

**Statement by Donald W. Koran
United States Ambassador-Designate to Rwanda
Before Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 7, 2011**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

It is an honor to have been nominated by President Obama to be the next United States Ambassador to Rwanda and to appear before you today.

Rwanda is known by most Americans for the 1994 genocide, which left the country and its people ravaged. I saw this legacy first-hand when I served there from 1999 to 2001. Since then, Rwanda has made great strides in rebuilding the country, as well as playing a positive role in the region and beyond. The United States works closely with Rwanda to advance these positive endeavors.

With the assistance of the United States and other donors, the Rwandan government has made remarkable progress in improving the living standards of its people, primarily through education and infrastructure development. It has improved the business climate, as evidenced by Rwanda's dramatic improvement in the World Bank's ease of doing business index. If confirmed, I plan to promote economic development in Rwanda, as well as opportunities for American trade and investment. The United States and Rwanda signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty in 2008, now pending advice and consent of the Senate, which would further improve the investment climate and provide additional protections to U.S. investors. We also support Rwanda's leadership in the East African Community and its efforts to promote development and economic integration.

Development assistance can have great impact in Rwanda due to the government's strong track record in implementing programs. That strong track record, along with remarkable results, contributed to its selection as a Global Health Initiative Plus country. The United States has been at the forefront of combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, and helping to improve food security in Rwanda through the President's Emergency Plan For Aids Relief, the President's Malaria Initiative, and the Feed the Future Initiative. Peace Corps returned to Rwanda in 2009 and currently has some 130 volunteers working in health and education programs.

The advancement of democracy and human rights are important components of our policy towards Rwanda, and one which the U.S. and Rwanda are committed to working closely together to achieve. We believe it is important for Rwanda to

continue to develop and strengthen its democratic institutions, to ensure political space for the opposition and to promote a strong independent media. In this context, I look forward, if confirmed, to build on and expand our mutual efforts with Rwanda on these important issues. Through our USAID Mission we have funded democracy and governance programs to strengthen the justice sector, media, and civil society.

My past experience in Rwanda and as desk officer for the Democratic Republic of the Congo has given me a deep appreciation for the importance and complexity of the relationship between those two countries. Their rapprochement in 2009, which put an end to years of conflict by proxy, has been the cornerstone of recent improvements in regional stability. Peace and security in the eastern Congo remain elusive, however, and we believe that Rwanda continues to have a critical and proactive role to play in stabilizing the region. We strongly support the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region's recent declaration committing the DRC, Rwanda, and the Congo's other neighbors to addressing the illegal trade in minerals, and we commend the steps Rwanda is undertaking to ensure the trade continues only through legal and certified channels. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, or FDLR, remains a violent threat to civilians in eastern Congo, though Rwanda continues to provide for the reintegration of FDLR members who demobilize.

Rwanda is an increasingly important partner internationally. It has over 3,000 peacekeepers in Darfur and some 250 troops elsewhere in Sudan who have benefited from U.S. military's Africa Contingency Operations and Training Assistance (ACOTA) program. It also has almost 200 police assigned to the peacekeeping mission in Haiti. President Kagame was among the strongest voices in the international community supporting action to prevent a massacre in Libya earlier this year.

If confirmed as Ambassador to Rwanda, I will continue U.S. efforts to support economic and political progress. Rwanda's development and stability are essential for its citizens and critical to the stability of Central Africa. I look forward to working closely with you, Mr. Chairman, and with the committee in this important endeavor, should I be confirmed.

Thank you again Chairman Coons and members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions that you might have.