

**Statement of Assistant-Secretary-designate Eric P. Schwartz  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
June 3, 2009**

I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration. I thank President Obama for selecting me as his nominee, and I am deeply grateful to Secretary of State Hilary Clinton for her confidence and support.

My wife, Catherine M. Graham, and my children, Sarah Elizabeth Schwartz and Anna Michelle Schwartz, are with me today, and I express my deepest appreciation for their unequivocal support and encouragement. I am also grateful for the presence of my brother, Karl Schwartz, my sister, Martha Mason, and my cousin, Air Force Lt. Colonel Lee Spechler. Finally, I thank former Representative Stephen J. Solarz and Senator Jeff Merkley for their kind words on my behalf.

Day-in and day-out, the overseas humanitarian programs of the United States Government provide critical life-saving assistance to those engulfed in tragedies that most of us can only imagine – persecution, forced displacement, separation of families, abuse at the hands of militaries or militias, and other basic violations of human dignity. United States' support for relief and rehabilitation of shattered communities, and for durable solutions for the displaced and dispossessed, reflect the most noble ideals of the U.S. Congress and the American people, and communicate solidarity with hundreds of millions of people around the world.

For all these reasons, I am humbled to be considered for this important assignment. If confirmed, I would take it on with enormous enthusiasm, with a deep and

abiding commitment to humanitarianism and to public service, and with an enduring interest in and concern for the plight of refugees. As a young child, I listened to my grandfather, who emigrated from Romania at the turn of the century, as he conveyed to me the fear of persecution he experienced as a young Jewish boy in Eastern Europe. He also told me of the adversity he faced after his arrival in the United States, underscoring for me the critical importance of a refugee admissions program that adequately addresses the needs of newly resettled refugees and welcomes them into our communities.

If confirmed by the Senate, I would come to this position with broad experience on refugee and migration issues, beginning with my work on the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs from 1989 to 1993. In that capacity, I was the principal staffer on Asian refugee issues, including Vietnamese boat people, Laotian refugees and the immigration issues relating to the transfer of sovereignty in Hong Kong.

Between 1993 and 2001, I worked at the National Security Council, where I ultimately served as Senior Director for Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs and Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. At the NSC, I was responsible for refugee issues, and was deeply engaged in Administration policy responses leading to the rescue of Kurdish refugees from Northern Iraq in 1996, the resettlement of Vietnamese boat people, and the establishment of safe havens for Haitians and Kosovars, among other issues. I have also worked extensively on humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, human rights and the rule of law, and post-conflict stabilization -- as the UN Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery from 2005 to 2007, as a lead expert for the Mitchell-Gingrich Task Force on United Nations Reform in 2005, and as

the NSC Senior Director with responsibility for peacekeeping policy and programs from 1998 to 2001.

If confirmed, I would seek to sustain the long-standing and extraordinary partnership between the Executive and Legislative Branches on humanitarian issues, paying close attention to the concerns of the Congress. In her confirmation testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee, then-Secretary Designate Clinton told Senators that she intended to elevate refugee issues and to develop more comprehensive and effective strategies to deal with these humanitarian challenges. I have reflected carefully on the most important contributions I could make to promote the Secretary's objectives, and four areas of focus seem particularly important.

First, I would be a determined and persistent advocate for humanitarian principles – especially protection -- within the U.S. government policy-making process, in contacts with governments whose policies impact refugees and displaced persons, and among other donors. I would seek to ensure that the U.S. government continues to lead efforts to champion the needs of the most vulnerable, whether that means responding quickly and generously to the crisis in Pakistan, pressing Sri Lankan government officials to respect international humanitarian law and protect hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians at risk, rallying other governments to help bear the burden of large-scale displacement in sub-Saharan Africa, or working with host governments and humanitarian organizations to improve the conditions for displaced Iraqis in the Middle East.

Second, I would promote more active efforts to tackle one of the most vexing and compelling humanitarian challenges confronting governments around the world -- that of protracted refugee situations. Nearly 10 million people – over 60 percent of the world's

refugees -- have been displaced for more than five years, and approximately 8 million have lived as refugees for more than a decade. Women and children are especially vulnerable in such situations. Some progress has been made, but much more must be done for populations -- such as the Burmese in Thailand and Somalis in Kenya -- who have suffered in refugee camps for far too long. If confirmed, I would seek to build on recent successes in promoting local integration, voluntary and assisted return, and expanded third country resettlement, while sustaining and strengthening protection and assistance for long-staying populations who have yet to find durable solutions. I would work closely with colleagues in the geographic bureaus of the State Department on resolving conflicts and abuses that create these refugees in the first place.

If confirmed, a third priority for me would be to ensure that U.S. humanitarian assistance efforts help to create the conditions for longer term, sustainable recovery. U.S. foreign assistance programs focused on displaced persons and refugees in places like Liberia, Colombia, Iraq and Afghanistan not only reflect our most noble values, they also help to begin the process of recovery and reconstruction that is crucial to long-term economic growth and political stability.

Finally, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary, I would seek to ensure that the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program continues to serve as a model of responsible humanitarian action for other governments around the world. The program, which was established by the Congress in response to the Indochinese refugee crisis in the 1970's and 1980's and has historically enjoyed strong bipartisan support, has had recent successes, including increased diversity. But that diversity has imposed challenges for government officials and voluntary agencies providing the support and assistance that enables new arrivals to

become productive members of society. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary, I would work closely with other government offices, including the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services, to ensure the continued strength and vitality of the admissions program. I would also work closely -- and seek to strengthen relationships -- with the voluntary agencies that serve as partners of the government in providing reception and placement services for newly resettled refugees.

In conclusion, I recognize that the PRM Bureau I would lead has a well-earned reputation for passionate dedication to its mission. I want to assure the members of the Committee that, if confirmed, I would take on the role of steward with the utmost sense of responsibility and accountability -- to the President, to the Secretary of State, to the Congress, to the American people, and to the millions of refugees, displaced persons, and conflict victims whom the Bureau seeks to protect and assist.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

