bangui is a small team, and it is important we trust each other and can discuss these issues transparently.

*Question.* In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled "The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China." The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively.

- In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in the Central African Republic and counter the malign influence of China?

*Answer.* China's footprint in CAR is lighter than elsewhere in the region. That said, if confirmed, I look forward to deepening work on this question in consultation with colleagues from the bureaus of African Affairs, European and Eurasian Affairs, East Asia and Pacific Affairs, and other key offices. Work in this lane will leverage the already-robust inter-Departmental collaboration on countering Russia's malign influence in CAR that I have observed during my consultations.

*Question.* In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, the Central African Republic was identified as Tier 2 due to a lack of adequate victim services, convictions of traffickers, and overall official complicity. Yet, they did demonstrate overall improving efforts during the reporting period and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

- How will you work with the Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

*Answer.* I was pleased to learn the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) assessed CAR demonstrated overall increasing efforts to prosecute traffickers, identify and protect victims, and prevent the crime over the course of the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report rating period. This achievement is especially notable as the country faced such a myriad of threats and challenges over the course of 2020 and early 2021. If I am confirmed, I will work

in partnership with J/TIP to support the CAR Government's anti-trafficking in persons lead, Josiane Bemaka-Soui (one of eight global 2021 TIP Heroes), with training and technical assistance where possible, while encouraging President Touadera to continue prioritizing this important issue, as he has since 2019. Considering the central government's limited presence throughout much of the country, I think it will be important for authorities to focus their efforts in the short term on identifying victims and prosecuting traffickers within Bangui first, before expanding their efforts elsewhere in the country. Lastly, owing to the Government's very limited resources, effective partnership with civil society, NGOs, and international organizations will be imperative for CAR to identify more victims and remove them from their bondage.

Further, I will continue to collaborate with Department of State and interagency teammates as well as our allies to strengthen the country's justice and security institutions to help CAR transition from lifesaving humanitarian assistance to development. Based on my years of experience serving across the world, increasing the capacity of governments to provide for their people and improving economic conditions is the most effective way to prevent the heinous phenomenon of human trafficking.

*Question.* In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, the Central African Republic was identified as intolerant of religious freedom, especially for Muslims. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is a U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department of State continues to closely monitor the religious freedom situation in CAR. I commit to working with civil society and the CAR Government to ensure all individuals enjoy freedom of religion and equality regardless of religion as stated in the constitution. If confirmed, I will work with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to emphasize the importance of religious tolerance and to address religious freedom concerns in CAR.

Specifically, I am deeply concerned with reports of Russian mercenaries targeting individuals from the predominantly Muslim Peuhl community. If confirmed, I will work with the Government and civil society to ensure all individuals in CAR—regardless of religion—have access to justice and a voice in their government.

*Question.* In the 2020 Human Rights Report, the Central African Republic was identified as having serious human rights abuses committed by the Government as well as armed groups.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. The 2020 Human Rights Report narrative of human rights abuses and violations in CAR is disturbing and extensive, and it is crucial the Government holds those responsible accountable. I was encouraged to see the CAR Government issue the summary of its commission of inquiry in mid-October, which included an acknowledgement of the involvement of the country's armed forces and "Russian instructors" in some of these incidents. To demonstrate its commitment to justice and accountability, it will be critical for the Government to provide more transparency on the inquiry's findings and hold offenders accountable.

Additionally, I commit to spotlighting reports of human rights violations and abuses and governance concerns to my Central African counterparts, and spotlighting these concerns through Embassy Bangui's reporting, in collaboration with NGOs and civil society. If confirmed, I would consult with Department of State colleagues from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, as well as the Office of Global Criminal Justice, and other agencies on exploring additional actions, where appropriate.

*Question.* How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to building on and expanding Embassy Bangui's strong relationships with civil society members, human rights and other NGOs in the United States, and with NGOs and civil society organizations in CAR. As the United States' Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, I used the convening power of my position to create spaces for NGOs and members of civil society to gather and voice their concerns. If confirmed, I will strive to develop a robust dialogue with government and civil society actors to better understand their equities. Additionally, I will work closely with likeminded partners to ensure our messaging to the CAR Government is unified in our advocacy for respect for human rights, access to jus-

tice, and stressing the importance of a free and open environment for Central Africans to express their political views without fear of retribution.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. PETER HENDRICK VROOMAN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*Question.* Ending the insurgency in Mozambique will require more than just victory on the battlefield. What are the driving forces behind the insurgency, and how is the United States working with the Government of Mozambique and other actors to address those root causes?

*Answer.* There are many factors that fueled the rise of terrorism in Cabo Delgado. Longstanding socio-economic grievances, unmet economic expectations, political, cultural, and geographic isolation from Maputo, negative experiences with security forces, a lack of government services, tribal rivalries, criminal activity, and an influx of intra-Muslim ideological divisions made northern Mozambique susceptible to violent extremist ideologies.

The United States aims to counter ISIS-M and to support the Mozambican Government and people. We share a holistic strategy in four areas: security assistance, strategic communications, socio-economic assistance, and diplomatic engagement. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Mozambique to address the underlying drivers of violent extremism and terrorism by: protecting the civilian population, addressing social and economic inequality and marginalization, and strengthening the transparent provision of public services, while upholding the core values of respect for human rights, good governance, and democratic participation.

*Question.* Rwandan troops were deployed to Mozambique as part of a bilateral agreement. What are Rwanda's goals and motivations for this deployment, and what implications does the deployment have for the SADC mission?

*Answer.* President Nyusi requested security assistance from Rwanda, and its Government responded; their combined efforts, together with SADC forces have resulted in the capturing of key towns, bases, leaders, and strongholds—providing space for the Government to assess and develop a reconstruction plan for Cabo Delgado. President Kagame has publicly expressed his desire to promote regional security through Rwanda's presence in Mozambique.

*Question.* Apart from the insurgency in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique faces challenges in the areas of governance, the economy, health, and widespread poverty. What is the United States strategy for helping Mozambique address issues in the areas of anti-corruption and good governance in particular? What actions will you take if confirmed to push for greater transparency in the area of debt held by the Government of Mozambique?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government has in the past year launched several anti-corruption activities in Mozambique which support sub-national systems of accountability; reduce teacher absenteeism and medical supply leakage; promote policy reform through support to civil society anti-corruption initiatives, including advocacy for the development of a transparent and accountable sovereign wealth fund; and strengthen investigative journalism to promote improved economic governance and natural resource management. Corruption is the top governance concern of Mozambicans. If confirmed, I would continue to support credible initiatives that enhance the transparency and accountability of the Government of Mozambique.

*Democracy and Human Rights*

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* I have attended the trials of opposition leaders unjustly accused of crimes and advocated for due process and the rule of law in many of the countries where I have served. Bearing witness in such trials may not change verdicts, but it demonstrates that eyes are watching judicial proceedings. Defense attorneys around the globe often bear the brunt of government efforts to repress their voices, and I have advocated for their ability to represent those accused of crimes.

Whenever counter-accusations about the U.S. surface, I seize the opportunity to make the point that such instances are flagged by a free press and are fair game for debate in the political arena in the United States. I always encourage counterparts to consider allowing and listening to such debate in order to spur greater respect for human rights. To foster more transparent electoral processes and more

democratic systems of governance, I am a firm believer in independent election observation efforts, including those of embassies, as well as a role for domestic political party observers.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Mozambique? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* Mozambique is still a young, developing democracy with institutions that have difficulty enforcing the law, particularly regarding respect for human rights. Civil society has an influential role, but requires greater capacity and, with the independent media, occasionally faces threats for investigative reporting on sensitive topics. Mozambique has been ruled by a single political party since its independence, and the strongest competing party lost ground in the most recent national elections. Corruption is widespread and impunity for officials remains a serious problem. If confirmed, I plan to support credible initiatives that enhance the Government's transparency and accountability to ensure Mozambique is an anchor of stability, security, and democracy in the region.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Mozambique? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will pursue an integrated approach to northern Mozambique, in coordination with Mozambican institutions and international partners. This approach to creating conditions for sustainable peace will build the capacity of Mozambican security forces, address socioeconomic drivers of violence, such as marginalization, promote respect for human rights, and support improved governance to underserved communities. I look to partner diligently with the Mozambican Government to respond to the needs of its citizens transparently and accountably. If confirmed, I would also serve as the co-Chair of the Contact Group that oversees the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration process that started in 2019 and seeks to establish a durable peace after the devastating civil war. Currently USAID's democracy and governance funding for Mozambique has been prioritized to address governance challenges in the North.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to identify and support reputable Mozambican and international partners who share our commitment to helping Mozambique build an inclusive, responsive, and resilient democracy. I will continue to advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities in our programs and policies.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Mozambique? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* A key function of an embassy is to engage with governments and civil society. Often an embassy can be an effective forum for the exchange of ideas, as I indicated in my testimony, and a forum for debate on global challenges. If confirmed, I will encourage officers in the U.S. Embassy in Maputo to be receptive to listening to the concerns raised by civil society organizations and, if appropriate, helping to seek redress of specific problems on cases with the appropriate interlocutors in the host government. I would also look for synergistic opportunities to cooperate with these groups to advocate for reform, accountability, and respect for human rights. I will continue to advocate for the involvement of disabled persons and organizations in inclusive, civil society-government discussions related to the rights of people with disabilities.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to continue to strengthen the relationships the U.S. Mission has built with democratically-oriented, political opposition figures and parties. I will strive to support the efforts of these figures and parties to develop

a more inclusive, political environment throughout Mozambique. If confirmed, I will advocate for the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly for all political actors, including those who do not agree with the Government. If confirmed, I will advocate through public statements, targeted small grants and other programming, and direct engagement with a diverse spectrum of leaders and community members for a political environment that is inclusive of women, youth, people with disabilities, and Mozambicans who might otherwise be marginalized.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Mozambique on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Mozambique?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will engage with media practitioners, like-minded diplomatic missions, civil society, government, and international partners to underscore the importance of an independent, professional, and open media in a free and democratic society. If confirmed, I will seek resources to continue support to both Mozambique's private and state-run media, including professional exchanges, targeted training programs, and seminars to educate journalists and media stakeholders about the importance of the right to free expression.

Mozambican journalists have consistently participated in U.S. Government-sponsored professional exchange programs on investigative reporting, safeguarding freedom of expression, and combating disinformation, and the media's role in strengthening democratic institutions. If confirmed, I will continue to engage in the independent press, as well as prioritize these exchanges and training opportunities.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda by foreign state and non-state actors. If confirmed, I will also commit to working with like-minded partners in Mozambique to do the same.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Mozambique on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* The United States has a long and strong tradition of supporting the rights of workers to exercise freedom of association, including to form and join independent trade unions. If confirmed, I will ensure that I and others in the embassy engage with unions, relevant government offices, and the private sector to support labor rights. If confirmed, I will also mobilize U.S. Government policies, programs, and trade agreements to empower workers in all sectors to organize, successfully bargain with their employers, and improve working conditions.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Mozambique, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

*Answer.* Promoting respect for human rights and democracy is a priority for the U.S. Mission in Mozambique. If confirmed, I will strive to defend respect for the human rights and dignity of all persons in Mozambique, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

*Question.* What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Mozambique?

*Answer.* There have been no reports of bias-motivated attacks on LGBTQI+ people in Mozambique in recent years, but discrimination exists. The Government of Mozambique has not acted on the request for registration by the Association for the Defense of Sexual Minorities (LAMBDA), Mozambique's main LGBTQI+ organization, which has been pending since 2008. Despite its lack of registration, LAMBDA has partnered with diplomatic missions, including the U.S. Embassy, and government agencies, such as the Ministry of Health, to combat stigma and raise awareness about LGBTQI+ rights.

*Question.* What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Mozambique?

*Answer.* Promoting respect for human rights and democracy is a priority for the mission in Mozambique. The U.S. Mission has worked with the Association for the Defense of Sexual Minorities (LAMBDA), Mozambique's main LGBTQI+ organization, as well as potential partners from government, civil society, and the diplomatic community, to raise awareness of LGBTQI+ issues and combat HIV/AIDS stigma.



If confirmed, I would support the LGBTQI+ community, including by raising the Pride flag on International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia and encouraging key grants to local organizations.

*Congressional Consultations*

*Question.* Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Mozambique.

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I commit, in coordination with the State Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to respond promptly to all appropriate requests for briefings and for information by this committee.

*Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

*Question.* Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* If confirmed as Chief of Mission, there would be no higher priority for me than the health, safety, and security of our personnel and family members serving overseas. This commitment extends to the handling of anomalous health incidents. These incidents and any threats to health and safety must be taken seriously. If confirmed, I will make sure that the entire Embassy community is aware of what to do should a potential incident affect them, their colleagues, or their family members.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would underscore that U.S. Government personnel and family members should immediately alert the Mission's health and security professionals at Post if they note any onset of unexplained medical symptoms to receive prompt access to health care. At the same time, I would reiterate that there is no stigma associated with reporting, and that every report will be taken seriously by our health and security professionals and the leadership of the Department.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will regularly meet with medical and RSO staff to ensure I understand the full scope of threats against U.S. personnel and their family members and that all safety protocols are being carefully followed.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. PETER HENDRICK VROOMAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* What is your assessment of current U.S. policy toward Mozambique?

*Answer.* The United States is Mozambique's largest bilateral donor, with nearly \$523 million allocated last year, and much of it focused on health. I anticipate that the United States will want to increase support of reform and transparency mechanisms, particularly in the lead-up to elections in 2023 and 2024. Education and health are key priorities for Mozambicans, who believe these sectors where the United States engages are drivers of economic growth and prosperity. The recent consolidation of Mozambican efforts in 2021 to combat ISIS-Mozambique, offers opportunities to spur continued investment in both resources and institutions. If confirmed, I plan to enhance our engagement to ensure Mozambique is an anchor of stability, security, prosperity, and democracy in the region.

*Question.* Do you feel the U.S. is adequately engaged given the various threats and challenges the situation in Mozambique poses to the region?

*Answer.* I believe that the United States correctly assessed the seriousness of the threats posed by ISIS-M to Mozambique, as well as to the region. We have also seen the Mozambican Government acknowledge the root causes of violence and fragility, in the form of its new Strategy for Resilience and Integrated Development in the North. This strategy prioritizes peacebuilding, social cohesion, community-govern-

ment dialogue, fighting corruption, ensuring access to inclusive government services, and fostering economic recovery in the North. If confirmed, I would work with government and civil society to restore ties, rebuild damaged infrastructure, and invest in the human capital in affected regions.

*Question.* What adjustments, if any, do you feel are necessary for U.S. engagement with the region?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would endeavor to remain in close contact with my counterparts, particularly those in capitals where regional organizations, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC), are situated. Beyond the combined military operations that many of Mozambique's regional partners and allies have conducted over recent months, there will be a need for an acceleration of discussions about reconstruction and governance in areas affected by terrorism and violent extremism. SADC could also play a larger role in taking on regional challenges such as illicit trafficking networks, conservation of southern African biodiversity, and the promotion and respect for human rights.

*Question.* What is your perspective on the deployment of Rwandan and Southern African Development Community (SADC) forces to Mozambique to assist in the containment of the insurgency in Northern Mozambique?

*Answer.* We support SADC's goals of promoting regional cooperation and integration, economic growth, socio-economic development, and durable peace and security among its member states. SADC's support through the organization's deployment of a four-country, Standby Force, whose mission was recently extended through January 2022, could help stabilize northern Mozambique and the region. Rwandan forces, with Mozambican forces, have played an important role in reversing ISIS-M's gains. I believe that these positive strides have created a window of opportunity to consolidate gains with the necessary steps needed to regain the trust of local communities in their security forces and in their government institutions.

*Question.* As U.S. Ambassador to Mozambique, if confirmed, how will you engage the Government of Mozambique on key democratic reforms in order to support sustainable peace?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will pursue an integrated approach to northern Mozambique, in coordination with Mozambican institutions and international partners. This approach to creating conditions for sustainable peace will build the capacity of Mozambican security forces, address socioeconomic drivers of violence, promote respect for human rights, and support improved governance to underserved communities. I would also serve as the co-Chair of the Contact Group that oversees the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration process that seeks to establish a durable peace after the devastating civil war. Currently USAID's democracy and governance funding for Mozambique has been prioritized to address governance challenges in the North.

*Question.* What challenges do you foresee as Mozambique moves toward 2024 elections with President Nyusi term limited?

*Answer.* Polling confirms the strong preference of Mozambicans for democracy with regular, open, and honest electoral processes resulting in free and fair elections. The Constitutional Court of Mozambique acknowledged there were irregularities in the 2019 elections but concluded that they did not substantially alter the outcome. Those irregularities included violence and intimidation in the pre-election period and systemic issues during the election. If confirmed, I will work with key stakeholders, including the Mozambican Government, civil society, and the National Election Commission so they can ensure peaceful pre-election periods and lay the groundwork for free and fair district elections in 2023 and presidential and provincial elections in 2024.

*Question.* Do you believe it is the sign of a healthy democracy when a duly elected government, in consultation with its citizens, extends the term of office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power?

*Answer.* Actions by a president in power to change the laws to allow him or her to remain in office extralegally pose an inherent threat to any democracy's health. A healthy democracy abides both by the will of its people and the underlying legal foundations upon which it rests. This requires the active participation of all citizens to safeguard democracy.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you respond to Mozambique doing something like extending the term of office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power?

*Answer.* Mozambique's strong democratic tradition includes term limits that are respected by presidents, the political parties, and a strong majority of the electorate. I expect this respect for constitutional limits will continue. If confirmed, I will promote democratic values and seek to strengthen democratic institutions.

*Question.* Can you provide your view on supporting U.S. funded, independent international election observation missions?

*Answer.* I have advocated for and supported independent international election observations missions in many locations where I have served overseas. Mozambique's elections are regularly observed by external teams from the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, the European Union, and the Commonwealth. In 2019, Embassy officers supplemented the international election observation teams. Mozambique welcomes and supports these missions and would likely be amenable to additional electoral observation if the conditions warrant such a mission.

*Question.* Would you support such U.S. funded, independent international election observation methods for Mozambique's next general election?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I would support independent international election observation missions and encourage the relevant institutions and parties in Mozambique to welcome them as well.

*Question.* How can the United States best use the tools it has to hold Mozambique officials accountable for corrupt behavior?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government has in the past year launched several anti-corruption activities in Mozambique which support sub-national systems of accountability; reduce teacher absenteeism and medical supply leakage; promote policy reform through support to civil society anti-corruption initiatives, including advocacy for the development of a transparent and accountable sovereign wealth fund; and strengthen investigative journalism to promote improved economic governance and natural resource management. Corruption is the top governance concern of Mozambicans. If confirmed, I would support credible initiatives that enhance the transparency and accountability of the Government of Mozambique.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you go about using the tools the U.S. has to hold Mozambican officials accountable for corrupt behavior?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government has in the past year launched several anti-corruption activities in Mozambique which support sub-national systems of accountability; reduce teacher absenteeism and medical supply leakage; promote policy reform through support to civil society anti-corruption initiatives, including advocacy for the development of a transparent and accountable sovereign wealth fund; and strengthen investigative journalism to promote improved economic governance and natural resource management. Corruption is the top governance concern of Mozambicans. If confirmed, I would support credible initiatives that enhance the transparency and accountability of the Government of Mozambique.

*Question.* How can the United States best support Mozambique in curbing the corrupt behavior of those companies and government officials of malign foreign actors like China that feed on corrupt governments and business environments?

*Answer.* The United States is the biggest investor in the human capital of the people of Mozambique through our health and education programs and we are increasing investments in Mozambican infrastructure through various interagency programs and USAID projects. For those parts of the Mozambican society that want to support good governance, the United States' Foreign Corrupt Practices Act stands out as a gold standard for private sector conduct and a selling point for American business. If confirmed, I will help demonstrate that our Government and business policies and practices are respectful of human rights and the environment, transparent, and responsive to Mozambique's needs.

*Question.* Should the United States build on its existing defense and security cooperation with Mozambique?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will take stock of our developing defense and security cooperation with a view to assessing its effectiveness and the latest requirements of our partners.

*Question.* Where are the opportunities and the risks if the United States does build on its existing defense and security cooperation with Mozambique?

*Answer.* ISIS-affiliated violence and brutality are a grave threat to Mozambique and the region. U.S. security assistance incorporates programming to promote respect for human rights, protection of civilians, and engagement with civil society and local communities. Consistent with the Leahy laws, the U.S. Government provides assistance only to Mozambican security force units that are fully vetted and where there is not credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.

*Question.* Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale in Embassy Maputo?

*Answer.* My understanding is that the move of the Embassy team to a new chancery building only several weeks ago represents a big boost for morale. The new embassy compound brings together the entire U.S. Mission in Mozambique (with the exception of Peace Corps) under one roof, including USAID, CDC, and the American Cultural Center to facilitate a more cohesive, secure, and productive work environment.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I intend to ask members of the Embassy team and their families for their specific suggestions on how we can improve morale. I firmly believe in listening to concerns and addressing them as promptly and concretely as possible.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision?

*Answer.* All U.S. Embassies are now embarking on a process of reviewing Integrated Country Strategies. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing their work and contributing to it by providing Chief of Mission priorities that can knit together our goals. Thereafter, my practice is to regularly review where we are as a mission and to reiterate our mission regularly at town halls and other fora.

*Question.* Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.

- How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* I strive to be a servant leader, offering what I can to my team to help us achieve our mission goals. I am a fair and democratic leader interested in eliciting the contributions of each member of my team. What I can offer my team is a commitment to make timely and well-considered decisions that advance our goals while safeguarding our team. I firmly believe that I—and all members of my team—must respect the dignity of each person on the team. That fundamental requirement allows teams to stay cohesive even in the face of challenges.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

*Answer.* No, I cannot think of an occasion when berating subordinates is either appropriate or effective. That said, constructive, honest, and timely feedback on performance is an imperative of good supervision that I strive to uphold.

*Question.* What lessons have you learned from your tenure as Chief of Mission in Rwanda?

*Answer.* Regular communication is essential during times of crisis, especially during pandemics such as COVID-19 or Ebola. To ensure that communication is bi-directional, I regularly surveyed our staff and their families on their morale. During virtual town halls, we always provide a mechanism for eliciting anonymous feedback and questions. Humility in the position of ambassador is critical to gaining the trust and respect of a team, and I believe this lesson also applies to diplomatic engagement. My efforts to learn and communicate in Rwanda's one national language has proven to be an incredibly valuable tool that demonstrates my respect for Rwandans.

*Question.* How do you envision your relationship with deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* This is the most critical relationship within an Embassy. Not only must the DCM be trusted by the Chief of Mission but empowered to represent him/her and assume his/her responsibilities on many occasions. Frequent communication, both formal and informal, is necessary. If confirmed, I would strive to be open to constructive feedback from my DCM and to look for opportunities for the DCM to lead and learn.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* The DCM has multiple responsibilities within an embassy. Among the most important role that she has is the chairperson of the Emergency Action Committee, the interagency body that is essential in formulating recommendations to me as the Chief of Mission. As the “Chief Operating Officer,” she also has a responsibility for seeing that management controls are in place across our operations and programs. As morale-booster and the direct supervisor of many section heads, she has another critical role to play in recruiting a diverse team and sustaining staff on the job—and in addressing any problematic relationships that could impact teamwork.

*Question.* How should the chief of mission lead a post with multiple U.S. Government agencies present?

*Answer.* A successful COM must step outside his/her Department of State persona and strive to understand the priorities and personalities of other agencies represented at post (or in the region). Listening and participating in the activities, such as staff meetings, can be a good way to learn directly from the employees of those agencies. If confirmed, I will demonstrate curiosity and interest in other agencies: going on USAID and USDA project site visits; participating in PEPFAR programmatic reviews, joining promotion ceremonies with the Marine Security guards or other DOD personnel, meeting Peace Corps volunteers in rural areas, and soliciting CDC briefings on infectious disease.

*Question.* In your experience, how important are interagency relationships within a post?

*Answer.* Interagency relationships are critical to accomplishing mission goals. In my experience, forming interagency working groups focused on Integrated Country Strategy goals can feed into more effective Country Team discussions and decisions. Often, the Front Office (COM and DCM) leaders are those who have the broadest interagency perspective at post, so I believe that it is essential to create opportunities for interaction, both formally and informally. Interagency, in-country travel with the COM can be one effective way to do this.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you handle interagency disagreement within Embassy Maputo?

*Answer.* Hearing out all sides in an interagency disagreement is critical to establishing a sense of fairness from the Front Office. If a leader has fostered occasions for celebrating interagency accomplishments, then that experience can be tapped to find a way forward in the case of disagreements. For example, the PEPFAR program, which is quintessentially interagency in make-up, often generates disagreements over budgeting priorities or geographies (or functions) where different agencies have the lead. Collectively coming together to celebrate team victories—such as reaching epidemic control of HIV/AIDS—can help each agency and its staff feel like they are playing an important part in achieving goals.

*Question.* In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide subordinates with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

*Answer.* Yes, timely and constructive feedback on performance is imperative. An ambassador must be intentional in providing encouragement of excellent performance immediately after it is observed to be most impactful.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will undertake and encourage active supervision of performance. Counseling sessions over the course of an evaluation period are critical to this end and must be structured. I use these sessions both with my direct reports and with those whose performance I review each year, so they hear directly from me on how I see their performance, as well as their areas for development. In turn, I seek feedback from them on whether my own supervision is effective and how I can improve as a leader.

*Question.* It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and everyday citizens.

- In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. U.S. Ambassadors must lead by example in order to encourage other colleagues to get outside the embassy walls. One way to do so is by traveling to sites where we or our partners work. Another is to request other officers to accompany me to events where they might meet useful contacts or share a unique experience in the host country. If officers sense that their absence from their embassy office occasions even a hint of disapproval from a senior leader, then they and others will not venture far from the embassy walls. If confirmed, I would avoid sending this sort of signal and encourage the development of broad and diverse embassy contacts.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to access all local populations?

Answer. Learning local language(s) is critical to developing access to local populations. If confirmed, I would aim to lead by example—demonstrating both my willingness to speak the national and local languages and allocating time to continue my study. Doing so with the Kinyarwanda language in Rwanda provided critical opportunities for me to get to know Rwandans better and to make me and our diplomatic mission more accessible to those who do not speak English well.

*Question.* Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Mozambique?

Answer. The strong U.S.-Mozambique bilateral relationship facilitates a positive public diplomacy environment. Young Mozambicans largely hold positive views of the United States and are eager to apply to study in the United States. The Mozambican Government and people are increasingly receptive to our policy issues and initiatives. Independent press continues to publish in Mozambique despite incidents of intimidation and threats against some journalists. If confirmed, I would urge the Mozambican Government to preserve press freedom and investigate harassment against journalists. My impression is that Mozambicans are accessible and interested in exchanging ideas with Americans, including diplomats at the U.S. Embassy.

*Question.* What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face in Mozambique?

Answer. The challenges include capacity issues such as an organization's ability to qualify for and implement grants on behalf of the U.S. Government; few established civil society organizations, which restricts our ability to offer diverse programming; and a nascent, independent press corps. However, journalists and emerging leaders are eager to gain additional training and experiences through USG exchange programs. COVID-19 has severely impacted the Mission's ability to conduct in person exchanges, training, and other outreach, and poor internet connectivity throughout the country make virtual programming challenging.

*Question.* How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. The Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section balances these occasionally differing objectives; generally, there is little appetite overseas for any messaging content that appears "canned" or copied or even retweeted or reposted in the case of social media. Local language content is more readily read and considered by foreign audiences. If confirmed, I would encourage our Public Diplomacy teams to translate our messages considering cultural norms and local context in order to reach broader audiences.

*Question.* "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, there would be no higher priority for me than the health, safety, and security of our personnel and family members serving overseas. This commitment extends to the handling of anomalous health incidents. If confirmed, I will make sure that the entire Embassy community is aware of what to do should a potential incident affect them, their colleagues, or their family members.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Mozambique personnel?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would underscore that U.S. Government personnel and family members should immediately alert the Mission's health and security professionals at Post if they note any onset of unexplained medical symptoms. At the same time, I would reiterate that there is no stigma associated with reporting, and that every report will be taken seriously by our health and security professionals and the leadership of the Department.

*Question.* In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled "The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China." The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively.

- In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Mozambique and counter the malign influence of China?

*Answer.* The U.S. Mission in Maputo works closely with like-minded European partners to support Mozambique's democracy by strengthening democratic institutions and coordinating engagement with the Government, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders. Our unified message with our partners must be that further efforts to combat corruption will improve the investment climate, advance shared goals of fiscal transparency, and counter money laundering and illicit financing. If confirmed, I will work through the U.S. interagency, multilateral financial institutions, and like-minded partners to support private sector growth in Mozambique, encourage good local governance practices, and promote U.S. business opportunities.

*Question.* In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Mozambique remained on Tier 2 due to overall increasing efforts, but prosecuted fewer trafficking cases, convicted fewer traffickers, and did not proactively identify trafficking victims aside from criminal referrals.

- How will you work with the host government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will prioritize our work to combat human trafficking, and I will consistently communicate the importance of combatting human trafficking through private exchanges and public diplomacy. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Mozambique to finalize its draft, national referral mechanism for trafficking victims. This will help community-level officials' efforts to identify victims of trafficking. Similarly, I will urge the government to finalize the implementing regulations for trafficking victims and witness protection. Both of these recommendations would enable a more victim-centered law enforcement approach to trafficking.

*Question.* In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, religious intolerance and subsequent violence in Mozambique is a growing concern for the Embassy as well as Congress.

- What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country and work to end religiously motivated violence?

*Answer.* Religious freedom is a U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department continues to closely monitor religious freedom in Mozambique. Northern Mozambique became susceptible to violence undergirded by extremist ideologies spread by disaffected youth. If confirmed, I would undertake an assessment of these factors to see which drivers of violent extremism can be addressed with policy solutions. I will also commit to working with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to emphasize the importance of religious freedom, addressing any religious freedom concerns, and further strengthening tolerance and respect among and for members of religious communities in Mozambique.

*Question.* In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Mozambique was identified as having committed and baring witness to severe human rights abuses. Impunity remains a large problem.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to lead the Embassy's advocacy efforts as I engage the Government of Mozambique to address concerns detailed in the 2020 Human Rights Report.

*Question.* How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

*Answer.* A key function of an embassy is to engage with governments and civil society. Often an embassy can be an effective forum for the exchange of ideas, as I indicated in my testimony, and a forum for debate on global challenges. If confirmed, I will encourage officers in the U.S. Embassy in Maputo to be receptive to listening to the concerns raised by civil society organizations and, if appropriate, helping to seek redress of specific problems on cases with the appropriate interlocutors in the host government. I would also look for synergistic opportunities to cooperate with these groups to advocate for reform, accountability, and respect for human rights.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO PETER D. HAAS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*Human Rights*

*Question.* Attacks against religious minorities in Bangladesh are increasing. In recent days, at the end of the Hindu holiday of Durga Puja, press reports indicate more than two dozen homes of Hindu families were burned and at least two people were killed following a posting on social media perceived as insulting to Islam. What can the U.S. do to ensure the Government, which sometimes fans the flames of communal tensions, does to both quiet the violence and ensure accountability?

*Answer.* I am deeply troubled by the recent violent attacks on Hindu temples and businesses in Bangladesh during the Durga Puja celebrations. There is no justification for attacks on religious minorities or violently disrupting sacred celebrations. Freedom of religion or belief is a human right. If confirmed, I intend to work with colleagues at Embassy Dhaka, in the Office of International Religious Freedom, and within the Department to advocate for the protection of all vulnerable communities, including religious minority groups in Bangladesh, through engagement with government officials and members of civil society. If confirmed, I will remain in contact with members of all religious faiths and ensure that the annual State Department International Religious Freedom Report accurately documents restrictions on religious freedom in Bangladesh.

*Question.* Extrajudicial killings by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) have spiked since the Government of Bangladesh began its “war on drugs” in the months ahead of the December 2018 elections. Last year, Sen. Young and I sent a bipartisan letter with eight of our other colleagues urging the Trump administration to impose sanctions on senior RAB commanders. Do you support imposing sanctions on senior commanders of Bangladesh’s Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which has reportedly killed more than 400 people extrajudicially since 2015? Do I have your commitment to advocate within the department for a process to consider sanctions against Benazir Ahmed, the chief of police and former head of RAB?

*Answer.* The extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture committed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) are of deep concern. I understand the United States does not provide security assistance to the RAB and that all Bangladeshi security forces units receiving assistance, including training, are vetted according to applicable laws including the Leahy law. If confirmed, I commit to consulting with Congress on the use of applicable authorities, including sanctions and visa ineligibilities, in order to advance our human rights interests and promote accountability for those responsible for human rights abuses and violations within the RAB. Conducting a thorough investigation of Benazir Ahmed’s involvement in human rights abuses and violations aligns with the United States’ commitment to human rights and accountability. If confirmed, I commit to supporting a thorough investigation of allegations against Benazir Ahmed’s involvement with human rights abuses. I further commit to leveraging all applicable accountability tools to hold accountable those who abuse and violate human rights.

*Labor*

*Question.* Last year, this committee released a report that found workers in Bangladeshi garment factories faced increased intimidation, threats, and violence if they were involved in labor activism. Meanwhile, other workers in Bangladesh still face unsafe work conditions. Do I have your commitment to make support for labor rights a priority at the Embassy in Dhaka? Do you commit to engage with me and my staff on these issues throughout your tenure? Do you support the deployment of a dedicated labor attaché at the Embassy?



Answer. I am concerned about the status of labor rights, especially as it relates to freedom of association and workplace safety in Bangladesh. All workers should feel safe in their place of work and have available mechanisms to report and push back against labor abuses, including retaliation against workers for forming and joining unions of their choosing. If confirmed, I commit to making support for labor rights a priority at Embassy Dhaka and commit to working closely with you, your staff, and Congress on these issues during my tenure. I will ensure my team works to improve the environment for unions, supports worker empowerment, urges accountability for abuses against workers, and promotes freedom of association among workers across and between sectors, as well as continues to raise concerns about labor rights and abuses against employees at the highest levels of the Government of Bangladesh. The Department of Labor is already in the process of adding a labor attaché at Embassy Dhaka, and if confirmed, I commit to ensuring that this process proceeds quickly.

*Question.* How is State measuring Bangladesh's progress on labor rights in the aftermath of the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster and the July 2021 fire? Is the administration considering restoration of Dhaka's access to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)? Under what circumstances or conditions would it do so?

Answer. Since the horrific building collapse at Rana Plaza in 2013, the United States Government has worked with partners across the international community, major industries, and Bangladeshi authorities to advocate for and enable improvements in factory safety, which included the establishment of new agreements by major international brands to enforce safety standards across factories. While these changes are encouraging, much more needs to be done to institutionalize safety standards across Bangladesh's major industries, as evidenced by the tragic Hashem Foods fire in July 2021. The Department of State works closely with the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the Department of Labor to monitor Bangladesh's progress meeting internationally recognized labor rights, especially workplace safety, freedom of association, and collective bargaining. I commit, if confirmed, to upholding the position that restoring Bangladesh's GSP benefits must be contingent upon strengthening labor rights and workplace safety, as well as improving the overall business and civil society operational environment.

*Attack on Ambassador Bernicat*

*Question.* In August 2018, armed persons attacked a vehicle carrying U.S. Ambassador Marcia Bernicat after she met with civil society activists in November 2018. Congress still does not have a clear understanding of exactly what happened. Your safety as ambassador is of paramount concern to me. What is being done to bring the culprits—who have already been publicly identified—to justice? Will you bring this issue up with the Government, if confirmed?

Answer. The Department is closely following proceedings against nine individuals accused of attacking Ambassador Marcia Bernicat's motorcade with bricks. Charges were officially filed and accepted by a court in March 2021. If confirmed, I will work with my team in Dhaka and the Government of Bangladesh to ensure full accountability for this act. Moreover, if confirmed, the health and safety of those supporting the mission and their families will be my highest priority.

*Question.* How do you think the U.S. can use its leverage on trade, development and security assistance to advance the protection of human rights, including of Rohingya? Further, how can the U.S. utilize economic cooperation to ensure that Bangladesh will improve or develop clear social and environmental policies and practices which are inclusive and nondiscriminatory of all communities, including Rohingya?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support President Biden's commitment to place human rights at the center of our foreign policy. That includes looking at all the tools the United States has to incentivize Bangladesh to take actions that advance the human rights of its people, particularly related to reversing democratic backsliding and holding perpetrators accountable for human rights abuses. Our humanitarian and development assistance also plays an essential role in easing tensions between Rohingya refugees and host communities. The United States is the largest single-country destination for Bangladeshi exports, and our economic partnership with Bangladesh can support our broader foreign policy goals in the areas of human rights and sustainable development. If confirmed, I will utilize the tools that the United States has available—including infrastructure credentialing programs like the Blue Dot Network—to ensure that U.S. economic cooperation with Bangladesh has a central focus on inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, and transparent financing.

*Humanitarian*

*Question.* The protection environment in the Rohingya refugee camps continues to deteriorate. This has been heightened even more following Mohib Ullah's assassination.

- How do you plan to work with UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the root causes of insecurity, such as impunity for criminal and militant actors, are recognized and that protection needs are adequately and expeditiously addressed?
- How will you press the Bangladeshi Government to prioritize security and protection of Rohingya activists and all Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar while avoiding over securitization of the camps?
- What should the United States do to urge the Bangladeshi Government to guarantee the protection and rights of Rohingya in Bhasan Char?

*Answer.* Like you, I was deeply saddened and disturbed by the murder of Mohib Ullah. If confirmed, I commit to pressing the Government of Bangladesh to improve the safety of Rohingya refugees by addressing the root causes of insecurity in the camps in Cox's Bazar and ensuring those who commit crimes or abuses are held accountable. I will also continue to advocate for unhindered humanitarian access for protection activities in the camps, especially for the most vulnerable Rohingya refugees, and expanded freedom of movement for Rohingya in the camps. Regarding Bhasan Char, I plan to work with my team to continue to encourage dialogue between the Government of Bangladesh and the U.N. on safe living conditions, freedom of movement, and adequate protection for Rohingya on the island. I will work closely with colleagues across the Department and interagency to ensure that U.S.-funded programming takes these security, human rights, and protection considerations for Rohingya into account and work with donor nations and U.N. agencies to advocate for government actions when necessary.

*Question.* How can the United States promote and support rights-respecting, sustainable solutions for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, particularly in light of the February coup in Burma?

*Answer.* The February 1 military coup d'état and horrific violence perpetrated by the military regime in Burma have closed the door for the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Burma in the near future. The military leaders who launched the coup are many of the same people responsible for atrocities against Rohingya. If confirmed, I commit to continue working closely with the U.S. Mission to the U.N., the U.N.'s Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and the Missions of other likeminded countries to promote justice and accountability for the Rohingya crisis, including at the U.N. Security Council. A durable solution to the Rohingya crisis will require the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Burma, when conditions allow. A return to Burma for Rohingya would require addressing the root causes of their displacement and violence against them.

*Question.* How can the U.S., as by far the largest donor to the humanitarian response, engage constructively with Government of Bangladesh counterparts to ensure Rohingya fundamental rights are protected, including basic security and access to education, and that Rohingya are consulted in the process?

*Answer.* The United States is the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, having provided more than \$1.5 billion to affected communities in Bangladesh, Burma, and elsewhere in the region since August 2017. USG assistance supports U.N. and NGO programming for education, livelihood opportunities, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, prevention and response to gender-based violence, and other activities that are critical to ensuring Rohingya rights and security. Accountability to affected populations, which ensures that refugee participation and feedback are a part of every step of the process, is an essential part of all USG humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya refugee response. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that the United States Government continues to support the Rohingya crisis response, including in consultation with Rohingya to determine their security and protection needs.

*Question.* COVID restrictions have largely been lifted in the camps but limitations in programming and bureaucratic restrictions for implementers remain, especially for education and livelihood activities. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government of Bangladesh and U.N. Agencies to push for consistent, unhindered access to the camps for humanitarian actors, access to protection services for refugees, and expanded education and livelihood opportunities?

*Answer.* As the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, the United States has a major role to play in advocating for unhindered access to the camps for humanitarian actors to improve access to services, including education, vocational and skills trainings, and other livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with the Government of Bangladesh to reduce bureaucratic barriers to U.N. and NGO operations and ensure that security measures such as fencing do not impede life-saving activities, including protection and disaster prevention and response.

*Question.* The MoU recently signed between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR allows for livelihoods and formal education on Bhasan Char, activities that Bangladesh has been very resistant to allow in the camps in Cox's Bazar. How will you work with Bangladesh and U.N. agencies to ensure there isn't a further increase in restrictions in Cox's Bazar as a means to compel Rohingya to relocate to Bhasan Char and to encourage a parity of services between the two?

*Answer.* The Department has made it clear to the Government of Bangladesh that the United States will not accept any double standards in conditions, protections, and services for Rohingya refugees between Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. If confirmed, I will work with the international community, other donors, and UNHCR to press the Government of Bangladesh not to curtail livelihoods and education programs for Rohingya in the camps in Cox's Bazar or further restrict refugee rights in order to pressure refugees to relocate to Bhasan Char. As for the feasibility of services on the island, I look forward to reviewing UNHCR's assessment and operations plan.

*Question.* Following the MoU recently signed between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR, there are still questions on measures that will be taken to ensure voluntariness of relocation to Bhasan Char. There is substantial evidence that prior relocations involved coercion and false promises. How do you think the U.S. can work to ensure informed consent of Rohingya prior to further relocations?

*Answer.* The Department has made it clear to the Government of Bangladesh that any relocations of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char must be safe, informed, and voluntary. Refugees should also be permitted to move freely between the island and Cox's Bazar. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues across the Department and interagency to urge the Government of Bangladesh to uphold humanitarian principles. The Department welcomes the Government of Bangladesh signing an MoU with the U.N. establishing a framework of cooperation on U.N. engagement on Bhasan Char. The Department also supports UNHCR's request that the Government of Bangladesh allow the U.N. to conduct an assessment of the island prior to resuming relocations. If confirmed, I will work with my team to continue to encourage dialogue between the Government of Bangladesh and the U.N. on safe living conditions and adequate protection for Rohingya on Bhasan Char. Any U.S. Government funding for operations on Bhasan Char would have to be conditioned on a demonstrated commitment to a principled humanitarian response, including voluntary relocations and freedom of movement between the island and Cox's Bazar. I am committed to working with Congress as we continue to assess whether these conditions can be met.

*Question.* While the MoU guarantees freedom of movement on Bhasan Char, there is no mechanism for enabling Rohingya to return to Cox's Bazar. Hundreds of Rohingya have attempted to flee the island, with some dying in boat accidents and others detained and returned to the island against their will, underscoring Bangladesh's narrow view of "voluntariness." If confirmed, how will you work to address these issues?

*Answer.* The Department is following closely the relocation of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char and has made it clear that such relocations must be safe, informed, and voluntary. Refugees should also be permitted to move freely on Bhasan Char as well as to and from Cox's Bazar. The Department welcomes the Government of Bangladesh's agreement to sign an MoU with the U.N. establishing a framework of cooperation on U.N. engagement on Bhasan Char. The MoU ensures the stay of refugees on Bhasan Char is voluntary and permits refugees' freedom of movement including to and from the island on a needs basis. If confirmed, I will work with UNHCR and the international community to ensure that the Government of Bangladesh upholds these principles in practice, which includes allowing Rohingya refugees to return to Cox's Bazar in a timely manner should they find their stay on Bhasan Char untenable.

*Question.* Rohingya are seeking accountability and justice for the crimes committed against them, including genocide and crimes against humanity; Bangladesh

has largely been supportive of these efforts. The United States is yet to make a genocide determination though we know from Secretary Blinken's comments that a determination process is ongoing. What accountability measures do you believe would be appropriate for the United States to take in response to the atrocities against the Rohingya? If confirmed, how would you support such measures?

Answer. The violence against Rohingya is truly horrifying. As Secretary Blinken has said, the State Department is committed to reviewing this issue and taking steps necessary to address these atrocities and make sure they never happen again. One aspect of that review is considering the question of genocide determination. If confirmed, I commit to supporting this process and exploring other methods to seek accountability and justice for these crimes.

#### *Regional Diplomacy*

*Question.* The Rohingya crisis and military coup in Burma have cross-border dimensions and far-reaching regional implications. If confirmed, how will you work with regional governments to promote constructive engagement with issues of concern to both Bangladesh and the U.S.? How will you work with your counterparts in Dhaka to improve collective engagement on shared interests, including on the Rohingya?

Answer. The impacts of the Rohingya crisis are felt throughout the region. If confirmed, I will coordinate with U.S. embassies in neighboring countries to highlight the importance of sharing their responsibilities by rescuing and allowing safe disembarkation and reception of Rohingya refugees in their waters and on the high seas, including by providing shelter, healthcare services, protection against abuses, and access to UNHCR to assess their protection claims. I also plan to regularly meet with other donor nations, U.N. agencies, NGOs, and the Government of Bangladesh to coordinate on Rohingya issues.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

*Question.* Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

Answer. I am also deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and family members. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. I agree that such incidents may pose a threat to the wellbeing of U.S. personnel, and must be taken extremely seriously.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

Answer. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Mission Dhaka staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that all reported potential anomalous health incidents are given serious attention and reported swiftly through the appropriate channels. I will also ensure that staff who are affected by these incidents receive prompt access to the treatment, support, and medical care that they need.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at Embassy Dhaka to discuss past reported anomalous health incidents so that I am most prepared to protect the safety of Mission Dhaka staff and ensure that all protocols regarding anomalous health incidents are followed appropriately.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO PETER D. HAAS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Bangladesh remained on Tier 2 for ongoing improving effort, including increasing prosecutions, but declining con-

victions as well as forced labor and sex trafficking of Rohingya, among other pressing issues. How will you work with the Bangladeshi Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

*Answer.* The exploitation of human beings through trafficking and sexual exploitation is a horrific crime. The Government of Bangladesh remained on Tier 2 because it does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking; however, it is making efforts to do so. Nevertheless, trafficking in persons remains a persistent challenge in the country, including in Rohingya refugee camps, and refugee communities are vulnerable to forced labor, sex trafficking, and other serious abuses. If confirmed, I commit to pressing the Government of Bangladesh to continue its efforts to prevent, protect, and prosecute human trafficking. I will also work with the Government of Bangladesh to urge that trafficking survivors receive shelter, psychosocial care, and justice through the appropriate governmental mechanisms.

*Question.* Please describe your planned engagement with the office of the Ambassador at Large to combat and monitor trafficking in persons, given the high rates of forced labor and sex trafficking of Rohingya refugees.

*Answer.* If confirmed, my team at Embassy Dhaka and I will work collaboratively with the Office of the Ambassador-at-Large to Combat and Monitor Trafficking-In-Persons (J/TIP) to accurately depict the situation in Bangladesh in the annual Trafficking-In-Persons Report. I will also coordinate with J/TIP, USAID, and other inter-agency partners to implement programs that support victims of trafficking and work to expand livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking in the first place.

*Question.* In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, the U.S. Embassy is described as having robust, routine engagement to foster a climate of religious tolerance and consistently encouraging the Bangladesh Government to respect the rights of religious minorities. Obviously, this is an ongoing issue that will require your consistent engagement, if confirmed. What is your assessment of this particular issue and, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

*Answer.* Bangladesh is the third-largest Muslim majority country in the world. It is also home to members of Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, and other faiths. Its constitution commits the Government to maintaining secularism, a commitment the Prime Minister reiterated after the horrible violence against Hindus during this year's Durga Puja celebration. These tragic events show that there is still much to be done to maintain a secular, tolerant society. If confirmed, Embassy Dhaka and I will work with colleagues in the Office of International Religious Freedom led by the Ambassador-at-Large, and elsewhere within the Department to advocate for the protection of all vulnerable communities, including religious minority groups in Bangladesh, through engagement with government officials and members of civil society.

If confirmed, Embassy Dhaka and I will remain in contact with members of various religious faiths to publicly demonstrate the U.S. Government's support for religious freedom and ensure that the annual State Department International Religious Freedom Report accurately documents restrictions or progress on religious freedom in Bangladesh. If confirmed, my team and I will coordinate with USAID and the Office of International Religious Freedom to find ways to use foreign assistance to bolster religious freedom and promote harmonious inter-communal relations.

*Question.* There have been increased security incidents inside of the refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar, including a recent targeted killing of a Rohingya leader. How do you plan on engaging with the Bangladeshi Government to address security concerns and ensure that justice is served?

*Answer.* I recognize the challenges and responsibilities that Bangladesh is facing in hosting approximately 900,000 Rohingya refugees. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Government of Bangladesh, the international community, and other donors to find a durable solution to the crisis.

As the international community works towards a durable solution, we should urge that Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar be protected and have safe and humane living conditions. If confirmed, I commit to pressing the Government of Bangladesh to improve the safety of refugees residing in the camps in Cox's Bazar. I will note the importance of addressing the root causes of insecurity in the camps and ensuring that those who commit crimes (to include individuals from the security forces) and abuses are held accountable in accordance with the law. I will also encourage the Government of Bangladesh to provide freedom of movement for Rohingya and per-

mit increased access to livelihood and educational opportunities to reduce refugees' vulnerability to labor and sexual exploitation.

*Question.* The Digital Security Act (DSA) in Bangladesh is another repressive step to stifle freedom of expression, particularly online.

- Do you believe that “internet shutdowns” are a threat to human rights?

*Answer.* The internet is a lifeline to information as well as a platform for people to exercise their human right to freedom of expression. Governments that use “internet shutdowns” to stifle freedom of expression and the media, including criticisms of the Government and alternative political viewpoints, are contravening the universal right to freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is vital for a healthy democracy. Members of the media, civil society organizations, and opposing political parties should be able peacefully to express their views and advocate for policy change without fearing retribution. An accessible internet is an important conduit for free expression.

*Question.* Do you believe that people should be able to freely express themselves online without fear of authoritarian creep into their privacy?

*Answer.* Yes, I believe that people should be able to freely express themselves online without fear of persecution or retribution from their Government.

*Question.* How will you engage with the host government on this important issue?

*Answer.* bring the law into compliance with Bangladesh’s international obligations on human rights. Amending or repealing the Digital Security Act will allow the people of Bangladesh to exercise their right to freedom of expression; that right includes peacefully criticizing their Government and presenting alternative political viewpoints and restoring a healthy and functioning civil society space in Bangladesh. Additionally, I will continue to urge government authorities to provide a fair trial and safe detention guarantees to those already charged, arrested, or detained under the law. If confirmed, I commit to addressing the anti-democratic, speech-suppressing effects of the Digital Security Act, when they arise.

*Question.* How can you work with functional and regional bureaus in the Department on internet freedom, especially as more programs are formed to bolster freedom of expression within civil society in country?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work closely with the Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor as well as the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs to ensure that U.S. Government programming highlights the importance of internet freedom, freedom of expression, and the centrality of both to a healthy, vibrant civil society.

*Question.* This law is being used to harass and detain journalists in an already hostile environment to their profession. How will you work to improve conditions for the press in Bangladesh?

*Answer.* I share your concerns about the growing application of various laws to intimidate journalists, such as in the case of investigative journalist Rozina Islam who was arrested and charged under the Official Secrets Act. A free press is vital to a government that is accountable to its people and to a healthy, public debate about the future of a country. If confirmed, I will work with like-minded nations to sound an alarm about potential abuses of power that could stifle the work of journalists. I will also coordinate within the Department and with USAID to execute programs to train journalists and offer exchange opportunities to build the capacity of investigative journalists in Bangladesh.

*Question.* As conditions in Burma continue to deteriorate, Bangladesh has graciously hosted close to 1 million Rohingya refugees. Yet, the Government shut off their internet for almost a year, denied children formal access to education, and built barbed wire fences around the camps. It has been reported that refugees in the camps are also extremely vulnerable to trafficking, forced labor, and other horrific crimes. Please describe your engagement to encourage additional protection for Rohingya refugees.

*Answer.* I recognize the challenges and responsibilities that the Rohingya refugee crisis has placed on the Government and people, especially the host community, of Bangladesh. The United States is the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, having provided more than \$1.5 billion to affected communities in Bangladesh, Burma, and elsewhere in the region since August 2017. USG assistance supports U.N. and NGO programming for case management, education, livelihood opportunities, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, prevention and response to gender-based violence, and other activities that

are critical to protecting Rohingya rights and ensuring their security. If confirmed, I will continue to press the Government of Bangladesh to permit Rohingya increased access to livelihood and educational opportunities and expanded freedom of movement inside Bangladesh. I will request that security measures such as fencing do not impede life-saving activities, including protection and disaster prevention and response. I will also work closely with colleagues across the Department and inter-agency, so that protection continues to be at the core of U.S.-funded programming for Rohingya refugees.

*Question.* Over the last two years, the Government of Bangladesh placed gradual numbers of Rohingya on a silt island in the Bay of Bengal, Bhasan Char, under the premise it was “temporary.” The Government denied access to NGOs and the U.N. for protected visits, and refugees reported abuse by government authorities. Now that Bangladesh and UNHCR have cemented a Memorandum of Understanding about protection of the populations on the island, it is imperative that the United States, as well as other donors, have visibility into the operations both on the island and in the mainland camps.

- Do you commit, if confirmed, to briefing congress about the ongoing Bhasan Char agreement and any changes to U.S. policy towards resettlement on Bhasan Char?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to communicating with Congress about ongoing developments related to the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh. I will ensure that Embassy Dhaka’s reporting on Bhasan Char agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding with the U.N. are accurate, timely, and communicated to Washington quickly.

*Question.* Do you commit, if confirmed, to encourage the Government of Bangladesh to reconsider sending Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char?

*Answer.* The Department has made it clear to the Government of Bangladesh that any relocations of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char must be safe, informed, and voluntary. Refugees should also be permitted to move freely between the island and Cox’s Bazar. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues across the Department and interagency to urge the Government of Bangladesh to uphold these humanitarian principles. The Department welcomes the Government of Bangladesh signing an MOU with the U.N. establishing a framework of cooperation on U.N. engagement on Bhasan Char. The Department also supports UNHCR’s request that the Government of Bangladesh allow the U.N. to conduct an assessment of the island prior to resuming relocations. If confirmed, I will work with my team at Embassy Dhaka to continue to encourage dialogue between the Government of Bangladesh and the U.N. on safe living conditions and adequate protection for Rohingya on Bhasan Char. Any U.S. Government funding for operations on Bhasan Char would have to be conditioned on a demonstrated commitment to a principled humanitarian response, including voluntary relocations and freedom of movement between the island and Cox’s Bazar.

*Question.* Please explain your plan of engagement with the Bangladesh Government about the plight of the Rohingya people and the necessity of protection and adequate resources for them.

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will coordinate within the U.S. Government to provide protection and assistance and develop durable solutions for Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi host communities. I understand that since August 2017, the U.S. Government has provided more than \$1.5 billion to affected communities in Bangladesh, which supports life-saving humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees across all sectors of the response, including education, emergency telecommunications, food security, health, logistics, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene. The assistance also supports programs to improve disaster preparedness and bolster access to education and livelihoods for Rohingya and host communities. This helps safeguard Rohingya refugees until their voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return to Burma when conditions allow. I will also continue to press the Government of Bangladesh to allow unhindered access to the camps for humanitarian actors to improve protection and access to services, including educational, vocational and skills training, and other livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
 SUBMITTED TO PETER D. HAAS BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

*Question.* Rohingya are seeking accountability and justice for the crimes committed against them, including genocide and crimes against humanity; Bangladesh has largely been supportive of these efforts. The United States is yet to make a genocide determination though we know from Secretary Blinken's comments that a determination process is ongoing. What accountability measures do you believe would be appropriate for the United States to take in response to the atrocities against the Rohingya? If confirmed, how would you support such measures?

*Answer.* The violence committed against Rohingya is truly horrifying. As Secretary Blinken has said, the State Department is committed to reviewing this issue and taking steps necessary to address these atrocities and make sure they never happen again. One aspect of that review is considering the question of genocide determination. If confirmed, I commit to supporting this process and exploring other methods to seek accountability and justice for these crimes.

*Question.* While I recognize and appreciate the Government of Bangladesh's generosity for taking in nearly one million Rohingya refugees, prospects for repatriation in the near-term appear slim and conditions continue to deteriorate in Cox's Bazar. Recognizing the difficult position Bangladesh is in, how will you nonetheless encourage your counterparts in the Bangladesh Government to take a more constructive approach to the growing humanitarian and security challenges in Cox's Bazar if you are confirmed? What, in your view, are the key elements that must be addressed?

*Answer.* I recognize the challenges and responsibilities that Bangladesh is facing in hosting approximately 900,000 Rohingya refugees. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Government of Bangladesh, the international community, and other donors to find a durable solution to the crisis. We thank and recognize the Government of Bangladesh for hosting Rohingya refugees and urge Bangladesh to attend to Rohingyas' protection as much as possible. As the international community works towards a durable solution, we should ensure that Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar are protected and have safe and humane living conditions. If confirmed, I commit to pressing the Government of Bangladesh to improve the safety of refugees residing in the camps in Cox's Bazar by addressing the root causes of insecurity in the camps and ensuring those who commit crimes and abuses are held accountable. I will also press Bangladesh to permit Rohingya increased access to livelihood and educational opportunities to reduce refugees' vulnerability to labor and sexual exploitation. Improving the relations between Rohingya refugees and host communities through humanitarian and development programming and protecting civil society in Cox's Bazar are also key items I will look to address.

*Question.* COVID restrictions have largely been lifted in the camps but limitations in programming and bureaucratic restrictions for implementers remain, especially for education and livelihood activities. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government of Bangladesh and U.N. Agencies to push for consistent, unhindered access to the camps for humanitarian actors, access to protection services for refugees, and expanded education and livelihood opportunities?

*Answer.* As the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, the United States has a major role to play in advocating for unhindered access to the camps for humanitarian actors to improve access to services, including educational, vocational and skills training, and other livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with the Government of Bangladesh to reduce bureaucratic barriers to U.N. and NGO operations and ensure that security measures such as fencing do not impede life-saving activities, including protection and disaster prevention and response.

*Question.* The MoU recently signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) allows for livelihoods and formal education on Bhasan Char, activities that Bangladesh has been very resistant to allow in the camps in Cox's Bazar. How will you work with Bangladesh and U.N. agencies to ensure there isn't a further increase in restrictions in Cox's Bazar as a means to compel Rohingya to relocate to Bhasan Char and to encourage a parity of services between the two?

*Answer.* The Department has made it clear to the Government of Bangladesh that the United States will not accept any double standards in conditions, protections, and services for Rohingya refugees between Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. If confirmed, I will work with the international community, other donors, and UNHCR to press the Government of Bangladesh not to curtail livelihoods and educational programs for Rohingya in the camps in Cox's Bazar or further restrict refugee rights



in order to pressure refugees to relocate to Bhasan Char. As for the feasibility of services on the island, I look forward to reviewing UNHCR's assessment and operations plan.

*Question.* Following the MoU recently signed between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR, there are still questions on measures that will be taken to ensure that relocation to Bhasan Char is voluntary and ensure freedom of movement for those who choose to relocate there. There is substantial evidence that prior relocations involved coercion and false promises. How do you think the U.S. can work to ensure informed consent of Rohingya prior to further relocations? Further, while the MoU guarantees freedom of movement on Bhasan Char, there is no mechanism for enabling Rohingya to return to Cox's Bazar. Hundreds of Rohingya have attempted to flee the island, with some dying in boat accidents and others detained and returned to the island against their will, underscoring Bangladesh's narrow view of "voluntariness." If confirmed, how will you work to address these issues?

*Answer.* The Department has made it clear to the Government of Bangladesh that any relocations of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char must be safe, informed, and voluntary. Refugees should also be permitted to move freely between the island and Cox's Bazar. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues across the Department and interagency to urge the Government of Bangladesh to uphold these humanitarian principles. The Department welcomes the Government of Bangladesh signing an MOU with the U.N. establishing a framework of cooperation on U.N. engagement on Bhasan Char. The Department also supports UNHCR's request that the Government of Bangladesh allow the U.N. to conduct an assessment of the island prior to resuming relocations. If confirmed, I will work with my team at Embassy Dhaka to continue to encourage dialogue between the Government of Bangladesh and the U.N. on safe living conditions and adequate protection for Rohingya on Bhasan Char. Any U.S. Government funding for operations on Bhasan Char would have to be conditioned on a demonstrated commitment to a principled humanitarian response, including voluntary relocations and freedom of movement between the island and Cox's Bazar. I am committed to working with Congress as we continue to assess whether these conditions can be met.

*Question.* How will you work with the U.S. Mission to the U.N. to ensure the Rohingya crisis is on the agenda of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC), including issues related to accountability, and increase the political price for China to block any meaningful UNSC action?

*Answer.* The United States is stronger when it works with partners. If confirmed, I commit to continue working closely with the U.S. Mission to the U.N., the U.N.'s Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and the Missions of other likeminded countries to promote justice and accountability for the Rohingya crisis, including at the U.N. Security Council. A durable solution to the Rohingya crisis will require the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Burma, when conditions allow. A return to Burma for the Rohingya would require addressing the root causes of their displacement and violence against them. Many of those who led the February military coup in Burma are also the same individuals largely responsible for the atrocities against Rohingya. Working together with partners in the U.N. will ensure that this issue does not go unaddressed due to China's role on the UNSC and will underline to the PRC that the international community's norms include treating refugees humanely and that the international community has a duty to protect refugees.

*Question.* The Rohingya crisis and military coup in Burma have cross-border dimensions and far-reaching regional implications. If confirmed, how will you work with regional governments to promote constructive engagement with issues of concern to both Bangladesh and the U.S.?

*Answer.* The impacts of the Rohingya crisis are felt throughout the region. If confirmed, I will coordinate with the U.S. embassies in Bangladesh's neighboring countries to highlight the importance of Bangladesh's neighbors sharing their responsibilities to protect the most vulnerable of human beings, by rescuing and allowing safe disembarkation and reception of Rohingya refugees in their waters and on the high seas, including by providing shelter, healthcare services, and access to UNHCR to assess their protection claims.

*Question.* Bangladesh has vocally called for developed countries to meet their \$100 billion annual pledge for climate finance. How important is it that the United States lead by example through its climate finance investments to help move Bangladesh towards a carbon free future?

Answer. Bangladesh is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and it is vitally important that the United States leads by example to help Bangladesh's move towards a carbon-free future. President Biden has announced his intent to work with Congress to increase the United States' international climate financing, including an increase in adaptation support to fully six-fold from its peak under President Obama—to \$3 billion. If confirmed, I commit to working diligently to support Embassy Dhaka's continuing work to ensure that U.S. climate finance and assistance supports Bangladesh's climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, as well as its efforts to deploy renewable energy technology.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO PETER D. HAAS BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* As the U.S. and Bangladesh both look to increase opportunities to expand their trade and commercial relationship bilaterally, how do you intend to balance economic policy and human rights concerns?

Answer. As the eighth most populous country in the world coupled with dynamic economic growth, Bangladesh presents tremendous opportunity for U.S. investment and economic collaboration. However, there are also worrying trends in Bangladesh's human rights record, especially related to crackdowns on freedom of expression and the press. If confirmed, I will continue to press Bangladesh to uphold democratic principles and respect human rights, while seeking a stronger economic partnership with Bangladesh. For example, one way our economic partnership can support human rights is to work with the Government of Bangladesh on improving worker rights, which would improve the country's business environment and attract more U.S. investment.

*Question.* How do you think the U.S. can use its leverage on trade, development and security assistance to advance the protection of human rights, including of Rohingya? Further, how can the U.S. utilize economic cooperation to ensure that Bangladesh will improve or develop clear social and environmental policies and practices which are inclusive and nondiscriminatory of all communities, including Rohingya?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support President Biden's commitment to place human rights at the center of our foreign policy. That includes looking at all the tools the United States has to incentivize Bangladesh to take actions that advance the human rights of its people, particularly related to reversing democratic backsliding and holding perpetrators accountable for human rights abuses. Our humanitarian and development assistance also plays an essential role in easing tensions between Rohingya refugees and host communities. The United States is the largest single-country destination for Bangladeshi exports, and our economic partnership with Bangladesh can support our broader foreign policy goals in the areas of human rights and sustainable development. If confirmed, I will utilize the tools that the United States has available—including infrastructure credentialing programs like the Blue Dot Network—to ensure that U.S. economic cooperation with Bangladesh has a central focus on inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, and transparent financing.

*Question.* How can the US, as by far the largest donor to the humanitarian response, engage constructively with Government of Bangladesh counterparts to ensure Rohingya fundamental rights are protected, including basic security and access to education, and that Rohingya are consulted in the process?

Answer. The United States is the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, having provided more than \$1.5 billion to affected communities in Bangladesh, Burma, and elsewhere in the region since August 2017. USG assistance supports U.N. and NGO programming for education, livelihood opportunities, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, prevention and response to gender-based violence, and other activities that are critical to ensuring Rohingya rights and security. Accountability to affected populations, which ensures that refugee participation and feedback are a part of every step of the process, is an essential part of all USG humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya refugee response. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that the United States Government continues to support the Rohingya crisis response, including in consultation with Rohingya to determine their security and protection needs.

*Question.* While we recognize and appreciate the Government of Bangladesh's generosity for taking in nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees, prospects for repatriation

in the near-term appear slim and conditions continue to deteriorate in Cox's Bazar. Recognizing the difficult position Bangladesh is in, how will you nonetheless encourage your counterparts in the Bangladesh Government to take a more constructive approach to the crisis if you are confirmed? What, in your view, are the elements of such an approach?

*Answer.* I recognize the challenges and responsibilities that Bangladesh is facing in hosting approximately 900,000 Rohingya refugees. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Government of Bangladesh, the international community, and other donors to find a durable solution to the crisis. We thank and recognize the Government of Bangladesh for hosting Rohingya refugees and urge Bangladesh to attend to Rohingyas' protection as much as possible. But while the international community works towards a durable solution, ensuring that Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar are protected and have safe and humane living conditions is paramount. If confirmed, I commit to pressing the Government of Bangladesh to improve the safety of refugees residing in the camps in Cox's Bazar by addressing the root causes of insecurity in the camps and ensuring those who commit crimes and abuses are held accountable. I will also press Bangladesh to permit Rohingya increased access to livelihood and educational opportunities in order to reduce refugees' vulnerability to labor and sexual exploitation. Improving the relations between Rohingya refugees and host communities through humanitarian and development programming and protecting civil society in Cox's Bazar are also key items I will address.

*Question.* The protection environment in the camps continues to deteriorate. This has been heightened even more following Mohibullah's assassination. How do you plan to work with UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the root causes of insecurity, such as impunity for criminal and militant actors, are recognized and that protection needs are adequately and expeditiously addressed?

*Answer.* The Department was deeply saddened and disturbed by the murder of Mohib Ullah. If confirmed, I commit to pressing the Government of Bangladesh to improve the safety of Rohingya refugees by addressing the root causes of insecurity in the camps in Cox's Bazar and ensuring those who commit crimes or abuses are held accountable. I will also continue to advocate for expanded humanitarian access for protection activities in the camps, especially for the most vulnerable Rohingya refugees. I will work closely with colleagues across the Department and interagency to ensure that U.S.-funded programming takes these considerations into account and work with donor nations and U.N. agencies to advocate for government actions when necessary.

*Question.* COVID restrictions have largely been lifted in the camps but limitations in programming and bureaucratic restrictions for implementers remain, especially for education and livelihood activities. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government of Bangladesh and U.N. Agencies to push for consistent, unhindered access to the camps for humanitarian actors, access to protection services for refugees, and expanded education and livelihood opportunities?

*Answer.* As the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, the United States has a major role to play in advocating for unhindered access to the camps for humanitarian actors to improve access to services, including education, vocational and skills trainings, and other livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with the Government of Bangladesh to reduce bureaucratic barriers to U.N. and NGO operations and ensure that security measures such as fencing do not impede life-saving activities, including protection and disaster prevention and response.

*Question.* The MoU recently signed between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR allows for livelihoods and formal education on Bhasan Char, activities that Bangladesh has been very resistant to allow in the camps in Cox's Bazar. How will you work with Bangladesh and U.N. agencies to ensure there isn't a further increase in restrictions in Cox's Bazar as a means to compel Rohingya to relocate to Bhasan Char and to encourage a parity of services between the two?

*Answer.* The Department has made it clear to the Government of Bangladesh that the United States will not accept any double standards in conditions, protections, and services for Rohingya refugees between Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. If confirmed, I will work with the international community, other donors, and UNHCR to press the Government of Bangladesh not to curtail livelihoods and education programs for Rohingya in the camps in Cox's Bazar or further restrict refugee rights in order to pressure refugees to relocate to Bhasan Char. As for the feasibility of services on the island, I look forward to reviewing UNHCR's assessment and operations plan.

*Question.* Following the MoU recently signed between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR, there are still questions on measures that will be taken to ensure voluntariness of relocation to Bhasan Char. There is substantial evidence that prior relocations involved coercion and false promises. How do you think the U.S. can work to ensure informed consent of Rohingya prior to further relocations? Further, while the MoU guarantees freedom of movement on Bhasan Char, there is no mechanism for enabling Rohingya to return to Cox's Bazar. Hundreds of Rohingya have attempted to flee the island, with some dying in boat accidents and others detained and returned to the island against their will, underscoring Bangladesh's narrow view of "voluntariness." If confirmed, how will you work to address these issues?

*Answer.* The Department has made it clear to the Government of Bangladesh that any relocations of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char must be safe, informed, and voluntary. Refugees should also be permitted to move freely between the island and Cox's Bazar. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues across the Department and interagency to urge the Government of Bangladesh to uphold these humanitarian principles. The Department welcomes the Government of Bangladesh signing an MOU with the U.N. establishing a framework of cooperation on U.N. engagement on Bhasan Char. The Department also supports UNHCR's request that the Government of Bangladesh allow the U.N. to conduct an assessment of the island prior to resuming relocations. If confirmed, I will work with my team to continue to encourage dialogue between the Government of Bangladesh and the U.N. on safe living conditions and adequate protection for Rohingya on Bhasan Char. Any U.S. Government funding for operations on Bhasan Char would have to be conditioned on a demonstrated commitment to a principled humanitarian response, including voluntary relocations and freedom of movement between the island and Cox's Bazar. I am committed to working with Congress as we continue to assess whether these conditions can be met.

*Question.* How will you work with your counterparts in Dhaka to improve collective engagement on shared interests, including on the Rohingya?

*Answer.* One of our nation's greatest strengths is our network of allies and partners. If confirmed, I will work closely with both our traditional and emerging partners in the Indo-Pacific. For instance, I look forward to coordinating with G7 nations on infrastructure through the Build Back Better World Partnership, and to working with Quad nations and Bangladesh itself on public health and climate adaptation. I also plan to regularly meet with other donor nations, U.N. agencies, NGOs, and the Government of Bangladesh to coordinate on Rohingya issues.

*Question.* How will you work with the U.S. Mission to the U.N. to ensure the Rohingya crisis is on the agenda of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC), including issues related to accountability, and increase the political price for China to block any meaningful UNSC action?

*Answer.* The United States is stronger when it works with partners. If confirmed, I commit to continue working closely with the U.S. Mission to the U.N., the U.N.'s Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and the Missions of other likeminded countries to promote justice and accountability for the Rohingya crisis, including at the U.N. Security Council. A durable solution to the Rohingya crisis will require the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Burma, when conditions allow. A return to Burma for the Rohingya would require addressing the root causes of their displacement and violence against them. Many of those who led the February military coup in Burma are also the same individuals largely responsible for the atrocities against Rohingya. Working together with partners in the U.N. will ensure that this issue does not go unaddressed due to China's role on the UNSC and will underline to the PRC that the international community's norms include treating refugees humanely and that the international community has a duty to protect refugees.

*Question.* The Rohingya crisis and military coup in Burma have cross-border dimensions and far-reaching regional implications. If confirmed, how will you work with regional governments to promote constructive engagement with issues of concern to both Bangladesh and the U.S.?

*Answer.* The impacts of the Rohingya crisis are felt throughout the region. If confirmed, I will coordinate with the U.S. embassies in Bangladesh's neighboring countries to highlight the importance of Bangladesh's neighbors sharing their responsibilities to protect the most vulnerable of human beings by rescuing and allowing safe disembarkation and reception of Rohingya refugees in their waters and on the

high seas, including by providing shelter, healthcare services, and access to UNHCR to assess their protection claims.

*Question.* Rohingya are seeking accountability and justice for the crimes committed against them, including genocide and crimes against humanity; Bangladesh has largely been supportive of these efforts. The United States is yet to make a genocide determination though we know from Secretary Blinken's comments that a determination process is ongoing. What accountability measures do you believe would be appropriate for the United States to take in response to the atrocities against the Rohingya? If confirmed, how would you support such measures?

*Answer.* The violence against Rohingya is truly horrifying. As Secretary Blinken has said, the State Department is committed to reviewing this issue and taking steps necessary to address these atrocities and make sure they never happen again. One aspect of that review is considering the question of genocide determination. If confirmed, I commit to supporting this process and exploring other methods to seek accountability and justice for these crimes.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIE CHUNG BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* What do you think the role of the United States is in emphasizing accountability for past and ongoing human rights violations by the Sri Lankan military? What do you think the U.S. role is in assuring that security forces are not primarily deployed in regions primarily inhabited by Tamil and Muslim populations? Do you commit to engaging closely with this committee on any new developments with respect to security assistance in Sri Lanka?

*Answer.* The Biden administration has centered human rights in our foreign policy. Human rights abusers have enjoyed impunity in Sri Lanka, and in some cases have received support from the Sri Lankan Government. If confirmed, I will continue to seek a commitment from the Sri Lankan Government to credibly address longstanding human rights abuses, including by holding abusers to account, ending the over-deployment of security forces in regions primarily inhabited by minority groups, and finding a long-term resolution of ethnic and religious tensions in Sri Lanka. Additionally, I will use available U.S. tools to promote accountability, including, as applicable and appropriate, Section 7031(c) visa restrictions and/or Global Magnitsky sanctions to advance our human rights goals. The State Department and I commit to engaging closely with the committee on new developments with respect to security assistance to Sri Lanka.

*Question.* In 2015, the United States led a resolution in the U.N. Human Rights Council co-sponsored by Sri Lanka to provide transitional justice following the armed conflict, which ended in 2009. After minimal progress, Sri Lanka withdrew from this resolution and the commitments made. The U.S. supported a March 2021 U.N. Human Rights Resolution on Sri Lanka, mandating the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights collect and preserve evidence of serious violations of international law that occurred in Sri Lanka and report on opportunities for accountability for these crimes. How can the United States best support the UNHRC process in Geneva and more broadly promote international accountability for reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka?

*Answer.* The Department remains committed to using the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and other multilateral fora to press the Government of Sri Lanka to credibly address its longstanding human rights abuses. Our co-sponsoring of Resolution 46/1 is a testament to our commitment to promoting democratic values, human rights, justice, and accountability measures in Sri Lanka. The United States will rejoin the Sri Lanka core group in the UNHRC at the earliest opportunity to continue our work with international partners to promote human rights and accountability in Sri Lanka. The long-term social stability, peace, and prosperity for all Sri Lankans can best be ensured by credibly pursuing justice, accountability, and reconciliation as outlined in the UNHRC resolutions on Sri Lanka. If confirmed, I will continue to press Sri Lanka to engage meaningfully with the UNHRC and to make good on its own commitments to its people as well as to the Council to redress human rights abuses and pursue reconciliation.

*Question.* In March 2021, Sri Lanka expanded the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) with a new regulation, which was highly criticized by human rights organizations, U.N. Special Rapporteurs and a European Parliament resolution. Since its enactment in 1978, the PTA has been used disproportionately against Tamil popu-

lations and, more recently, the island's Muslim population. Do you commit to engaging with the Sri Lankan Government on the PTA and other institutional reforms necessary for the protection of civil society?

Answer. The Department has repeatedly made clear to the Sri Lankan Government that the continued use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) is inconsistent with respect for human rights and contrary to the Sri Lankan Government's pledges to amend the act. The PTA offers detainees no right to due process, and many of those arrested under the PTA remain in detention without charge. Those in detention include more than 300 Muslims arrested after the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, 70 Tamils held for many years for alleged links to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during the civil war, and more than 100 Tamils more recently arrested mainly for their posts on social media. The Government's appointment of a Cabinet Sub-Committee charged with reviewing the PTA is a welcome step, but it must lead to aligning Sri Lanka's counterterrorism law with international standards and to the immediate release of many who have been arbitrarily detained. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with the Sri Lankan Government on the PTA and other institutional reforms necessary for the protection of civil society and the promotion of human rights and religious freedom.

*Question.* Sri Lanka has the second-largest number of unresolved enforced disappearance cases in the world. Despite repeated promises from the Government and the establishment of an Office of Missing Persons, a 2020 United Nations Special Rapporteur's report states, "no observable progress has been made on pending cases." For over four years, Tamil families of the disappeared have been conducting continuing protests, in the face of intimidation from the Sri Lankan state, demanding answers regarding their loved ones. How will U.S. engagement show support for these civil society actors and emphasize accountability and justice regarding enforced disappearances?

Answer. The Department remains concerned about the persistent lack of progress by the Sri Lankan Government in addressing missing persons and enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka. Families of the disappeared and other civil society activists who are pressing the Government on this issue have faced violence and intimidation when seeking answers on what happened to their family members and loved ones. The Department continues to seek a commitment from the Sri Lankan Government to credibly address longstanding human rights cases including those of missing and disappeared persons, and to end intimidation against civil society and human rights defenders. If confirmed, I will continue to support Sri Lanka's civil society, including demonstrating our support for the resolution of missing and disappeared persons cases, and advocate for the protection of religious and ethnic minority groups and the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions.

*Question.* Sri Lanka currently faces a severe financial crisis resulting from high levels of debt incurred during and after the armed conflict and exacerbated by corruption and the COVID-19 global pandemic. When considering economic support for Sri Lanka—whether it be through aid, the IMF and/or other multilateral funders, or connections with private investors and bankers—how will U.S. engagement emphasize the necessary political, economic, and military restructuring requisite for lasting economic stability and sustained peace on the island?

Answer. Sri Lanka is in an unsustainable financial situation and facing imminent debt restructuring and/or default. The Department has urged the Sri Lankan Government to work with the IMF to develop a reform and relief package to place the Government's fiscal stance and debt obligations on a sustainable path. If confirmed, I will seek to further build the capacity of the Sri Lankan Government to meaningfully address corruption, manage financial obligations, and enact policies that support healthy trade and sustainable and inclusive development. I will also seek to use the tools that the United States has available—including the Development Finance Corporation and infrastructure credentialing programs like the Blue Dot Network—to ensure that U.S. economic cooperation with Sri Lanka focuses on inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, and transparent financing. Furthermore, the People's Republic of China (PRC) aggressively seeks political, economic, and strategic advantage in Sri Lanka and in many cases enjoys wide public support for its engagement. If confirmed, I will appropriately highlight the detrimental impact of the PRC's activities on Sri Lanka's sovereignty and sustainable development.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the re-

sponse of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

Answer. I am also deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. I agree that such incidents may pose a threat to the wellbeing of U.S. personnel, and must be taken extremely seriously.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

Answer. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy Colombo staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that all reported potential anomalous health incidents are given serious attention and reported swiftly through the appropriate channels. I will also ensure that staff who are affected by these incidents receive prompt access to the treatment, support, and medical care that they need.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at Embassy Colombo to discuss past reported anomalous health incidents so that I am most prepared to protect the safety of Embassy Colombo staff and ensure that all protocols regarding anomalous health incidents are being followed appropriately.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIE CHUNG BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Sri Lanka remained on Tier 2 Watch List after receiving a waiver preventing an automatic downgrade to Tier 3. Given the serious issues the Government is facing in combating human trafficking, how will you work with the Government to boost their prevention, prosecution, and protection efforts so they do not stay on the watch list?

Answer. Trafficking in Persons remains a significant challenge in Sri Lanka and one the Department takes seriously. While we welcomed the Sri Lankan Government issuing and funding a National Action Plan to address trafficking in persons last year, additional progress will be needed to merit an upgrade to Tier 2 and to avoid an automatic downgrade to Tier 3 in 2022. If confirmed, I will stress to the Government the need for tangible progress to address trafficking in persons, as recommended in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report. These recommendations include investigating and prosecuting suspected traffickers, increasing efforts to identify victims of trafficking, increasing the availability of victim services, and countering child sex tourism.

*Question.* In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Sri Lankan societal respect for religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities is thin. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is guaranteed under Sri Lanka's constitution, and citizens are often free to practice their beliefs. I am concerned about discrimination, intimidation, and harassment of religious minorities practicing their faith traditions. For example, in March the Government finally reversed a month's long policy of compulsory cremation for COVID-19 victims in contravention of Islamic tenants. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to highlight how such practices are inconsistent with Sri Lanka's constitution and promote respect for freedom of religion or belief, including as it relates to the protection of houses of worship and other religious sites, especially for members of minority communities.

*Question.* In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Sri Lanka was identified as having committed serious human rights issues, including impunity for police who harassed citizens, corruption, arbitrary detention, restrictive NGO laws, and more.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

*Answer.* Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms are key aspects of the administration's foreign policy, including with regard to Sri Lanka. The United States seeks a peaceful, democratic, and inclusive Sri Lanka that respects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons in Sri Lanka and is a reliable partner in addressing global challenges. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government of Sri Lanka to take meaningful steps to advance democratic governance, human rights, equal access to justice, and reconciliation, and to address the concerns of minority communities and civil society. Additionally, I will use available tools to promote accountability for abusers who enjoy impunity in Sri Lanka, including, as applicable and appropriate, Section 7031(c) visa restrictions and/or Global Magnitsky sanctions, to advance our human rights goals.

*Question.* In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Sri Lanka was identified as having committed serious human rights issues, including impunity for police who harassed citizens, corruption, arbitrary detention, restrictive NGO laws, and more.

- How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

*Answer.* Civil society has a critical role to play in advancing human rights and democratic governance in Sri Lanka. In order for progress and reforms in Sri Lanka to be resilient in the face of internal and external pressures, civil society groups must be allowed to operate free from monitoring, surveillance, intimidation, harassment, and fear. The Department has continued to urge the Sri Lankan Government to credibly address longstanding human rights cases and respect civil society, members of ethnic and religious minority groups, and human rights defenders. If confirmed, Embassy Colombo and I will continue to support Sri Lanka's civil society, advocating for peaceful organizations to operate without undue governmental restraint, protection for religious and ethnic minority groups, and the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO BRIAN WESLEY SHUKAN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* Benin has long been considered a democratic leader in West Africa. Under President Talon however, Benin has experienced significant democratic backsliding. During this year's election, for example, the Government detained several figures within the opposition, including its leader. What steps can the United States take to help Benin reverse this alarming trajectory?

*Answer.* The United States can encourage Benin to resume its traditional role as a positive influence and example in West Africa for democratic governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights by directly engaging the Beninese Government on these issues, partnering with Benin on regional initiatives for peace and security, and health, and by creating strong economic opportunities for Benin's large and growing youth population. If confirmed, my focus in Benin will be to promote democratic, inclusive, and transparent governance, respect for human rights, a prosperous and healthy society with closer trade links to the United States, and a partnership with Benin to strengthen regional security and address global threats such as violent extremism and transnational organized crime.

*Question.* Like many states in littoral West Africa, Benin faces the threat of encroaching violent extremism from the Sahel and Nigeria. How is the United States helping Benin address threats from beyond its borders and counter the spread of extremist ideology to populations within the country?

*Answer.* The United States supports Benin's efforts to train rural border police officers and military personnel to prevent criminality and the development of violent extremist ideologies through integration with, and support to, previously marginalized communities in border areas. If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Cotonou's engagement with the Beninese Government on security sector assistance, youth development, and strategic communications. USAID's Littorals Regional Initiative supports local counterparts to withstand the increasing pressures of violent extremist organizations by addressing weak governance, conflict, and weak social cohesion.

*Question.* One could argue there is a tension between providing a government with valuable security assistance while that same government seeks to dismantle democracy. If confirmed, how will you balance the United States' security interests against our goal of spreading and strengthening democracy?



*Answer.* If confirmed, I would balance the United States' security interests against our goal of spreading and strengthening democracy by supporting and encouraging Benin to resume the positive influence it once had, and could continue to have, in promoting peaceful democratic governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights while strengthening regional security and addressing global threats such as violent extremism and transnational organized crime.

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* I have promoted democracy and respect for human rights throughout my 26-year foreign service career. In Sudan, I have worked to support the civilian-led democratic transition, including ensuring that U.S. programs and advocacy advance this objective. In Haiti, I coordinated Mission efforts and worked with international partners to support the completion of long-delayed elections. In Iraq, I led a team that lobbied Iraq's parliament to pass a provincial election law and monitored elections in northern Iraq. And in Ghana, I engaged political activists, government officials, candidates, civil society and religious leaders to promote the democratic process in advance of Ghana's 2008 election and led embassy efforts to combat human trafficking.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Republic of Benin? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* The most pressing challenges to democracy in Benin are increasing restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, arrests of political prisoners, and laws that undermine electoral competitiveness. Of significant concern is the Government's jailing of political opponents and critics, often on questionable charges, for extended periods of time, and without a public, transparent judicial process. Although President Talon has had significant success combatting low-level corruption and improving infrastructure, rule of law issues and democratic backsliding run counter to U.S. democracy and human rights priorities and discourage the private investments and international commerce that would bring long-lasting prosperity.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Republic of Benin? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support and encourage Benin to resume its traditional role as a positive influence in promoting peaceful democratic governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights in the region. I would also advance these priorities by promoting regional initiatives for peace and security, supporting the development of a healthier society, and creating economic opportunities for Benin's large and growing youth population. Potential impediments include corruption and slow bureaucratic processes.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will utilize U.S. Government assistance resources to encourage Benin to resume its traditional role as a positive influence and example in West Africa for democratic governance. In administering such assistance, such as USAID's programs to counter democratic backsliding, promote respect for human rights, and support peacebuilding efforts by local civil society organizations that began implementation in the past year, I would prioritize democratic, inclusive, and transparent governance.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Republic of Benin? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-government organizations in the U.S., and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of the civil society in Benin. If confirmed, I would also seek to strengthen relationships with civil society leaders and human rights advo-

cates in Benin, the U.S., and internationally. Where possible, I will work in partnership with diplomatic counterparts to proactively counter efforts to close the space for NGOs and civil society to operate.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to meeting with democratically oriented political opposition figures. To encourage genuine political competition, I will take steps to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones across the political spectrum. I also commit to advocating for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties, if confirmed.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Republic of Benin on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Republic of Benin?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Benin and actively engaging, with the Embassy team, with the Beninese Government on freedom of expression, including for members of the press. I also commit to addressing government efforts to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, and other measures.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue the Embassy's engagements with civil society and government counterparts to counter disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Republic of Benin on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to actively engage with the government of Benin on the right of workers to exercise freedom of association, including to form and join independent trade unions, and call out incidents when this right is restricted.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Republic of Benin, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to using my position to promote respect for human rights and the dignity of all people in Benin, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

*Question.* What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Republic of Benin?

*Answer.* According to the 2020 Department of State Human Rights Report, members of the LGBTQI+ community reported that police tolerated violence against LGBTQI+ persons. Benin's laws do not criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults. A provision related to public indecency in the penal code, however, may be applied to prosecute same-sex sexual conduct by charging individuals with public indecency or acts against nature.

*Question.* What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Republic of Benin?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will encourage the Beninese Government to resume its traditional role as a positive influence and example in West Africa for respect for human rights, including for LGBTQI+ persons, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and persons of every ethnic background, faith, and heritage. I will also work with diplomatic counterparts and allies in civil society to promote respect for the human rights of all in Benin.

*Question.* Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Benin?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that I fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time I am in Washington for visits or consultations throughout my tenure as Ambassador to Benin.

*Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately. Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to ensuring any reported incident is treated seriously and reported through appropriate channels in a timely manner and that any affected individual promptly receives medical care. Secretary Blinken's number one responsibility as Secretary of State is to protect the men and women representing our country around the world.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously, working through the appropriate channels within the Department, and that any individual who experiences an anomalous health incident, or any other matter that would have an impact on their health and safety, will receive prompt medical attention and care.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO to discuss any past incidents, and to ensuring that all health, safety, and security protocols are followed and implemented. I will also work together with our medical team and the RSO to ensure that Embassy personnel are aware of what to do in the event of a potential anomalous health incident.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO BRIAN WESLEY SHUKAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Benin has experienced significant democratic decline under President Talon. As ambassador, if confirmed, how will you engage the Talon administration, civil society and the opposition on democratic and electoral reforms in an effort to help restore Benin's democratic credentials?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would encourage Benin to resume its traditional role as a positive influence and example in West Africa for democracy, rule of law, and human rights by directly engaging the Beninese Government, civil society, and other political actors. If confirmed, my focus would be promoting democratic, inclusive, and transparent governance, respect for human rights, a prosperous and healthy society with closer trade linkages to the United States, and a partnership to strengthen regional security and address global threats such as violent extremism and transnational organized crime.

*Question.* Like the rest of Littoral West Africa, Benin faces a growing threat of violent extremism moving south from the Sahel. As ambassador, if confirmed, what is your perspective on the types of investments the U.S. needs to make and/or maintain to reduce Benin's vulnerability?

*Answer.* Engagement on counterterrorism is a bilateral priority and Benin is a strong U.S. partner. If confirmed, I would strengthen our partnership with Benin on counterterrorism operations in the region by supporting continuing counterterrorism and countering-violent extremism assistance. This includes training for border police and military personnel to prevent criminality, and efforts to prevent development of violent extremist ideologies through support for marginalized communities in border areas. I would also continue counterterrorism engagement with the Beninese Government in the areas of security sector assistance, youth development, and strategic communications.

*Question.* Do you believe it is the sign of a healthy democracy when a duly elected government, in consultation with its citizens, extends the term of office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power?

Answer. Every country has the ability to make constitutional changes, which the U.S. supports as long as such changes are made through a consultative and broad process that includes all stakeholders, including civil society and opposition parties. However, constitutional changes designed to favor incumbents or extend terms erode democratic principles.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you respond if Benin were to extend the term of the office of the presidency even if that means it would extend the term of the current President in power?

Answer. If confirmed, I would advocate for regular, democratic transitions of power, which yield more accountability, stronger institutions, and less corruption.

*Question.* Can you provide your view on supporting U.S. funded, independent international election observation missions?

Answer. Promoting democracy and respect for human rights has long served as the basis of American foreign policy. Election observation can promote public participation, encourage transparency and public confidence in the electoral process, and mitigate the potential for electoral violence. Both U.S. Mission observers and independent observation missions help deter fraud at polling stations and facilitate the collection of critical information on conditions. To ensure real democratic gains, it is important that our elections work not focus solely on Election Day, but also address institutional or conduct problems in the lead up to elections.

*Question.* Would you support a U.S. funded, independent international election observation mission for Benin's next general election?

Answer. If confirmed, I would carefully consider how U.S. support to observation efforts can contribute to free and fair elections, and transparent electoral processes in Benin.

*Question.* How can the United States best use the tools it has to hold Benin officials accountable for corrupt behavior?

Answer. Corruption is a significant challenge in Benin. President Talon has described endemic corruption as one of the country's biggest problems. The United States can best use the tools it has to hold Beninese officials accountable for corrupt behavior by directly engaging the Beninese Government, promoting internationally recognized standards, and reinforcing the important role played by civil society, the media, and the business community.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would be your approach in using the tools it has to hold Benin officials accountable for corrupt behavior?

Answer. If confirmed, I would enlist the full resources of the Department of State's anticorruption teams and other U.S. Government resources to support these efforts, including continuing USAID's support to the National Anti-Corruption Authority to implement an anti-corruption action plan designed to elevate awareness of the perils and price of corruption.

*Question.* How can the United States best support Benin in curbing the corrupt behavior of those companies and government officials of malign foreign actors like China that feed on corrupt governments and business environments?

Answer. If confirmed, the Embassy could best support Benin in curbing corrupt behavior of those companies and government officials of malign foreign actors like the PRC that feed on corrupt governments and business environments by prioritizing anti-corruption; promoting democratic values, including inclusive electoral processes and media freedom; promoting high-quality alternatives to PRC trade and investment such as the African Growth and Opportunities Act and the West African Trade Hub; and providing assistance to Benin in the energy sector through the Millennium Challenge Corporation, health sector through USAID, and the security sector through Department of Defense and Department of State funding.

*Question.* Should the United States build on its existing defense and security cooperation with Benin? Where are the opportunities and the risks?

Answer. Benin is a strong partner to the United States for peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel. Our assistance to Benin's armed forces and police supports Benin's participation in peacekeeping and regional security efforts and advances its ability to interdict maritime and transnational organized crime. Our security and military engagement creates opportunities for U.S. law enforcement and service members to integrate respect for human rights and international humanitarian law as core training components and allows Beninese military personnel to

attend professionalization training in the United States. If confirmed, I would support building on our existing defense and security cooperation with Benin.

*Question.* Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Benin?

*Answer.* My understanding is that morale throughout Mission Benin is strong, motivated by staff's commitment to promoting democratic, inclusive, and transparent governance, promoting respect for human rights, supporting a prosperous and healthy society with closer trade linkages to the United States, and working in partnership with Benin to strengthen regional security and address global threats such as violent extremism and transnational organized crime.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Benin?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would prioritize building a strong team and community. I would support frequent and robust communication with local and U.S. staff, ensuring opportunities to share information and hear concerns. I would ensure that we communicate and put into practice Mission priorities and values, emphasizing the importance of diversity, inclusion, and respect. And as the father of two daughters who attended international schools overseas, I would prioritize ensuring that the educational needs of U.S. Mission families are served as well as possible.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Benin?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would focus on establishing strong communication among all agencies and personnel to ensure a common understanding of Mission priorities and values, and to promote a unified approach to achieving our objectives. Since some Mission offices are represented by non-resident personnel based in neighboring countries, I would also prioritize incorporating those personnel into key discussions.

*Question.* Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* As a manager and leader, I want to create an empowered, collaborative, and creative team that is motivated to achieve Mission objectives. I am committed to ensuring a respectful and inclusive workplace, in which everyone's contribution is valued. I prioritize frequent and open communication to ensure that the team understands our vision and values, while maintaining an environment in which personnel at all levels are empowered and able to share information, expertise and suggestions.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

*Answer.* It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

*Question.* What lessons have you learned from your tenure as the Chief of Mission in Sudan?

*Answer.* This has been an extremely dynamic period in the U.S.-Sudan relationship. I have worked with a new government that took office following the overthrow of Sudan's longtime dictator, dealt with a transformed bilateral relationship following the rescission of Sudan's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, and managed the Embassy team during the COVID pandemic. Engaging with a new and relatively inexperienced government has underscored the importance of clear and coordinated communication, transparency, adaptability, and managing expectations.

*Question.* How do you envision your leadership relationship with deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* I have had the opportunity to serve as deputy chief of mission at Embassy Port-au-Prince under two ambassadors, and as consul general in Casablanca. For me, a strong and mutually supportive relationship between the DCM and the chief of mission is critical. I envision a close and collaborative relationship, with the DCM involved in all decisions. This requires a constant open line of communication and trust between the two.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* While the chief of mission has overall leadership and management responsibility at the Embassy, I view the DCM as a key embassy leader and the chief of mission's principal partner and advisor. If confirmed, I would look to the DCM to help ensure strong communication within the embassy community, coordinate an

active mentoring program, assist in coordinating interagency activities and programs, promote a culture of respect, inclusion and diversity, and ensure robust and effective management controls.

*Question.* How should the chief of mission lead a post with multiple U.S. Government agencies present?

*Answer.* The Chief of Mission should lead a post with multiple U.S. Government agencies present by establishing strong communication among all agencies and personnel to ensure a common understanding of Mission priorities and values, and to promote a unified approach to achieving post's objectives.

*Question.* In your experience, how important are interagency relationships within a post?

*Answer.* In my experience, interagency relationships within a post are critical to the success of the overall mission. If confirmed, I would promote strong coordination between all offices and agencies at Mission Benin.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you handle interagency disagreement within Embassy Cotonou?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would handle interagency disagreement within Embassy Cotonou by prioritizing frequent and open communication and ensuring that the Embassy is a respectful and inclusive workplace, in which everyone's contribution is valued. As a manager and leader, I want to create an empowered, collaborative, and creative team that is motivated to achieve Mission objectives.

*Question.* In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

*Answer.* I believe it is important to provide employees with timely, accurate, constructive feedback on their performances to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeed in their roles.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

*Question.* It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Benin. In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

*Answer.* I agree that it is essential that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, civil society activists, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats, in addition to ensuring oversight of projects and programs. In my experience, U.S. diplomats get outside of the embassy walls enough to fully accomplish their mission, although this has been made more challenging by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would encourage U.S. diplomats in Benin to better access local populations by utilizing all available public diplomacy tools for in-person, virtual, and media engagement. I would also encourage in-country travel and representation outside of the capital.

*Question.* Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Benin? What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

*Answer.* U.S. public diplomacy in Benin is focused on bolstering support for democratic values among the country's rapidly growing youth population and municipalities beyond the capital, strengthening media institutions and the culture of investigative journalism, and promoting American-style entrepreneurial values among women and other underrepresented groups. The Embassy engages thousands of Beninese youth through its growing network of English Clubs, four American Spaces, and five active exchange program alumni organizations, and reaches hundreds of thousands more Beninese citizens through community radio and social media highlighting the scale and scope of the U.S. commitment to Benin and Africa.

*Question.* How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

*Answer.* Post has latitude to tailor our public messaging to local issues and concerns. If confirmed, I would ensure that our public diplomacy posture continues to play a key role in promoting our shared values and America's generous financial assistance and support across the range of issues.

*Question.* "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to taking the threat of anomalous health incidents seriously.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Benin personnel?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as I can to Mission Benin personnel.

*Question.* In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled "The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China." The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively. In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Benin and counter the malign influence of China?

*Answer.* The United States should partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Benin and counter the malign influence of the PRC by promoting shared democratic values, good governance, transparency, anti-corruption efforts, and calling out nondemocratic behavior. If confirmed, I would engage with like-minded partner embassies to encourage a common understanding and approach to these challenges.

*Question.* In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Benin remained on Tier 2 due to overall increasing efforts to eliminate trafficking but can improve on convictions of traffickers and assigning proportional sentences. How will you work with the host government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the Beninese Government to increase knowledge of its anti-human trafficking laws within the judiciary and assign proportional sentences to traffickers by encouraging implementation of Benin's anti-human trafficking laws and 2020-2024 National Action Plan. I will also continue the Embassy's efforts to engage the Beninese Government at all levels to increase awareness of human trafficking and to spur action to counter exploitation by implementing the prioritized recommendations in the U.S. Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons report.

*Question.* In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Benin was identified as having great societal respect for religious freedom. Despite this, there is still work the U.S. Embassy can do to bolster international religious freedom. How will you work with the Ambassador At Large on this issue?

*Answer.* Religious freedom is a U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department closely monitors the religious freedom situation in Benin. Benin has long been a strong example for ethnic and religious tolerance in an often-turbulent region. If confirmed, I commit to work with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to emphasize the importance of religious freedom, addressing religious freedom concerns, and further strengthening tolerance and respect among and for members of religious communities in Benin.

*Question.* In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Benin was identified as having committed or baring witness to (severe) human rights abuses. If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will encourage the Beninese Government to address impunity and hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations and abuses. I will also support and encourage Benin to resume the positive role it once had, and could continue to have, in promoting respect for human rights in the region.

*Question.* How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I will direct the Embassy team to work with our like-minded partners and allies in civil society to improve respect for human rights on the ground by prioritizing programs that work closely with local civil society organizations, including USAID programs to counter democratic backsliding, promote respect for human rights, and support peacebuilding.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO  
ELIZABETH ANNE NOSEWORTHY FITZSIMMONS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* President Gnassingbé or his father have ruled Togo since 1967. Political opposition often face harassment, detention, and even high-tech surveillance by the Togolese Government. What is the state of democracy in Togo, and what can the United States do to help Togo establish a competitive political system with real protections for opposition voices?

Answer. The United States continues to urge the Government of Togo to make greater advancements towards increasing respect for democracy and human rights. In 2019, the Government reformed the constitution to institute a two-round election system and a two-year term limit for presidents, though the presidential term-limit is not retroactive. Togo held local elections last year for the first time in 30 years and engaged in a government-initiated national dialogue with opposition parties to modify the electoral code and constitution and improve the electoral process for upcoming regional elections. The regional elections are the next step in decentralizing the Government and implementing the constitutionally-mandated Senate and Constitutional Court. If confirmed, I will continue to push the Government to increase political space so that the people of Togo can make their voices heard and peacefully express dissent, through the ballot box and through greater respect for human rights and a competitive political system.

*Question.* The Togolese Government has alleged used digital surveillance tools, including from Israeli and Indian firms to monitor opposition and civil society. What role can the United States play in countering digital authoritarianism and what steps would you take if confirmed to confront digital authoritarianism in Togo?

Answer. In August 2021, international media cited Togo as the only West African country and one of four sub-Saharan African countries using Pegasus software to monitor internet communications, journalists, opposition parties, Catholic clergy, and political dissidents. The right not to be subject to arbitrary or unlawful interference with one's privacy is a human right, guaranteed in Article 28 of the Togolese Constitution and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Togo acceded to in 1984. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Government of Togo, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote transparency and privacy rights, increase access to justice, and strengthen democratic institutions. We will continue to urge the Government of Togo to adhere to international commitments they made and to make greater advancements towards increasing respect for democracy, and human rights and fundamental freedoms.

*Question.* U.S. relations with Togo have mainly focused on the fight against HIV/AIDS and more recently on security assistance. What areas do you see as opportunities for increased engagement by the United States?

Answer. Supporting good governance and democracy in Togo is a key goal of our bilateral relationship in Togo. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government of Togo to make greater advancements towards increasing respect for democracy, and human rights and fundamental freedoms. Recent restrictions on the press following politically motivated arrests, limitations on applications for political gatherings, and suspensions of press outlets have greatly impeded Togolese ability to participate in their democracy. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Government of Togo, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote political reforms, reinforce democratic institutions, and strengthen electoral institutions and processes to promote free and fair elections. I will also support the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

*Question.* What is the COVID-19 situation in Togo right now? Is the United States doing enough to help Togo vaccinate its population?

Answer. As of October 18, the Government of Togo has recorded 25,899 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 239 deaths. The Embassy managed over \$1,484,000 in COVID-related programming from AFRICOM, USAID, the State Department, and



Embassy Small Grants. Through COVAX, the United States made available 607,230 Pfizer-BioNTech doses to Togo and 4,000 test kits and other equipment through the International Atomic Energy Association.

The PEPFAR program in Togo received \$590,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (APRA) funds to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on PEPFAR implementation in FY21-22, including infection prevention control measures and training, procurement of PPE for healthcare workers, and laboratory strengthening. If confirmed, I will continue the work of Embassy Lomé to work with the Togolese Government to end the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that the U.S. Government is working with the Togolese Ministry of Health to meet the health needs of the country to end COVID-19.

#### *Democracy & Human Rights*

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* Throughout my career, I have been dedicated to publicly championing democracy and respect for human rights. Many of my overseas tours were in Public Affairs Sections, where I worked directly with media and the public to promote the ideals of democracy and respect for human rights. Direct engagement with youth leaders on issues of democracy, governance, and human rights throughout my career has offered the greatest impact, as those youth leaders emerge as influential figures in government, business, and the media.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Togo? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* Recent restrictions on the press following politically motivated arrests, limitations on applications for political gatherings, and suspensions of press outlets raise concern and certainly present challenges to Togo's democracy. The Government amended the "Bodjona" Law in late 2019 to restrict the time, place, frequency, and application process for demonstrations citing rising terrorist threats. A 2019 modification to the press and communication code increased fines and granted the High Authority for Audiovisuals and Communication (HAAC) more stringent control over the press. The HAAC exercised this additional control more rigorously over the past year. On April 8, 2020, the Government of Togo banned protests and political rallies under the COVID-19 State of Emergency, which now is scheduled to last until September 2022.

Following the 2020 Presidential elections, the Government initiated a six-month national dialogue with opposition parties, the National Consultation between Political Parties (CNAP), to modify the electoral code and constitution and improve the electoral process for upcoming regional elections. Despite boycotts from a few political parties, CNAP produced over 50 suggestions for consideration. The Government's willingness to adopt these suggestions is still unclear. Togo's regional elections, the next step in its decentralization process, are necessary for the appointment of the Senate, as regional representatives select two-thirds of Senators.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Togo? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Government of Togo, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote political reforms, reinforce democratic institutions, and strengthen electoral institutions and processes to promote free and fair elections.

I would support the continued use of available State Department and USAID regional and centrally managed resources to advance democracy and respect for human rights in Togo. The Embassy has leveraged these kinds of resources in the past to support the decentralization process in Togo, support the efforts of Togo's Committee for the Prevention and Fight Against Violent Extremism, and increase women's participation in the political process.

USAID/West Africa's Reacting to Early Warning and Response II program helps address democratic backsliding through a combination of approaches that prevents the spread of COVID-19 infections, fights COVID-19-related misinformation, builds the capacity of women and youth to lead conflict prevention efforts, and promotes social cohesion and community resilience against COVID-19.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would seek to leverage the Government of Togo's strong desire for an MCC Compact to encourage further reforms that improve transparency and reduce corruption. In 2019, MCC signed a Threshold Program with Togo to increase competition and private sector participation in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services market and to improve agricultural land tenure and management. Both of these areas will be critical to driving economic growth and reducing poverty in the country. If confirmed, I will explore all USAID, small grants, and other available U.S. funding to support and prioritize democracy and governance activities to focus on efforts to increase political pluralism and end limitations of freedom of assembly and expression.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Togo? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to meet with and listen to all civil society and political actors in Togo who support strengthening Togo's democracy. I would build on Embassy efforts to urge the Government to lift undue restrictions on the press and journalists and allow for freedom of peaceful assembly. I would also continue to encourage the Government to take seriously issues of impunity to build trust between the Government and its people, and a concrete way the Government can build that trust is to allow NGOs and civil society true freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to continue and strengthen the relationships our mission has built with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. I will strive to support the efforts of these figures and parties to develop a more inclusive political environment in Togo, including their government-initiated dialogue with opposition parties to support regional elections. I will urge the Government to respect the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly for all political actors, even those who do not agree with the Government. Through public statements, small grants and other programming, and direct engagements, I will advocate for a political environment that is inclusive of women, youth, minorities, and Togolese who might otherwise be marginalized.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Togo on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Togo?

*Answer.* Recent restrictions on the press following politically motivated arrests, limitations on applications for political gatherings, and suspensions of press outlets raise concern. If confirmed, I would, along with the rest of my Embassy team, prioritize work with the Government of Togo to end restrictions on media outlets and reporters and to remind them that freedom of expression, including for members of the press, is key to maintaining a healthy democracy. If confirmed, I will commit to meeting regularly with independent and local press outlets in Togo as visible sign of support for press freedom.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will build on the Embassy team's great work and programs to combat disinformation and propaganda perpetuated by foreign and non-state actors. A well-informed citizenry is required for a functioning democracy, which is why the Embassy provides programs to educate journalists about the dangers of disinformation and publicly refutes dangerous disinformation, a recent example being the disinformation circulated on the efficacy and safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

*Question.* Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Togo on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* The Togolese constitution provides that workers may form and join unions and bargain collectively. Togolese labor law also prohibits forced labor, child labor, and discrimination in the workplace; and outlines a minimum wage, occupational safety and health, and hours of work protections. The Government has demonstrated on several occasions its willingness to negotiate with labor groups. At the same time, concerns regarding government enforcement of worker rights protections, including on child labor and forced labor, remain. If confirmed, my team and I will encourage the Government of Togo to support the rights of organized labor groups which are protected in by law.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Togo, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I commit to using the position of the U.S. Ambassador to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Togo, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity. Through collaboration with various Togolese NGOs, the Embassy supports programming that promotes the rights and representation of women and LGBTQI+ persons in the Togolese economy and politics and increases public-private partnerships to encourage citizen participation and local governance. We will not compromise on these important American, and frankly global, ideals.

*Question.* What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Togo?

*Answer.* Togolese law prohibits “acts against nature committed with an individual of one’s sex,” widely understood as a reference to same-sex sexual activity. The law provides that a person convicted of engaging in consensual same-sex sexual activity may be sentenced to one to three years’ imprisonment and a substantial fine, but it is rarely enforced. The law forbids promotion of immorality, which is understood to include promotion of same-sex activities. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons face societal discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education and health care. Existing antidiscrimination law does not apply to LGBTQI+ persons. No law allows transgender persons to change gender markers on government-issued identity documents.

*Question.* What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Togo?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to engaging with LGBTQI+ people in Togo on the best ways the U.S. Government work to end the discrimination LGBTQI+ persons face in Togo. I will listen whole-heartedly to their concerns, take their lead, and develop a collaborative approach to ending discrimination against members of the LGBTQI+ community. If confirmed, I will work with like-minded diplomatic partners and strengthen civil society advocacy to fully support and advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. Members of Togo’s LGBTQI+ community can be assured that promoting respect for human rights for all individuals, with no exception or caveat, is a U.S. foreign policy priority.

#### *Congressional Consultations*

*Question.* Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Togo?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit, in coordination with the State Department’s Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to respond promptly to all appropriate requests for briefings and for information by this committee. Congress has an important role to play not only in foreign policy legislation but also during the implementation process. Our foreign policy is stronger when the two branches of government coordinate, and I would look forward to strengthening the coordination between our two branches.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* Yes, absolutely. As Secretary Blinken has said, his number one responsibility as Secretary of State is to protect the men and women representing our coun-

try around the world. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring any reported incident is treated seriously and reported through appropriate channels in a timely manner and that any affected individual promptly receives medical care.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to treating each case seriously and working through the appropriate channels within the Department. Any individual who experiences an anomalous health incident or any other matter that would have an impact on their health and safety will receive prompt medical attention and care.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will hold regular meetings with medical staff and the RSO on any past incidents to ensure that all health, safety, and security protocols are followed and implemented at Embassy Lomé. If confirmed, I will work together with our medical team and the RSO to make sure that the entire Embassy community is aware of what to do should a potential incident affect them, their colleagues, or their family members.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO  
ELIZABETH ANNE NOSEWORTHY FITZSIMMONS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Given your background in public diplomacy, how will you balance public diplomacy and quiet diplomacy in working with the Togolese Government?

*Answer.* Understanding how to balance public messaging and quiet diplomacy is vital to achieving U.S. goals. If confirmed, I would build on Embassy Lomé's use of quiet diplomacy to urge the Government to make democratic reforms. I would also continue to encourage the Government to take seriously issues of impunity to build trust between the Government and its people. I would also support, if confirmed, increasing engagement through our Public Diplomacy programs that give youth, journalists, and opposition leaders a voice to allow us to promote the ideals of democracy and respect for human rights for the Togolese people.

*Question.* How do you view the U.S. role in supporting positive democratic and institutional reforms in Togo?

*Answer.* Supporting positive democratic and institutional reforms in Togo is a top policy priority for the United States. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Government of Togo, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote political reforms, reinforce democratic institutions, and strengthen electoral institutions and processes to promote free and fair elections.

I would support the continued use of available State Department and USAID regional and centrally managed resources to advance democracy and respect for human rights in Togo. The Embassy has leveraged these kinds of resources in the past to support the decentralization process in Togo, support the efforts of Togo's Committee for the Prevention and Fight Against Violent Extremism, and increase women's participation in the political process.

*Question.* As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, how will you engage the Gnassingbé administration and opposition figures in supporting positive democratic and institutional reforms?

*Answer.* Following the 2020 Presidential elections, the Government of Togo initiated a six-month national dialogue with opposition parties, the National Consultation between Political Parties (CNAP), to modify the electoral code and constitution and improve the electoral process for upcoming regional elections. Despite boycotts from a few political parties, CNAP produced over 50 suggestions for consideration. The Government's willingness to adopt these suggestions is still unclear. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador, I will encourage both the Gnassingbé Government and opposition figures to continue to build upon the CNAP and enact the necessary reforms to strengthen democracy and political pluralism in Togo.

*Question.* The U.S. mission in Togo is a relatively small, and Togo commands significantly less attention from Washington than many of its close neighbors, including Nigeria, Ghana, Niger and Burkina Faso.

- As Chief of Mission, if confirmed, how will you operate in such a post to manage the staff and lead U.S. policy on the ground?

Answer. My experience as both Deputy Assistant Secretary and Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs provided me ample opportunity to understand how to work with my interagency colleagues in Washington to best support our missions overseas. If confirmed, I will partner with the team at Embassy Lomé to ensure their ideas about how to achieve policy successes in a resource-constrained environment are heard and leverage my knowledge of Washington to acquire the appropriate resources and attention from Washington to achieve the U.S.G. mission goals in Togo.

*Question.* What is your view on political dynasties and long-serving rulers who, like in the case of Togo, manipulate constitutional and electoral processes to give the façade of democratic legitimacy?

Answer. We continue to urge the Government of Togo to make greater advancements towards increasing respect for democracy, and human rights and fundamental freedoms. One such needed change is greater political pluralism. In 2019, the Government reformed the constitution to institute a two-round election system and a two-year term limit for presidents, though the presidential term-limit is not retroactive. Togo held local elections last year for the first time in 30 years and engaged in a government-initiated national dialogue with opposition parties to modify the electoral code and constitution and improve the electoral process for upcoming regional elections. The regional elections are the next step in decentralizing the Government and increasing political pluralism. If confirmed, I will continue to push the Government to increase political space so that the people of Togo can make their voices heard and peacefully express dissent through the ballot box and through greater respect for human rights and political pluralism.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address the issue of political dynasties and long-serving rules as U.S. Ambassador, particularly in light of broader regional trends?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue our work with all stakeholders in ensuring that Togo's political system remains fair and transparent and that the Togolese people are heard and given an opportunity to choose their political leaders. I will promote democratic values and seek to strengthen democratic institutions, including through electoral processes that have credibility and integrity in representing the will of the people of Togo.

I understand our Embassy in Lomé and the MCC have continually reminded the Togolese Government that MCC compact assistance is predicated on a clear, demonstrated commitment to MCC's eligibility criteria, as well as successful implementation of its Threshold Program. If confirmed, I will continue to use this and other programs as an incentive toward making political reforms in Togo.

*Question.* Can you provide your view on supporting U.S. funded, independent international election observation missions?

Answer. Election observation can promote public participation, encourage transparency and public confidence in the electoral process, and mitigate the potential for electoral violence. Both U.S. Mission observers and independent observation missions help deter fraud at polling stations and facilitate the of information during elections. To promote real democratic gains, it is important that our election work looks beyond election day and addresses problems in the lead up to elections.

*Question.* Would you support a U.S. funded independent international election observation mission for Togo's next general election?

Answer. If confirmed, I would identify ways the U.S. could support international observation efforts to contribute to free and fair elections and transparent electoral processes in Togo. International observers from ECOWAS and the African Union judged the Presidential elections held in 2020 to be generally free and fair and international consensus is that President Gnassingbé won the election. Nevertheless, the level of distrust between Togo's major political factions remains exceptionally high. An overly centralized executive with political power concentrated in the ruling party inhibits broad-based participatory democracy. In addition, the Government expelled National Democratic Institute staff and pulled the credentials of their local partner days before the 2020 presidential election, limiting efforts to increase electoral transparency and build confidence in the electoral process.

*Question.* How can the United States best use existing tools to hold Togolese officials accountable for corrupt behavior?

*Answer.* The United States supports efforts to counter corruption throughout the world. Some of the best tools that the U.S. Government has at its disposal are those that include benchmarks on corruption reduction, such as MCC Threshold and Compact programs. If confirmed, I would utilize all available U.S. assistance tools and programs to combat government corruption in Togo and prioritize programs that help the U.S. and Togo achieve those goals.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would be your approach in using the tools at the U.S.'s disposal to hold Togolese officials accountable for corrupt behavior?

*Answer.* Combatting corruption in Togo is essential to promote economic opportunities and inclusive development for all Togolese and to increase government trust and accountability. If confirmed, I would seek to leverage the Government of Togo's strong desire for a MCC Compact to encourage further reforms that improve transparency and reduce corruption. In 2019, MCC signed a Threshold Program with Togo to increase competition and private sector participation in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services market and to improve agricultural land tenure and management. Both of these areas will be critical to driving economic growth and reducing poverty in the country, but that will only happen if corruption is reduced.

*Question.* Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale in Embassy Lomé?

*Answer.* Embassy Lomé is a small mission in a region facing growing challenges. I understand that Mission Togo's morale is good, particularly for a post of its size in a difficult environment, and that many officers choose to extend their tour in Togo for a third year. To me, that speaks volumes about the team and the environment that Embassy leadership has fostered in the country and, if confirmed, I will endeavor to build upon that foundation and ensure that morale remains good.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale?

*Answer.* If confirmed, maintaining morale of the team at Embassy Lomé will be of utmost importance to me. I intend to work closely with my staff, understand their concerns, make improvements where those can be undertaken at post, and communicate those concerns which cannot be addressed at post back to Department leadership for action. I will seek to support all employees and their families to create an inclusive and welcoming culture where individuals are safe and can achieve professional and personal goals. Our foreign service family members contribute directly to mission morale, and if confirmed, I will ensure that those family members are also supported and happy by seeking to work with the Office of Overseas schools in an effort to improve schooling options in Togo so that more families can consider service at Embassy Lomé. I will work to ensure that eligible family members who wish to work in the mission find meaningful employment in Embassy Lomé.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will lead regular discussions with all agencies to establish and review goals and develop strategies and tactics to achieve common objectives. If confirmed, I intend to ensure that all employees working in Embassy Lomé, whether they are locally employed staff, eligible family members, or U.S. direct hires, feel supported and heard in their work. I would maintain an open office policy and welcome the contributions and ideas of those working in our mission. Throughout my career, I valued and encouraged a diverse and inclusive work environment, and if confirmed, I intend to bring that same spirit to Embassy Lomé.

*Question.* How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* I am an inclusive leader and manager and if confirmed will encourage every member of the team to contribute - this is particularly important in an environment like Togo in which the Embassy team is small and relatively less experienced and the policy challenges are complex, varied, and growing. I am constantly seeking to innovate and learn in my own professional life, and I strive to create a culture of creativity, diversity, and inclusion so that all members of the team are valued, and their voices are heard. I think these are particularly important leadership traits in a small Embassy like Lomé, where innovative ideas and diverse perspectives will help the team leverage our relatively modest resources to achieve significant results.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

*Answer.* Absolutely not. It is neither acceptable nor productive to berate anyone in a professional setting. If confirmed, I will not tolerate abusive behavior at Embassy Lomé and I will seek to lead by example, praising in public, constructively correcting in private when necessary, and being open to dissent and constructive feedback from the team.

*Question.* How do you envision your relationship with your deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* The Department of State provides a list of suitable Deputy Chief of Mission candidates for a Chief of Mission to select when those positions become open. If confirmed, I will select a DCM who complements my skills, experience, and knowledge and we will work as a true team to ensure the U.S. Mission in Togo is best placed to advance U.S. interests.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I intend to entrust my Deputy Chief of Mission with the responsibilities akin to those of a Chief Operating Officer, modeling the function of the Embassy Front Office on the effective organization of the Bureau of African Affairs in which the Assistant Secretary functions as Chief Executive Officer and the Principal Deputy as COO. While both the DCM and I will have responsibility for coaching and mentoring the Embassy Team, if confirmed, I will also ask the DCM to play the primary role in ensuring the career development of the first and second tour officers on the Embassy team. And I will be open to any ideas that the DCM has about functions in which he/she is particularly interested or where he/she has particular strengths.

*Question.* How should the chief of mission lead a post with multiple U.S. Government agencies present?

*Answer.* Incorporating voices from all government agencies is the best way to capitalize on the knowledge, experience, and perspective they bring to Embassy Lomé. If confirmed, I will lead regular discussions with all agencies to establish and review goals and develop strategies and tactics to achieve common objectives. I will hold regular meetings with all U.S. Government agencies represented at the mission and with our regional colleagues based at other Embassies in West Africa.

*Question.* In your experience, how important are interagency relationships within a post?

*Answer.* In my experience, creating strong interagency relationships is extremely important for achieving U.S. priorities and goals at our missions overseas. In my previous Foreign Service assignments, I have relied on and fostered a close, productive relationship with my interagency colleagues, and I intend to do the same, if confirmed, as the next U.S. Ambassador to Togo.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you handle interagency disagreement within Embassy Lomé?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will regularly hold meetings with the interagency and incorporate interagency colleagues into the mission country team. I will encourage my staff to work closely as a team to resolve any disagreements, and I will make sure that each member on the team feels like their input and perspective is valid and important - we all work for the same U.S. Government.

*Question.* In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide subordinates with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

*Answer.* Yes. Our duty as leaders is to provide accurate and constructive feedback to our subordinates and to reward them for a job well done.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

*Answer.* Yes. I view that as a duty for any manager of people, and if confirmed I commit to provide clear, accurate, timely, and direct feedback to my team.

*Question.* It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and everyday citizens.

- In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In my experience, it is imperative that U.S. diplomats leave their office space on a regular basis and meet not only with government leaders but also with businesspeople, members of civil society, influencers, and change-makers in the country in which they work to fully understand the local context and in order to be able to provide the most effective advice to decision makers in the inter-agency. If confirmed, I will encourage my staff to work outside Embassy walls to achieve our foreign policy goals and will mentor those members of the team who need more experience in this area, while also modeling regular constructive outreach to all elements of Togolese society. I am a public diplomacy officer, and throughout my career I have valued, both personally and professionally, the relationships I have fostered outside the office to achieve U.S. goals.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, and as health and safety conditions permit, I will encourage U.S. diplomats to engage actively, broadly and in-person with local populations. Until then, we will maintain active engagement through virtual media. If confirmed, I intend to regularly visit people throughout Togo and use those visits to facilitate contacts for other U.S. diplomats.

COVID-19 has physical interactions and poor telecommunications infrastructure makes virtual interactions difficult. However, nearly all Mission personnel have been vaccinated and the number of vaccinated Togolese is also increasing. This should slowly improve our ability to access more people locally.

Once the COVID-19 situation is sufficiently improved we intend to fully re-engage with all our stakeholders throughout the country in-person. Once we achieve a healthy threshold of vaccinated people, we plan to return to hosting more representational events as they have historically been well received, especially our Fourth of July celebrations. A resumption in issuing tourist and business visas will also increase our interaction as it will raise interest in the United States.

*Question.* Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Togo?

Answer. Although the constitution provides for freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the Government restricted these rights. The law imposes penalties on journalists deemed to have committed "serious errors" as defined in the media code.

Independent media are active and express a wide variety of views, many highly critical of the Government. Authorities sometimes attempt to influence the press through illicit means, for example, by giving "year-end gifts" to encourage positive media coverage or by applying libel and slander laws to restrict public discussion and retaliate against journalists.

*Question.* What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face in Togo?

Answer. Recent restrictions on the press following politically motivated arrests, limitations on applications for political gatherings, and suspensions of press outlets raise concern and also makes our public diplomacy work in Togo challenging. If confirmed, I would, along with the rest of my Embassy team, engage the Government of Togo to end restrictions on media outlets and reporters and to remind them that freedom of the press is key to maintaining a healthy democracy. If confirmed, I will commit to meeting regularly with independent and local press outlets in Togo as visible sign of support for freedom of the press and of expression. COVID-19 restrictions have made it more difficult to reach out to the Togolese public. If confirmed, I fully intend to in-person engagement with the Togolese public as health and safety indicators allow.

*Question.* How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. The Embassy's Public Affairs Office does a good job balancing these occasionally differing objectives. The Mission's strategic planning working group meets monthly to discuss important policy objectives and to decide how to best deliver messaging to the public. As a Mission, we focus most of our messaging on our priority policy goals and objectives including on democracy and governance, peace and security, trade and economic growth, and development. However, we also deliver messaging on Washington's policy priorities. Most public messaging is delivered via our social media platforms, but also via traditional media including radio, television, and newspaper interviews, which is dominated by state media. If confirmed, I will also use my past experience at the Bureau of African Affairs Deputy Assistant Sec-



retary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to achieve the correct balance in our public diplomacy messaging.

*Question.* “Anomalous health incidents,” commonly referred to as “Havana Syndrome,” have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Togo personnel?

Answer. Yes, I commit to transparent communication with Mission Togo personnel as it relates to AHI and any other matters that would have an impact on the health and safety of Mission Togo personnel and their families.

*Question.* In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled “The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China.” The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively.

- In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Togo and counter the malign influence of China?

Answer. The United States and our European partners share an interest in supporting Togo’s efforts for financial transparency, respect for human rights, respect for freedom of expression, and efforts to counter corruption. We are concerned about the PRC’s influence on these areas in Togo. Working with like-minded partners, like the EU, is critical to advancing U.S. foreign policy goals in Togo. If confirmed, I will work closely with the EU mission in Lomé as well as with diplomats from our European and other like-minded partners to ensure that Togo’s democratic institutions can counter malign influence in the country.

*Question.* In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Togo remained at Tier 2 due to lack of convictions of traffickers and identifying fewer victims. How will you work with host government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. The Government of Togo, with support of the U.S. Embassy, has taken steps to increase its anti-trafficking efforts. Past State Department-funded workshops trained magistrates, police officers, and customs officials on the trafficking provisions of the 2015 penal code. In addition, U.S. funding supported a local NGO to train social workers and journalists and conduct an awareness raising campaign. Following this, the Government of Togo established a formal partnership with Plan International in support of a regional program targeting TIP and illegal immigration.

If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government of Togo to increase its efforts to combat TIP, including finalizing and adopting the pending decree to create a Trafficking in Persons Inter-ministerial Committee, increasing accessibility to shelters for victims, and drafting and resourcing a national action plan that incorporates adult victims and increases coordination with NGOs, neighboring countries, and regional organizations.

*Question.* In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Togo was identified as tolerant of religious freedom. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to continue to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Togolese constitution specifies the state is secular and enshrines the right of all individuals to exercise their religious beliefs, consistent with the nation’s laws. Relations among members of religions in Togo are generally amicable. Occasional disputes among members of religious groups were related to noise caused by religious celebrations, or competition for parishioners among churches. Members of different faiths regularly invite one another to their respective ceremonies. Inter-marriage between persons of different religions is common.

If confirmed, I commit to work with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to strengthen Togo’s efforts to foster an environment that respects religious freedom and plurality. I would continue the U.S. Embassy’s programs to reach out to all religious groups in Togo in conjunction with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. If confirmed,

I would also support peace and tolerance courses and programming that counters violent extremism alongside key Muslim leaders.

*Question.* In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Togo was identified as having significant human rights issues, including unlawful or arbitrary killings by security forces, political prisoners, restrictions on free speech and on the internet, violence against women, and more.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

*Answer.* The United States is deeply concerned about allegations of human rights violations and abuses, violence against civilians, arbitrary arrests and killing by security forces, political prisoners, and undue restrictions on freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly in Togo. We have called on the Government of Togo to respect the human rights of individuals in Togo, notably freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, both publicly and privately, and to ensure that all those arrested are afforded fair trial guarantees. If confirmed, I will continue to speak out for democratic pluralism and respect for human rights.

If confirmed, I would build on Embassy efforts to urge the Government to increase the transparency of the electoral process, lift undue restrictions on the press and journalists, and allow for freedom of peaceful assembly. I would also continue to encourage the Government to take seriously issues of impunity to build trust between the Government and its people.

*Question.* How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will meet with and listen to all civil society and political actors in Togo who support strengthening Togo's democracy. I would build on Embassy efforts to urge the Government to lift punitive restrictions on civil society organizations and allow for freedom of peaceful assembly and speech by Togolese who hold views in opposition to the ruling party. I would also continue to encourage the Government to take seriously issues of impunity to build trust between the Government and its people and a concrete way the Government can build that trust is to allow NGOs and civil society true freedom of peaceful assembly and association. As health and safety allows, my team and I will meet in-person with civil society leaders throughout Togo to hear and support their voices.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. DAVID R. GILMOUR BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* What are the main challenges faced by U.S. firms operating in Equatorial Guinea and how would you seek to promote opportunities for U.S. firms if confirmed?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will represent the interests of U.S. companies with the Government, including with the Ministry of Mines and Hydrocarbons, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Planning. I will also ensure that Embassy Malabo continues to maintain strong relationships with local offices of U.S. companies and prioritize the protection of U.S. investments and interests. Natural resource-driven economies like that of Equatorial Guinea face liquidity problems when the price of the export commodity falls dramatically; such developments also directly affect the efficiency and profitability of U.S. firms in the hydrocarbon sector. Non-oil and gas companies in Equatorial Guinea have also faced a variety of obstacles in conducting business, which is reflected in Equatorial Guinea's low ranking on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index. If confirmed, I will emphasize to Equatoguinean officials how damaging these obstacles, including non-payment of debts to U.S. investors, as well as apparent political influence or favoritism in commercial dealings, are to Equatorial Guinea's ability to attract and maintain foreign investment.

*Question.* What impact has corruption had on economic development, and what steps will you take if confirmed to address the issue of corruption?

*Answer.* It is telling that the World Bank classifies Equatorial Guinea as an upper middle-income country, yet 75 percent of the population lives in poverty. The oil and gas boom that began in the early 1990s did allow the Government to undertake some important infrastructure projects such as a high-quality road network, yet the country has not built a new public school throughout President Obiang's 42 years in office. If confirmed, I will utilize a measured and strategic approach by urg-

ing the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to adopt good governance practices, including increased transparency and accountability, more effectively implement its international anticorruption obligations and commitments, and invest more in its people, particularly in education and health. Equatorial Guinea recently passed a new anti-corruption law, and if confirmed, I will work to build on that and obtain real commitments from the Government to counter the corruption that threatens the Equatoguinean people's security, economic opportunity, and development. I will also continue to work with interagency partners to consider all available tools that promote accountability and combat corruption.

*Question.* China is a player in Equatorial Guinea and involved in construction, business, and maritime activities. How would you assess the level of Chinese influence and how should the U.S. work to counter it?

*Answer.* I understand that Equatorial Guinea's political and economic situation has created opportunities for exploitation by the PRC and other countries. If confirmed, I will build on ongoing collaboration among all relevant U.S. Government entities to ensure our efforts remain aligned and complementary. Moreover, while U.S. oil and gas companies have been the cornerstone of Equatorial Guinea's economic development for the past three decades, hydrocarbons are a limited resource and Equatorial Guinea needs to diversify its economy to promote further growth. Unfortunately, potential foreign investors from other sectors are rightly wary about the current investment climate, including contract sanctity and a politicized judicial system. The Government of Equatorial Guinea will need to address such issues if it wants to encourage increased foreign investment from reliable, transparent partners.

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

*Answer.* As Ambassador in Togo, I used a combination of personal diplomacy and a forceful critical statement from Washington to persuade the Government to cease the use of vigilantes who harassed and beat opposition demonstrators during a period of high political tension in 2017. I persuaded the Government to restore internet service that was shut down following mass demonstrations. I urged senior officials to compromise with the opposition on setting ground rules for demonstrations that restored freedom of assembly. In Chad, I joined with other likeminded chiefs of mission to convince the transitional government to allow peaceful public demonstrations, something which had not been permitted for many years. Throughout my career, I have worked with and supported journalists in countries with limited freedom of expression. As a public diplomacy officer, I administered training and exchange programs for human rights defenders and civil society activists.

*Question.* What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in the Equatorial Guinea? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

*Answer.* The State Department's 2020 Human Rights Report on Equatorial Guinea notes many significant issues of concern, including reports of excessive use of force by security forces; disregard for the rule of law; undue restrictions on freedom of expression including for members of the press; restrictions on peaceful assembly; and widespread official corruption—all of which negatively affect democracy and democratic development. While Equatorial Guinea is officially a multiparty democracy with a constitution that guarantees certain rights to its citizens, opposition parties have significantly fewer resources and less capacity than the president's political party, and the same person has been in power for 42 years. Opposition parties have not achieved political goals, and therefore have no track record with the public. There is no independent electoral commission and thus no accountability process before, during or after elections. Press freedom is slowly emerging, but journalists are censored or self-censor, and journalistic capacity is low. If confirmed, I will raise these important concerns with the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in addition to fostering and expanding the Embassy's own engagement with civil society, the political opposition, and media representatives.

*Question.* What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in the Equatorial Guinea? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

**Answer.** Human rights and democratic governance are central priorities for our engagements with Equatorial Guinea. If confirmed, I will raise human rights concerns with the Government of Equatorial Guinea, especially emphasizing how those concerns intersect our other areas of cooperation, such as fiscal transparency, economic diversification, anticorruption, trafficking in persons, and maritime security. I will also continue to use cultural exchanges, journalist trainings, democracy and good governance grants, and capacity building resources to expand and strengthen the Embassy's network of local partners and voices, who are critical in advocating for and implementing meaningful change in a society. We need to recognize, however, that the changes we and so many Equatoguineans seek will not happen overnight. While I would hope that the timeline for such changes will not be truly "generational," it may be wise to adopt an incrementalistic approach that embodies the philosophy of "First, Do No Harm," lest we endanger the very people we seek to assist. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss our approach with you and your colleagues in greater depth.

*Question.* How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

**Answer.** From FY2018 to FY2020, the United States has provided multiple grants totaling \$725,000 through Africa Regional Democracy Fund to strengthen civil society capacity and advocate for democracy and transparency in governance. The United States has also been able to increase cultural and educational cooperation due to Equatorial Guinea's upgrade from Tier 3 in the TIP Report, including exchange programs such as the Fulbright Program. USAID has minimal programming in Equatorial Guinea and provided \$150,000 in humanitarian assistance in response to the March 2021 Bata explosions. USAID will also disburse a COVID-19 rapid deployment award with WHO and UNICEF as implementing partners. If confirmed, I will continue to support all this important work.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in the Equatorial Guinea? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I commit to meeting with members of civil society, human rights, and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and local human rights NGOs, and civil society in the Equatorial Guinea. I will be clear in messaging that if the Government of Equatorial Guinea demonstrates interest and takes concrete steps to improve democratic governance and respect for human rights—including transparent and inclusive regulations to allow civil society organizations to register and operate—we could potentially discuss other ways to improve the bilateral relationship.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

**Answer.** Yes. If confirmed, I commit to meeting with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. I will also advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties. Political parties are only one part of the equation, however. The Government of Equatorial Guinea must continue to address important issues like corruption, transparency, the lack of a robust civil society, the lack of access to justice for all, and the lack of respect for human rights. Without concerted attention to improving these systemic challenges, democratic development will still fall short. Continued engagement on democracy and human rights issues will help strengthen democratic institutions and encourage inclusion of all elements of society in decision-making.

*Question.* Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with the Equatorial Guinea on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in the Equatorial Guinea?

**Answer.** Yes. If confirmed, I commit to building on and expanding Embassy Malabo's strong relationships with journalists and members of civil society to increase their professional capacity in order to build public trust, dispel myths and disinformation, and work to hold the Government accountable.

*Question.* Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with civil society members and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country. If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Malabo's efforts to build journalists' capabilities, professionalism, and public trust as an important part of countering disinformation.

*Question.* Will you and your Embassy teams actively engage with the Equatorial Guinea on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will commit to actively engage with the Equatoguinean Government—specifically the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Protection—on the right of labor groups to organize and call out incidents when the Government or other actors restricts that right.

*Question.* Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in the Equatorial Guinea, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

*Answer.* Yes. I commit to using my position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Equatorial Guinea, no matter their gender identity, expression or sexual orientation. As I did during my service in Togo as Ambassador, I will work with colleagues across the U.S. interagency to promote and protect the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in Equatorial Guinea, working in close partnership with local civil society. Understanding that, as in all operating environments, the U.S. Embassy should do no harm. I will support civil society voices in Equatorial Guinea to strengthen their ability to advocate for the human rights of all persons. I will use all the tools at my disposal, including Embassy Malabo's convening power to bring together key actors from the Government, civil society, private sector and international community to discuss issues affecting LGBTQI+ persons.

*Question.* What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in the Equatorial Guinea?

*Answer.* No laws exist in Equatorial Guinea expressly criminalizing same-sex sexual conduct, but neither do they prohibit discrimination, and members of the Equatoguinean LGBTQI+ community are challenged by societal stigmatization and discrimination. Some LGBTQI+ individuals were removed from government jobs or academic positions because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. The Equatoguinean Government has made no effort to combat this or investigate abuses. The Government has stated such sexual orientations and gender identities are inconsistent with cultural beliefs.

*Question.* What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in the Equatorial Guinea?

*Answer.* Promoting respect for human rights and democracy is a priority for our mission in Equatorial Guinea. As part of that effort, Embassy Malabo has developed a positive and productive relationship with local LGBTQI+ organization Somos Parte del Mundo, and has funded this group and others to help foster a more inclusive environment for LGBTQI+ citizens of Equatorial Guinea. If confirmed, I will ensure our Embassy continues promoting and protecting the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in partnership with civil society working against discrimination and stigmatization.

*Question.* Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to the Equatorial Guinea?

*Answer.* Yes. I commit fully to briefing Congress consistently and openly during my tenure as Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, if I am confirmed.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

Answer. Yes, these incidents and any threats to the health and safety of U.S. personnel must be taken seriously.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

Answer. Yes. As Secretary Blinken has said, his number one responsibility as Secretary of State is to protect the men and women representing our country around the world. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring any reported incident is treated seriously and reported through appropriate channels in a timely manner and that any affected individual promptly receives medical care.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed I will regularly meet with medical and RSO staff to ensure I understand the full scope of threats against U.S. personnel and that all safety protocols are being carefully followed.

---

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. DAVID R. GILMOUR BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Despite the many challenges faced in U.S. relations with Equatorial Guinea, it is also an important destination for U.S. investment, particularly in the oil and gas sector. How will you support American investors as U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will represent the interests of U.S. companies with the Government, including with the Ministry of Mines and Hydrocarbons, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Planning. I will also ensure that Embassy Malabo continues to maintain strong relationships with local offices of U.S. companies and prioritize the improvement of the investment climate for U.S. companies invested in Equatorial Guinea.

*Question.* Equatorial Guinea has harbored former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh since his ouster at the ballot box in 2016. How will you engage with Equatorial Guinea on issues of accountability for President Jammeh?

Answer. Yahya Jammeh and his wife live in Equatorial Guinea at the invitation of the Equatoguinean Government. The Gambian Government has not requested Jammeh's extradition to date. Equatorial Guinea and The Gambia should resolve this issue bilaterally. If confirmed, I will encourage the Equatoguinean Government to continue to discuss this issue with their Gambian counterparts.

*Question.* What is your view on political dynasties and long-serving rulers who, like in the case of Equatorial Guinea, manipulate constitutional and electoral processes to give the façade of democratic legitimacy? If confirmed, how will you address this issue as U.S. Ambassador, particularly in light of broader regional trends?

Answer. The promotion of human rights, democracy, and good governance is a key U.S. objective in Equatorial Guinea and, if confirmed, I will ensure that my team and I remain focused on these issues. As Ambassador to Togo and more recently as Chargé d'Affaires in Chad, I am familiar with countries in which sons succeeded their fathers as either the actual or de facto head of state, and while we do not currently face that situation in Equatorial Guinea, it is true that the president's son is serving as vice president and that he is widely rumored to be his father's most likely successor. It is more important, I believe, to focus not on the "who" becomes Equatorial Guinea's next leader but on the "how." Equatorial Guinea is scheduled to hold legislative elections in 2022 and presidential elections in 2023. If confirmed, I will lead Embassy Malabo's engagement with like-minded diplomatic missions and the full range of Equatoguinean officials and citizens to promote free, fair, and transparent electoral processes.

*Question.* How can the United States best use the tools it has to hold Equatorial Guinea officials accountable for corrupt behavior? If confirmed, what would be your approach in using those tools?

Answer. If confirmed, I will utilize a measured and strategic approach by urging the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to adopt democratic governance practices, including increased transparency and accountability, more effectively implement its international anticorruption obligations and commitments, and invest more in its people, particularly in education and health. Equatorial Guinea recently

passed a new anti-corruption law, and if confirmed, I will work to build on that and obtain real commitments from the Government to counter the corruption that threatens the Equatoguinean people's security, economic opportunity, and development. If confirmed, I will continue to work with interagency partners to consider all available tools to promote accountability and combat impunity in Equatorial Guinea.

*Question.* How can the United States best engage Equatorial Guinea to curb the corrupt behavior of those companies and government officials of malign foreign actors like China that feed on corrupt governments and business environments?

*Answer.* I understand that Equatorial Guinea's political and economic situation has created opportunities for Beijing and other competitors to exploit. If confirmed, I will build on ongoing collaboration among all relevant U.S. Government entities to ensure our efforts remain aligned and complementary. Moreover, while U.S. oil and gas companies have been the cornerstone of Equatorial Guinea's economic development for the past three decades, hydrocarbons are a limited resource and Equatorial Guinea needs to diversify its economy to promote further growth. Unfortunately, potential foreign investors from other sectors are rightly wary about the current investment climate, including contract sanctity and a politicized judicial system, and thus the Government of Equatorial Guinea will need to address such issues if it wants to encourage increased foreign investment from reliable, transparent partners.

*Question.* Should the United States build on its existing defense and security cooperation with Equatorial Guinea? Where are the opportunities and the risks?

*Answer.* The United States is committed to support Equatorial Guinea in facing security challenges in the maritime domain. After nearly a decade of inactivity, the United States has taken a deliberate, cautious approach to our military reengagement, focusing on confidence building activities to assess host nation buy-in and absorptive capacity. Our long-term partnerships within the region are vital for addressing immediate threats from piracy and building capacity to ensure long-term security and stability in the region. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea region is an important U.S. interest. We recognize the threat posed by piracy to maritime security in the region and to the significant U.S. oil sector investments there. The United States works actively with Gulf of Guinea countries to increase their capacity to address a range of maritime security threats and to improve maritime security cooperation among the states of the region.

*Question.* What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Equatorial Guinea?

*Answer.* According to what I have been told, morale overall is quite good despite some real challenges. The mission is small and tightly-knit, an attribute that is fostered by the fact that most U.S. personnel including the Chief of Mission and DCM reside on the same compound. Local staff have also showed great resilience and dedication to duty despite COVID-19's heavy toll on Embassy Malabo, with many members of our community having lost loved ones. Infrastructural challenges like telecommunications, healthcare, and food availability are very real, for both U.S. and local personnel. The Embassy has adapted to this new environment, with staff building stronger ties with each other as they rely on one another more than they did prior to the pandemic. Isolation and travel times to/from the United States also have the potential to affect our staff's well-being. Our mission in Malabo continues to prioritize Embassy morale through tools such as regular town halls, which provide a platform for staff to connect with leadership and for speakers to discuss resilience and coping mechanisms. As the COVID-19 situation evolves, we would also hope to return to the past practice of sponsoring well-attended athletic, cultural, and social events for community members and their families.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Equatorial Guinea?

*Answer.* If confirmed, the safety and security of the Embassy community will be of primary importance. I will seek to support American employees and their families to create an inclusive and welcoming culture where individuals are safe and can achieve professional and personal goals. The welfare of our local Equatoguinean and third-country staff members is also of great importance to me, and I commit to meeting regularly with the local staff committee in a spirit of open and constructive dialogue.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Equatorial Guinea?

*Answer.* Having led small missions in the past, I am cognizant of the particular challenges such missions face regarding resources and workload. If confirmed, I will lead regular discussions with all agencies, including those whose representatives covering Equatorial Guinea are resident in neighboring countries, to establish and review goals and develop strategies and tactics to achieve common objectives. If confirmed, I will engage all employees and stakeholders to conceive and articulate clearly what we will do, and how we will do it despite our size and resource limitations. As appropriate and necessary, I will work with the Department to identify resource gaps and seek ways to address those when possible. If confirmed, I will also create a culture of inclusion in which all employees' contributions are valued.

*Question.* How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* I aspire to create a leadership culture in which all are encouraged to contribute, create, and grow. If confirmed, I would like to create the ideal workplace in which people achieve shared objectives while respecting and valuing everyone's contributions. This requires from leadership and employees a recognition of individuals' strengths and areas of development, and a respect for shared values, inclusion, and our institutions.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

*Answer.* I do not believe there is an acceptable place for 'berating' subordinates, either in public or in private.

*Question.* What lessons have you learned from your tenure leading Embassy N'Djamena?

*Answer.* My tenure in N'Djamena as Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., reinforced lessons I had learned serving in other isolated hardship posts, notably that the Chief of Mission must pay close and continuing attention to the morale and welfare of the Embassy staff. N'Djamena is a challenging and historically difficult post to staff. Staff members face security threats, physical and mental health hazards, isolation, and loneliness. The chief of mission must ensure that employees and families have safe and acceptable housing, and that Embassy services for employees are efficiently delivered to maintain quality of life. In a high-threat environment such as N'Djamena, the chief of mission must devote extra attention to assuring the physical safety of employees and family members. Equally important for the chief of mission is to clearly communicate the nature of the Embassy's mission and strategic direction so that employees and family members understand how their work and presence in such an isolated and difficult place serves the national security interests of the United States.

*Question.* How will your management style and approach differ from Embassy Malabo?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I anticipate applying the same management and leadership practices I used as Chief of Mission in Togo and Chad, to ensure a happy, healthy and highly productive Embassy staff.

*Question.* How do you envision your leadership relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I expect to collaborate closely with the deputy chief of mission to conceive goals, then implement and oversee tactics and activities to achieve those goals. If confirmed, I will work with the deputy chief of mission to articulate and maintain high ethical standards and create a culture of inclusion and respect. I believe deputy chiefs of mission are most effective, productive, and valued when they are permitted to work with independence, while understanding that the chief of mission is ultimately responsible in all ways for the work of the Mission.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ask the deputy chief of mission to lead our mission-wide efforts to train, develop, and empower our small but dedicated staff to serve effectively in a challenging environment while promoting U.S. interests. I will also ask the deputy chief of mission to lead recruitment efforts for our Foreign Service positions and work with other agencies to ensure that their personnel covering Equatorial Guinea are fully integrated into Embassy Malabo's policy formulation and implementation. If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with the deputy chief of mission on policy implementation, engagement with the Government of Equatorial Guinea, and outreach to key groups-particularly youth-through traditional and social media. The deputy chief of mission at any mission must be able to stand in for



the Ambassador as needed and potentially on short notice; if confirmed, I will ensure that my deputy chief of mission has the knowledge, skills, and awareness to stand in for me with confidence.

*Question.* Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes I do.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. The most effective U.S. diplomats are those who actively engage broadly with people throughout all parts of society in the country to which they are assigned. During normal times (i.e., outside the context of COVID-19), our U.S. Mission community was actively involved in external engagement with our Government, civil society, and media partners and members of the international community throughout the country. This has continued even during the pandemic although on a more limited basis to ensure everyone's health, safety, and security, which are paramount responsibilities of all posts' leadership. If confirmed, I will ensure Embassy Malabo continues to engage externally in a manner commensurate with the local context at any given time, including by traveling to the continental portion of Equatorial Guinea and the distant island of Annobón to ensure we are getting the most complete understanding we can of what is going on in the country beyond the capital.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, and as health and safety conditions permit, I will encourage U.S. diplomats to engage actively, broadly and in-person with local populations. Until then, we will maintain active engagement through virtual media. If confirmed, I intend to regularly visit people throughout Equatorial Guinea and use those visits to facilitate contacts for the rest of my team.

*Question.* What is the public diplomacy environment like in Equatorial Guinea? What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The Equatoguinean public is generally receptive to U.S. Government programs and messaging on our policy priorities, and access to less expensive data plans has steadily increased the number of social media users following Embassy accounts. However, the combination of an underfunded education system, the low capacity of civil society and media professionals, and the GREG's conflation of all civil society actors as connected to the political opposition poses real challenges to engagement. Our civil society and journalist interlocutors are hungry for training and skill-building and have participated without incident in bi-monthly trainings provided by the public affairs section, with additional trainings on the horizon that have been tailored to participants' demands and needs. COVID-19 limited the Mission's ability to conduct in-person exchanges and outreach for much of the pandemic, but since June 2021 we have been able to safely conduct in-person trainings at the Embassy with virtual speakers to mitigate participants' connectivity issues and create an esprit-de-corps for those involved.

*Question.* How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. I understand the Embassy's strategic planning working group meets regularly to discuss important policy objectives and to decide how to best deliver messaging to the public. If confirmed, I will focus most of our messaging on our priority policy goals and objectives including democracy and governance, anticorruption, antitrafficking in persons, regional security, and strengthening the economy. Most public messaging is delivered via our influential social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, but also via traditional media including radio, television, and newspaper interviews, which is dominated by state media. Two emerging independent digital platforms have entered the media space with the goal of providing news that Equatoguinean citizens can trust; Embassy Malabo is working closely with both of these outlets via training and support ahead of the legislative elections in 2022 and presidential elections in 2023.

*Question.* “Anomalous health incidents,” commonly referred to as “Havana Syndrome,” have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Equatorial Guinea personnel?

Answer. Yes, I commit to transparent communication with Mission Malabo personnel as it relates to AHI and any other matters that would have an impact on the health and safety of Mission Malabo personnel and their families.

*Question.* In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled “The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China.” The report gave several recommendations on increased transatlantic cooperation, including in Africa, to counter Chinese malign influence more effectively. In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Equatorial Guinea and counter the malign influence of China?

Answer. The United States and our European partners share an interest in promoting financial transparency, respect for human rights, respect for freedom of expression, and efforts to counter corruption in Equatorial Guinea. We are concerned about the PRC’s influence in Equatorial Guinea, including in the areas listed in your question. If confirmed, I would continue to work with European and other likeminded nations and the Government of Equatorial Guinea to strengthen Equatorial Guinea’s resilience to external influence that exacerbates domestic problems. If confirmed, I will work with our partners that have influence with the Government to highlight the advantages to Equatorial Guinea of cooperation with U.S., European, and likeminded countries on areas of common strategic interest including in the economic and security realms. This may at times include speaking up against the PRC’s malign actions and attempts to undermine the international rules-based system and/or advocating for Equatoguinean support of U.S. positions in the UN system.

*Question.* In the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Equatorial Guinea remained on Tier 2 Watch List due to an overall lack of increasing efforts to eliminate trafficking, like never convicting a trafficker under its 2004 law, government complicity, and a lack of identifying victims. How will you work with host government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. The Embassy regularly engages the Equatoguinean Government on this issue, including by focusing on the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report’s prioritized recommendations to adopt a whole of government approach, as well as measures to proactively identify and provide assistance to trafficking victims. If confirmed, I will continue to press for additional progress in the year ahead.

*Question.* Because Equatorial Guinea remained on the Trafficking in Persons Report Tier 2 Watch List for a second year, they are at risk of being automatically downgraded if they remain on the Watch List in 2022. Please explain what steps you believe the Government can take to significantly improve efforts to combat human trafficking in country during the remainder of this reporting period.

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Equatoguinean Government to address the recommendations included in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons report. I will work to foster good relationships with the Government to encourage progress in key areas, including drafting and implementing an updated National Action Plan. I will also work with the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to address how else the United States can best help Equatorial Guinea to continue to improve its anti-TIP efforts.

*Question.* In the 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Equatorial Guinea was identified as having societal respect for religious freedom. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to continue to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is a U.S. foreign policy priority, and the Department continues to closely monitor religious freedom in Equatorial Guinea. If confirmed, I commit to working with civil society and the Equatorial Guinea Government to ensure all citizens enjoy freedom of religion and worship as stated in the Constitu-

tion. If confirmed, I commit to also work with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and Congress to emphasize the importance of religious freedom, addressing any religious freedom concerns, and further strengthening tolerance and respect among and for members of religious communities in Equatorial Guinea.

*Question.* In the 2020 Human Rights Report, Equatorial Guinea was identified as having committed and bearing witness to severe human rights issues.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

*Answer.* Human rights are a central priority for the U.S. Government's engagements with Equatorial Guinea. If confirmed, I will raise human rights concerns with the Government of Equatorial Guinea, especially emphasizing how those concerns intersect our other areas of cooperation, such as fiscal transparency, economic diversification, anticorruption, trafficking in persons, and maritime security. I will also continue to work with Embassy and Department programs such as cultural exchanges, journalist trainings, democracy and good governance grants, and capacity building resources to expand and strengthen the Embassy's network of local partners and voices, who are critical in advocating for and implementing meaningful change in a society.

*Question.* How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

*Answer.* The promotion of human rights is of the highest priority in our relations with Equatorial Guinea. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen and expand the relationships we have built in this space. I will continue to advance opportunities to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and amplify their voices, encourage the Government to collaborate productively with these organizations for the betterment of Equatorial Guinea, while respecting the local operating context and adhering to the fundamental principle of "First, Do No Harm." In this vein, I will work to ensure that we coordinate our efforts with other diplomatic missions.

---