

Testimony
of
Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe
For a Hearing of the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

I am honored to come before this committee to seek your confirmation of my nomination by President Obama to serve as U.S. Representative to the UN Human Rights Council. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for placing their confidence and trust in me by nominating me to serve in this important role.

It is a humbling experience for me to appear here today. I cannot imagine a greater honor than to be asked to serve one's country by promoting human rights internationally. In many ways, I have been preparing for this role my entire adult life. Starting at Dartmouth College, I spent a semester living in Blois, France and later worked as an intern for one of the first elected members to the European Parliament in London, Brussels and Strasbourg. I also began studying Mandarin at Dartmouth, and went to live in Tianjin following my graduation and later studied Chinese law in Shanghai, and worked at a law firm in Hong Kong. As part of my joint degree program in law and East Asian Studies at Stanford, I focused on the evolving political culture and development of the rule of law in post-Mao China. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to contribute to the work of several human rights organizations, including: International Defense and Aid for Southern Africa, the Ginnetta Sagan Fund for Women and Children at Amnesty International, and the Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights.

Most recently, I have focused my work as a Ph.D. candidate, and as a scholar at the Center for International Security and

Cooperation at Stanford, on human rights, the rule of law and UN reform issues, with a particular focus on ethical and legal justifications for humanitarian military intervention. The dominant ethos at the Center for International Security and Cooperation is to encourage excellent scholarship - but always with a public policy orientation and relevance to real world problems. In my case, this influence has led me to consider ways to improve the quality of debate in international fora on whether and when to use military force for humanitarian purposes. The prospect of serving as Ambassador to the Human Rights Council, where member states debate the real world application of universal human rights, presents the most deeply fulfilling opportunity I can imagine.

The United States was elected to a three-year term on the Human Rights Council on May 12th of this year. The Obama Administration sought a seat on the Human Rights Council to underscore America's commitment to human rights and to join the efforts of other member nations to make the Council a body that fulfills its promise. The United States has always been a champion of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This commitment is driven by the founding values of our nation, and the conviction that international peace, security and prosperity are strengthened when human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and protected. The promotion and protection of human rights is a fundamental value and integral part of the Obama administration's foreign policy. But it is important to remember and emphasize that these American values are also universal values:

As the President said in his speech in Cairo in June:

[We] have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and

doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights.

As a member of the Council, the United States has a greater ability and responsibility to influence and refocus the Human Rights Council's work. Participation in the Human Rights Council provides the United States with an opportunity to engage in dialogue with nations around the world about our most fundamental values, interests, and concerns. Furthermore, the Human Rights Council is the highest profile institution in the UN's human rights structure, and its decisions and actions influence the operations of the other UN human rights mechanisms. This fact adds weight to the importance of exercising U.S. leadership at the Human Rights Council. During its first several years of operation, the Human Rights Council has been criticized for its anti-Israel bias, as well as for avoiding discussion or investigation of serious human rights abuses that take place inside member states. If confirmed, my primary goal will be to strengthen the Council's effectiveness in fulfilling its core mission, which is to defend and protect human rights around the globe. I intend to promote transparency and objectivity in all of the Council's endeavors, and will work to ensure that greater focus is given to the most serious human rights violators. With strong U.S. leadership, the Human Rights Council can be encouraged to set priorities based on a more objective assessment of the most pressing human rights abuses and gain enhanced credibility as the lead entity for addressing global human rights concerns.

I am well aware that, if confirmed, my work as U.S. Representative to the Human Rights Council will be difficult, and at times may be highly contentious. Much work needs to be done to spread a deeper understanding of and appreciation for human rights in all regions of our world. If confirmed, I will specifically endeavor to bring balance to the Council's unconstructive focus on

Israel, and to hold all states accountable for human rights abuses occurring in their countries. Given the congruence between the universal principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fundamental values held in the United States, I believe we are well positioned to help lead the Human Rights Council to fulfill its mission. If confirmed, I will wholeheartedly dedicate myself to that important work.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. I look forward to your questions.