

Statement of Donald Y. Yamamoto
Nominee to be Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
August 23, 2018

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to be considered for the position of United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia. I am humbled to be President Trump's nominee for this important position and want to thank him and Secretary Pompeo for the confidence they have shown in me through this nomination.

I would like to take this time to introduce my wife, Margaret, and my children, who underscore the commitment to service: my daughter Laura, a Cadet at West Point, and son, Michael, who serves as a Captain in the U.S. Army Signal Corps.

Mr. Chairman, I have been fortunate to have many opportunities to work in East Africa over the course of my 38 years in the Foreign Service, including as Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti, Charge d'Affaires at U.S. Mission Somalia, and most recently as Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. Throughout my time in the region, I have been continuously impressed by the determination and resilience of the Somali people.

Over the past several years, those characteristics have been critical to the reemergence of a federalized system of governance in a country that has begun to assert itself as a legitimate and credible internal and international partner. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and its Federal Member States are working together to expand governance, pursue critical fiscal and security sector reforms, and address humanitarian needs, while the Somali diaspora, including many Americans, are returning and investing in Somalia, boosting the agriculture and service sectors.

These gains will hold only through sustained good governance, commitment to tackle enormous security challenges, and determination to bring about a better future for the country, one that no longer poses a security threat to the United States or the world. The United States is an important partner in the implementation of steadily increasing political, economic, and security reforms.

We, as the United States, are a critical lead element in coordinating international and regional efforts to improve Somalia's future. Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work to advance our desired end state of a peaceful and prosperous Somalia by focusing support to the Somali people in four key areas:

- 1) Building democratic institutions and governance structures, including by helping the Somalis plan for direct general elections in 2020/2021. "One person one vote" elections will be critical for shifting political influence away from power brokers to the people.
- 2) Developing effective security forces that can take over responsibilities from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and provide security throughout the country;
- 3) Implementing stabilization and economic recovery programs to help Somalis rebuild their communities liberated from al-Shabaab's grasp, provide jobs for Somalia's growing youth population, and develop as a market for U.S. investment; and
- 4) Delivering humanitarian assistance to alleviate emergency food and health crises in the near term while building capacity to allow Somalia to return to self-reliance and a role as a valuable contributor to its region and the world.

Coordination with international partners will also be critical to make the most effective use of U.S. influence and resources. Strengthening positive relations with like-minded western partners, AMISOM troop contributors, the Gulf States, and other international actors and organizations involved in Somalia, will be among my top priorities.

Above all, if confirmed, I will work to ensure the safety and security of my staff, U.S. government colleagues, and U.S. citizens in Somalia. The security challenges in Mogadishu are significant, and I will be ever vigilant to ensure that our operations are conducted with appropriate security safeguards in place.

Somalia's progress in the past few years, however fragile, is inspiring, and we have willing partners in the Somali government and the Somali people. Mr. Chairman, I have faith that with unwavering effort, we can maintain this positive momentum and deliver meaningful achievements that benefit both the United States and Somalia. If confirmed, I will work hard to protect Americans in Somalia,

strengthen our bilateral relationship, and see that our considerable investment in Somalia bears the fruit of peace and security.

I look forward to the opportunity to work with the Committee to achieve those goals. Let me once again reemphasize, Mr. Chairman, to this Committee, and the Congress, that I would take on this assignment with the utmost seriousness and dedication, in service of our values and our people. Thank you.