

Statement of Peter Bodde
Ambassador Nominee to Malawi
Before the Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
May 7, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Malawi. I am grateful for the trust placed in me by the President and Secretary Rice. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and my colleagues in the U.S. Government to further the interests of the United States in Malawi and in the region. I also want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the special efforts the Committee has made to schedule these nomination hearings.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my wife Tanya, who is also a member of the Foreign Service, our daughter Sara, who is a 3rd grade teacher in Montgomery County, Maryland, and our son Christopher who traveled from London to be here today. I am happy and proud that my father, Ambassador William Bodde, is here today. About 30 years ago, I sat where he is sitting today during his first confirmation hearing when he appeared before the late Senator Paul Tsongas prior to becoming Ambassador to Fiji. I

consider myself lucky to have grown up in a Foreign Service family.

Among the lessons I have learned during my career is that the success of every United States Mission abroad depends on a strong interagency effort and a cohesive Country Team. It also requires clear goals, strict accountability, adequate funding and trained personnel. These same critical concepts apply to our bilateral engagement and the delivery of significant levels of U.S. assistance at a critical juncture in Malawi's development. You have my full assurances that, should I be confirmed, I will provide the necessary leadership to ensure that these concepts are an essential element of all Mission programs. While the generosity of the American people is great, all of us involved in the stewardship of this generosity must be accountable for measuring success and failure.

In my current position in Islamabad, as well as in my previous position as Consul General in Frankfurt, I have had the opportunity to regularly brief dozens of your colleagues both in the House and Senate. Such regular interaction, whether at post or in Washington, is critical to our continued success. Frank exchanges of accurate information that build trust are essential for the Congress to make difficult resource and policy choices. Should I

be confirmed, I will make every effort to interact on a regular basis with the members of the committee and other members of the Congress and congressional staff.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world; it faces the daunting challenges of chronic malaria, wide-spread HIV/AIDS, poor infrastructure and a lack of mineral wealth. Yet, the Malawian government has made a meaningful commitment to raising living standards and improving the lives of its people, and the United States is an important and growing partner in this process. The primary objective of the U.S. Mission in Malawi, of course, is to promote and protect the interests of the United States and U.S. citizens who are either in Malawi or doing business with Malawi. In addition to that fundamental responsibility, we are working with Malawi to promote political and economic development, decrease the country's dependence on humanitarian assistance and increase its ability to make positive contributions to regional security and the broader global community.

If confirmed, I will make protecting and deepening Malawi's democratic systems one of my highest priorities. Malawi's political parties are currently locked in a bitter struggle that has placed serious strains on the country's political institutions. All eyes are now shifting to national elections scheduled for mid-2009

that will be a critical test for Malawi's democratic institutions. If confirmed, my recent experience in Pakistan, as well as my previous experience in Nepal and Bulgaria, in helping young or challenged democracies conduct fair and credible elections will serve me well. Success, however, will require U.S. and international donor support to reinforce Malawi's developing democratic system.

On the economic front, Malawi's near-term prospects look bright, largely because of good rains and the positive impact of the government's fertilizer and seed subsidy programs. From a longer-term perspective, however, Malawi remains highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture in an area prone to periodic droughts. In order to achieve sustainable improvements in living standards, Malawi must increase investment in irrigation and agricultural diversification, raise productivity and education standards, and reduce high transport and public utility costs. The Millennium Challenge Corporation's selection of Malawi as a compact eligible country in late 2007 has created significant new opportunities, not only for funding strategic public investments but also for new public-private partnerships to promote sustainable growth.

Disease, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and chronic malnutrition, poses a tremendous obstacle to Malawi's

continued growth. The Malawian government has been a willing partner in addressing the challenges of improving access to health care, but government and public sector capacity remain weak. The United States, through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund, has played a critical role in increasing access to treatment and increasing public awareness about the disease. If confirmed, I will be proud to shepherd the continued growth of these critical programs.

As Malawi continues to develop domestically, it is increasingly able to play a constructive role in advancing important issues throughout the region. One example of such a contribution is Malawi's planned deployment of a peacekeeping battalion to Darfur. The United States is working with the United Nations to support Malawi's efforts and prepare Malawian troops for deployment in 2009. If confirmed, I will work diligently to keep these plans on track.

I also want to note how much I look forward to serving again at a post with a large and well established Peace Corps program. I have seen first hand the significant impact a single Peace Corps volunteer can make. I want to assure you that, should I be confirmed, I will provide considerable support to this inspiring American outreach program.

In closing, I want to note that anyone who represents the United States has a unique responsibility. More often than not, we are the only nation that has the will, the values, and the resources to solve problems, help others, and to be a positive force for change in our challenged world. Being nominated to serve as an Ambassador representing our nation is in itself an incredible honor. With the consent of the Senate, I look forward to assuming this responsibility while serving as the next U.S. Ambassador to Malawi. Thank you for this opportunity to address you. I look forward to answering your questions.