

**Statement of Anne A. Witkowsky
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State
for Conflict and Stabilization Operations
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 20, 2021**

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Operations and Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. I am deeply grateful to President Biden and to Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me for this nomination.

I am joined here today by my husband, John and our son Jack, with our daughter Elizabeth watching remotely. I want to underscore how much their love and support means to me, as well as that of all my family members. Growing up in the Midwest, I am grateful my parents modeled for me the values of public service. My father served in the Army Corps of Engineers in World War II and as the first chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education, while my mother volunteered for many civic organizations.

I have by now had the opportunity to serve in the Executive Branch across four Administrations, within the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and on the White House National Security Council staff. While I have held positions outside government as well, there has been no greater privilege than to serve alongside the talented and dedicated men and women in the national security community, in the civil service, foreign service, the military services, law enforcement and intelligence.

Throughout, I have learned the critical importance of effectively using all U.S. national security tools – including diplomacy, development and defense -- to support U.S. policy priorities and advance U.S. interests and values. From my experience pursuing conventional arms control in Europe at the end of the Cold War, to advancing counterterrorism policies and programs in the post 9/11 period, to supporting the Department of Defense response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, I have learned that the U.S. government is most effective when integrating our policies, programs, and activities to work at common purpose. That is a key lesson I intend to bring to my position as Assistant Secretary, if confirmed.

The Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (or CSO) has a vital role to play in developing and carrying out U.S. conflict prevention and stabilization policies and programs, working in close cooperation with USAID and the Department of Defense. Preventing violent conflict is hard, and outcomes can be tough to measure. Yet, when we do not address instability at the front end, too often we find ourselves having to address it in different, more costly ways at the back end.

The strategic environment for the CSO mission is growing more challenging. The number and duration of violent conflicts is increasing. Democracy is backsliding for the 15th straight year, and authoritarianism is on the rise. We see territory controlled by governments being reduced, as non-state armed actors gain ground. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on populations globally. The displacement of people is at a recorded high. Climate change, corruption, gender inequality, and the rapid spread of disinformation pose additional underlying challenges.

Therefore, if confirmed, I will place priority on strengthening the Bureau's contributions to the U.S. government's effectiveness in meeting these challenges. Policies and best practices should be regularly adapted, drawing from lessons learned. We will deepen, and renew, U.S. partnerships on these issues, bilaterally and with multilateral organizations, to advance common objectives. And we must work collaboratively with civil society.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Members of this Committee, including those who have been instrumental in providing new tools to break the costly cycle of conflict. Among those tools are the Global Fragility Act of 2019 and the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018, as well as the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, all bipartisan legislation. CSO will exercise leadership, working with other State Department Bureaus and interagency partners, to advance their implementation, together with the 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review.

And, as I consider our plans, we will identify how the work of CSO can reinforce support for democratic values and human rights at the heart of our foreign policy. That work must be anchored in understanding how Russia's malign efforts undermine democracies and exploit instability, and the geostrategic challenge of China's ambitions.

Finally, I will be dedicated in full to building a strong workforce, one that is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Thank you again for this opportunity to lead the CSO Bureau, to advance American interests and values toward a more peaceful and safer world. I look forward to your questions.