

Statement of Stephen E. Biegun
Nominee to be Deputy Secretary of State
To the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
November 20, 2019

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, distinguished members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee for Deputy Secretary of State.

I am deeply grateful to President Trump and to Secretary Pompeo for the confidence and trust they have placed in me with my nomination for this position. I also want to recognize Deputy Secretary John Sullivan for his outstanding service during the past two and a half years. I am grateful to John and to several other former Deputy Secretaries of State—both Republicans and Democrats—who have generously provided me advice and counsel as I prepare for the position for which I have been nominated.

I want to thank the men and women of the State Department—Foreign Service, Civil Service, locally employed staff—for the work they do every day in advancing American interests and protecting American citizens around the world. If confirmed, it would be my great honor to serve alongside the 76,000 employees of the State Department in advocating for and representing the United States of America.

I appreciate the careful consideration members of this Committee have given to my nomination, particularly during a time when so many issues demand your attention. I am especially grateful for the courtesy of introductory meetings in which we were able to discuss your many priorities with the Department and U.S. policies. Should I be confirmed, I pledge to continue close consultation with this Committee and the Congress on issues related to foreign policy.

I am a Michigander. I was born, grew up, and attended college in Michigan. I moved to Washington after graduating from the University of Michigan because I was drawn to public service. Except for a two-year break after the fall of the Soviet Union, during which I led democracy building programming in Russia on a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy, I served for nearly two decades in government, including seven years on the staff of this Committee. During my time in Congress, we oversaw expansion of NATO after the end of the Cold War, Congressional approval of the PEPFAR program, sweeping reforms of the United Nations, and authorization of the State Department and foreign aid budgets over several years. I later served as the Executive Secretary of National Security Council from 2001-2003, where I directed and managed the interagency formulation, execution, and implementation of U.S. national security policies as a senior staff member to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice.

In 2004, I returned to my Michigan roots, following the footsteps of my grandfather and great-grandfather to become the third generation in my family to work for Ford Motor Company, one of the great American companies. At Ford, I led an 80-person team located across 20 countries

advocating for U.S. business interests in overseas markets related to international trade, tax policy, and regulatory issues.

Last year, Secretary Pompeo asked me to return to public service to lead our diplomatic efforts on North Korea and tackle the problem of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, a problem that multiple administrations, both Republican and Democrat, have worked to resolve for 25 years. For the past 15 months, as Special Representative for North Korea, I have led a State Department and interagency team as we seek to eliminate the threat posed to the United States and our allies by North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. We work closely on this effort with our allies—the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Australia in the Indo-Pacific, as well as NATO Allies—and others around the world, including China, Russia, members of the UN Security Council, the EU, and ASEAN. While we have not seen concrete evidence that North Korea has made the choice to denuclearize, we still believe that Pyongyang can make this choice, and if confirmed, I will continue to press U.S. efforts to make progress on the commitments President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un made at their Singapore Summit.

As my work on North Korea and prior service demonstrates, I am deeply committed to diplomatic solutions to address seemingly intractable problems. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I will continue to champion diplomatic approaches to the tough challenges our Nation faces to advance American interests and ensure that America remains prosperous, secure, and strong.

My priorities will be simple: people, policy, and process. In order to operate effectively and successfully advance U.S. national security interests and American values, our number one priority must be our people, and this is an area where I plan to focus on adding value for Secretary Pompeo. The people of the State Department, with their skills, character and dedicated commitment to public service, are the champions of America's diplomacy. Having led teams at the National Security Council, Ford, and the Department, I am particularly interested in helping enhance our recruitment and retention of talent by being the employer of choice, caring for our people, developing their skills, and boosting their resiliency and well-being. Under the leadership of Secretary Pompeo, we are nearing an all-time high in hiring for the Foreign Service and are planning to reinforce Civil Service staffing to fill gaps created by a past hiring freeze. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for and advance ongoing efforts to accelerate hiring and training of foreign service officers and civil servants into what is, and must continue to be, the finest diplomatic corps in the world. I am confident that as we look after our people, we will retain a premier diplomatic team, agile and flexible enough to take on the global opportunities and challenges we face.

During my tenure as Special Representative for North Korea, I have been privileged to lead a team of talented foreign service officers and civil servants and benefitted from the unparalleled reporting, analysis, recommendations, and work conducted by State Department employees in Washington and around the world. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to draw upon the wisdom and counsel of State Department experts. I will encourage debate and hear out

dissenting views on the broad range of challenges and opportunities for which the State Department is responsible.

As we formulate the policies to take on those challenges and opportunities, we will continue to be guided by our vision and our values: a vision of a world made up of strong, sovereign, and independent nations, thriving side-by-side in prosperity, freedom, and peace, and our values of freedom, human rights, democratic ideals, and rule of law. If confirmed, I will enhance our diplomatic efforts to advance these principles and defend democratic institutions against efforts to undermine them, including by working with civil society, non-state partners, and the private sector. With competitors and adversaries, we will work to find areas where our interests align in order to advance American interests, and we will disagree where necessary. Most importantly, we must work with our allies to enhance and leverage our alliances to address the full range of foreign policy challenges facing the United States today. In tackling these challenges, we are stronger because of the alliances—in this hemisphere, across the Atlantic, and in the Indo-Pacific—that have been the foundation of our national security for decades.

And lastly, in order to ensure our people have the tools to execute our policies effectively, we have to get the process right. American foreign policy is most effective when there is smooth interagency coordination within the executive branch, when there is close communication and collaboration between the executive and legislative branches of government, and when possible, there is alignment with members of civil society and non-state partners on our policy objectives and execution. In my tenure as Special Representative for North Korea, I have sought to turn these goals into reality on North Korea policy, and pledge, if confirmed, to strive to meet these goals across all our policy priorities.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.