

Statement of Christopher Murray
United States Ambassador-Designate to the
Republic of Congo
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Tuesday, July 13, 2010

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege and honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Congo. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress to protect and advance American interests in the Congo.

If I may, I would like to thank my daughter Sara and my son David, who are here today, for their support throughout my career.

The Republic of the Congo offers productive opportunities for positive United States engagement. The country has largely recovered from the 1997 civil war, thanks to rising oil revenues that have funded reconstruction and infrastructure projects.

Effective governance in the Congo is a priority for the United States. In order to achieve debt relief this year, the Congolese government committed itself to reforms such as changes in procurement, fiscal discipline, and budget implementation consistent with the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. We are encouraging the Congo to implement these reforms. These steps also help to ensure that American commercial interests can operate in a free, lawful, orderly, and transparent economic environment. The United States funded Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) helps the Government of the Republic of Congo (and eight other governments in the region) conserve forest resources and address climate change. Government efforts to combat corruption, invest oil revenues in social development, and manage the country's environmental resources are all top U.S. priorities.

We also support the country's democratic institutions, and promote civil and political rights. The country will soon undertake a census to bring about more representative and transparent legislative elections in 2012. We are promoting early efforts to ensure strong participation in these elections. Our aims include

strengthening civil society groups that encourage government accountability and transparency.

Maritime security is critical to the Congo's offshore petroleum sector. We continue to support capacity building efforts to enhance maritime security, which affects the interests of U.S. companies. Our training of the Congolese military will also support the country's efforts to contribute to future peacekeeping efforts.

We opened a new U.S. Embassy in January 2010. Our new Embassy in Brazzaville symbolizes our commitment to relations with the Congo, and our belief in the Congo's future.

If confirmed, I will promote U.S. policy through stronger links with U.S. institutions and practical engagement with the Congolese government. I will support public diplomacy initiatives throughout the country. I will enthusiastically pursue my mandate to expand and protect U.S. interests in the Congo, including U.S. investments, U.S. citizens, and U.S. values.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to respond to any questions. I look forward, if confirmed, to serving the United States, in Brazzaville, the Republic of the Congo.