

Statement of Daniel Smith
Ambassador-Designate to the Hellenic Republic
Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 22, 2010

Madam Chair and distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee for the United States Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic.

Madam Chair, I am honored that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have nominated me for this important post. If confirmed, I will devote myself to building upon the work of my predecessors to advance our bilateral relationship with Greece in all its facets: diplomatic, political, economic, and the important people-to-people ties that are at the heart of our nations' friendship. I also commit myself to work closely with this committee, your staff, and your congressional colleagues in this effort.

I am pleased to be joined today by my wife Diane and my sons, Andrew, Erik and Troy. Together, we welcome this opportunity to serve our nation overseas again.

I believe my career has helped prepare me for this important assignment. I have spent over 25 years as a public servant with the Department of State. Most recently, as Executive Secretary of the State

Department, a position I held during two administrations, I provided direct policy and administrative support to the Secretary and other Department leaders, and helped coordinate the Department's response to crises around the globe. My previous experience as Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs provided me invaluable experience in the formulation of public diplomacy strategies. As Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs I helped manage one of the largest bureaus in the Department with global responsibilities and helped formulate U.S. border security policy in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001. If confirmed, I believe my career and experience will provide a solid basis for my work in Athens. From my previous service at the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul, I also have unique insight into many aspects of Greek-Turkish relations, including the issues surrounding the Ecumenical Patriarch. Indeed, during my time in Istanbul I had the honor of visiting the Halki Seminary at the invitation of His All Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew, whose enthronement I also attended.

Greece and the United States have a long history of solidarity and friendship that will continue to guide our work together in the years ahead. These bonds are rooted in the well-known inspiration our Founding Fathers drew from classical Greece, the birth-place of democracy, as well as from

the common interests and democratic values our countries continue to share today. These bonds are further cemented by the millions of Americans who trace their ancestry to the Hellenic Republic.

Greece now faces a difficult economic situation and the Greek Government has embarked on a series of major reforms and measures designed to reduce the fiscal deficit, increase the country's competitiveness, and restore the confidence of the markets. The U.S. Government fully supports Greece as it implements these difficult changes. Greece's recovery is in the interest of our European allies and of the United States. Ultimately, Greece's ability to emerge from this situation stronger and more competitive than before depends on the fortitude and ingenuity of its government and people. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Government of Greece to support their reform efforts and explore ways the United States can assist Greece in meeting this challenge. I will also look for ways to expand bilateral trade and investment and enhance our economic ties.

While recognizing that the economic situation will absorb much of Greece's attention, we look to Greece to continue its engagement with its neighbors, and note the Greek government's constructive efforts to do so.

Fostering the security of Southeast Europe has long been a priority of the United States, and our government has strongly advocated the integration

of Balkan countries into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Greece, as an established member of the EU and a NATO Ally, as well as a regional economic leader with experience working with all the countries of the Balkans, is an important partner in achieving this goal. Greece's "Agenda 2014", an initiative which envisions the accession of Western Balkan countries to European institutions by the 100 year anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, aligns with U.S. aspirations for the region. In this context, the Administration is hopeful that efforts to settle the near 20 year-old name dispute between Athens and Skopje will bear fruit. The Administration continues to support the UN effort, led by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Matthew Nimetz, to work with the leaders in Athens and Skopje to achieve a resolution. The Administration will embrace any mutually-acceptable solution that emerges from these negotiations.

We also applaud the efforts of Greek Prime Minister Papandreou and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan to deepen relations between Greece and Turkey. Prime Minister Papandreou's first trip following his election was to Turkey, and we are hopeful that steps such as that and Prime Minister Erdogan's successful visit to Athens in May, will build trust and institutionalize positive momentum between these two key NATO Allies.

Prime Minister Papandreou and Prime Minister Erdogan recently signed 21 agreements, on issues ranging from working to improve economic ties to forming a joint committee to scour textbooks of negative stereotypes. With these steps, the two sides agreed to work towards strengthened bilateral ties. As part of its vision of a common future, Greece has long supported Turkey's accession to the European Union.

One of the longstanding points of dispute between our two Allies has been the continued division of Cyprus. A just and lasting settlement on Cyprus must be found. The leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities have made important progress in the Cypriot-led negotiations under the auspices of the UN Good Offices Mission led by Special Advisor Alexander Downer, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the government in Athens to support these efforts.

Greece is also a partner of the United States on global challenges, and if I am confirmed as Ambassador, I will work to enhance our cooperation with Greece to tackle today's most pressing concerns.

Greece is a longstanding contributor to NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan and to KFOR in Kosovo, and is a strong maritime partner, participating in NATO's operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean, and NATO's counter-piracy Ocean Shield operation in the Gulf of Aden.

Combating the proliferation of nuclear weapons, addressing poverty, stemming climate change, and fighting organized crime are all areas where we will continue to cooperate. In recent years, we have seen the emergence of a phenomenon which many thought had fallen by history's wayside: piracy. Greece, with the largest shipping fleet in the world, has been a leader in the international community's counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden, as well as participating robustly in the EU's "Atalanta" mission off of Somalia.

The development of green technology is another area where our interests coincide. Both President Obama and Prime Minister Papandreou have made this issue a cornerstone of their international policies. If confirmed, I look forward to working together with Greek experts to see what advances we can achieve together.

The State Department congratulates Greek law enforcement authorities on the recent successes they have had in their fight against domestic terrorism in Greece. The Department was pleased to hear about the recent arrests of some members of the terrorist group Revolutionary Struggle, the same group that claimed responsibility for launching a rocket propelled grenade into our Embassy in 2007. At the same time, we extend our condolences to the families of Greek officials who have lost their lives in

the fight against terrorism, including in the recent cowardly attack in the Office of the Minister of Citizen Protection. These attacks only reinforce our determination to strengthen still further our excellent law enforcement cooperation with Greece.

No review of U.S.-Greece relations is complete without recognizing the Greek-American community, whose strong ties to Greece, and love of the United States, has long strengthened and nourished our bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Greek-American community and would welcome their advice on advancing the U.S.-Greece partnership.

Madam Chair, it is an honor to appear before you today, and if confirmed, I want to assure you that I look forward to continuing to work closely with you, members of this Committee, and Congress in representing my fellow Americans as the U.S. Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic.

Thank you and I welcome any questions.