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for the
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Madam Chair and Members of this distinguished Committee,

I am honored to appear before you as the President's nominee to represent the United States at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

I also want to thank the Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Howard Berman, and our Ranking Member Ms. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen for their kind introduction. It has been a great honor to have had the opportunity to work with Chairman Berman for the past two years and for the Committee for the past eight years.

With me today, representing my family is my wife, Kristin Killion. I would not be here today if it were not for her support; her love and her inspiration. Believe it or not, I met Kristin in Paris when I was working for the late Congressman Tom Lantos on U.S. re-entry into UNESCO. When Kristin and I married in 2006, she relocated to Washington, D.C., and I promised her we would return to Paris some day. So if the Senate sees fit to confirm me, it will help me to keep that promise.

I feel very at home today appearing before the Foreign Relations Committee, as I have had the privilege to work very closely with this Committee during my entire career in Washington, first as a legislative liaison for the Department of State, and more recently as the senior staffer on the House Foreign Affairs Committee responsible for State Department oversight and International Organizations. Your Committee's staff members -- including Robin Lerner, Paul Foldi, Steve Feldstein, and Laura Winthrop -- are my colleagues and friends. I

have had the privilege of working with them on this year's Foreign Affairs Authorization Act.

I also feel very much at home thinking about the prospect of representing the United States at UNESCO. On behalf of Congressman Lantos, I had the privilege of drafting the legislative language that passed the House and was later enacted in authorizing U.S. re-entry into UNESCO in 2001, and in the ensuing years I have been intimately involved in Congressional oversight of U.S. participation in the Organization.

As I prepared for this confirmation hearing, I thought it was fundamentally important to go back to the beginning. Reading the U.S. Delegation Report from the First Session of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1946, it became clear that the founders of UNESCO, of which the United States was one, took a leap of faith in creating an organization that would advance the cause of peace through collaboration among governments in the fields of education, science, and the arts. The credo of UNESCO's founders, articulated in its Charter was that, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."

In the spirit of the collaboration envisioned by those in 1946 and in support of UNESCO's founding mission, the United States remains committed to working through UNESCO to advance education for all, support science and engineering, preserve the world's cultural heritage and natural heritage, and promote freedom of expression, gender equality, human rights, and tolerance.

Madam Chair, education initiatives at UNESCO are especially important. If confirmed, I look forward to working with UNESCO on behalf of President Obama to further the United States' commitment to seeing educational opportunities expand for students worldwide. Dr. Jill Biden was recently at UNESCO Headquarters to address the delegates during the opening ceremony of the World Conference on Higher Education. In her remarks, she underscored the commitment of the U.S. Government to education, stating that "community colleges are essential to our higher education mission, often providing an education to students who would not otherwise enroll in a four-year college or university." As an educator in a U.S. community college, Dr. Biden explained how this innovative model of higher education is helping to expand access to further learning opportunities among American students of all ages across the country. Other country delegations were eager to learn more about our experience with

community colleges. If confirmed, I desire to further the work that Dr. Biden has begun with her first trip abroad to UNESCO.

UNESCO plays a key role as the global coordinating agency for the Education for All initiative. The EFA goals, including ensuring that all children have access to primary education of high quality and achieving a 50 % improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, are important for countries to improve the lives of their citizens. Education is a critical foundation for all development and UNESCO is moving this agenda forward and helping to coordinate the education-related efforts of other multilateral organizations in countries around the world.

UNESCO is engaged in promoting a culture of peace and intercultural dialogue. This is critical because we face a common, global challenge to educate young people to resist violent ideologies, and to offer them tolerant, peaceful and constructive alternatives. UNESCO, through regional conferences, such as “Youth at the Crossroads” is providing a forum to bring together actors within each society who can share best practices and build partnerships that demonstrate a commitment to addressing this issue. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen UNESCO’s capacity to help governments and NGO’s reach youths-at-risk.

Gender equality as a Medium-Term Strategy Priority at UNESCO represents a welcome and very important commitment by Member States. A statement by Secretary Clinton regarding the important issues of women’s rights, women’s empowerment and gender equality was read at the opening ceremony of UNESCO’s International Women’s Day Event at the UNESCO headquarters on March 9, 2009. Secretary Clinton said “the fact is that it’s not only women who are undermined when the rights of women are denied. It is also their families and communities, their local economies, their governments, and their societies overall. Indeed, the world’s progress is slowed when half of the world’s population is lagging behind.” If confirmed, I plan to press UNESCO and its Member States to put content and resources behind its commitment to advance gender equality because as Secretary Clinton said, “the advancement of women is essential not only because it is morally right, but also because it is smart.”

UNESCO is the only UN specialized agency with a mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom. If confirmed, I will remain vigilant in upholding this important U.S. ideal. I will ensure that the U.S. speaks up for the rights of journalists and private citizens around the world.

The United States has made great strides at UNESCO since our return in 2003. Protecting and promoting the world's outstanding natural and cultural heritage is also of vital importance. In January 2009, the U.S. submitted World Heritage Site nominations for Mount Vernon, Virginia, and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in Hawaii. These are our first nominations to the World Heritage List in 15 years. If confirmed, I will work with our colleagues at the Department of the Interior/National Park Service to ensure that our nominations have the best chance of inscription on the World Heritage List when the World Heritage Committee meets in Brasilia in 2010.

The U.S. has also proposed its first ever UNESCO Category 2 Center - The International Center for Integrated Water Resources Management - sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The center's mission would be to advance the science and practice of integrated water resources management to address water security and other water-related challenges globally. Should this Center be approved by the UNESCO General Conference in 2009, it will contribute significantly to the U.S. strategy to use science and engineering to promote peace and security as well as to the internationally agreed development goals on water and sanitation.

Madam Chair, my discussions to date with officials from several U.S. Government agencies have impressed me with just how much inter-agency cooperation goes on in our engagement with UNESCO. Each agency has given me a greater sense of our priorities at UNESCO to which I am committed and I share their enthusiasm for our work at UNESCO. I am grateful for the confidence that President Obama has placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to serve the United States in the capacity of Ambassador to UNESCO. I also look forward to consulting frequently with Congress, and particularly this Committee.

I am pleased to answer any questions that you and the members of the Committee have for me. Thank you.