

Patricia N. Moller
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Guinea
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 21, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today. I am honored to have been nominated by President Obama to become the next Ambassador to the Republic of Guinea, and I would like to thank both the President and Secretary Clinton for their trust and confidence in me. I am humbled and honored by the prospect of this assignment and the immense challenges it represents. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and other members of Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Guinea.

I am pleased to introduce my long-time friend Ken Rinzler who accompanied me here, and to recognize both Caren Brown and Matthew Garrett who served with me in Burundi. I would like to note that my retired Foreign Service husband, Gil Sperling, is not with me today since he came out of retirement to bridge a staffing gap in Kampala, Uganda for the next two months.

Over the course of my 22-year career as a Foreign Service Officer, I have been privileged to represent the American people and our government in Germany, India, Serbia, Armenia, Georgia, and Burundi. During my Washington postings, I served as a Watch officer in the State Department Operations Center, and as the Vietnam desk officer during the exciting process of reestablishing diplomatic ties with that country. Most recently as U.S. Ambassador in Burundi, I worked to institutionalize democratic values and practices in a country that had achieved a successful election in 2005. I led U.S. efforts to support the preparations for their upcoming 2010 election. I assisted the Burundian army to embark on its peacekeeping mission to Somalia, and I was a trusted friend to civil society, leading their outcry against corruption, impunity, and violations of human rights. This experience will prove useful, I believe, in Guinea.

The Republic of Guinea is now facing a particularly tumultuous, historic transition, one that we hope will ultimately lead to democratic elections and the return to civilian rule. On December 23, 2008, a 32-person military junta, the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), led by army Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, seized power upon the death of longtime president Lansana Conte. This military coup was even more unfortunate because, at the time of President Conte's death, Guinea was preparing for legislative elections early in 2009. The military junta was widely condemned by the international community, including the United States, and its members were urged to cede power to a civilian transitional government in preparation for democratic elections.

Many Guineans, fearful of seeing their country fall into the same chaos that has struck their neighbors in the past, initially welcomed the junta. Unfortunately, in the six months that have passed since the regime took power, the junta has suspended the constitution and National Assembly, established an extrajudicial process for trials, and carried out numerous arbitrary arrests and detentions without due process.

I would like to emphasize, however, that our concerns lie with the military junta and its actions, not with the people of Guinea. The United States and Guinea have shared a strong friendship since Guinea's independence in 1958, and that has not changed. We stand in support of the African Union and Economic Community of West African States, known as ECOWAS, as well as in support of the Guinean people, in their efforts to speed the transition to civilian rule. We reiterate our call for free and fair elections to be held as soon as possible.

The Guinean people also have begun to demand that the junta hold timely elections. It was pressure from labor unions, civil society, political parties and ordinary people gathered under their umbrella organization, Les Forces Vives, which pushed the junta to agree to hold legislative and presidential elections currently scheduled for October and December 2009. It is the task of the United States and mine – if I am confirmed – to support their efforts and help the Guinean people establish a more democratic, representative, and transparent system of governance

Guinea also faces a tough road ahead in its path towards economic recovery and development. Already a poor country, with a ranking of 167 out of 179 on the United Nations Human Development Index, Guinea is becoming

poorer still. In a blow to fiscal accountability and transparency, the junta centralized all revenue and expenditure authority under the Acting President. Bauxite exports and their royalties are the main source of government revenues, but have dropped significantly as a result of poor economic policies and the global economic downturn. Customs receipts are also shrinking as domestic and regional demand for imported goods decreases.

If free and fair elections are held in Guinea, the United States can work with the Guinean people to promote economic development, rule of law, and good governance. If confirmed as Ambassador to Guinea, I will redouble our efforts to work with our partners and the Guinean people to achieve this goal.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, for this opportunity to appear before you. I am happy to answer any question