

Statement of Stephen Nolan
Ambassador Nominee to the Republic of Botswana
Before the Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
May 7, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Botswana. 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 to further the interests of the United States in Botswana and in the region as the Secretary of State's Representative to the Southern African Development Community.

With me today is my wife, Judy, who has been a source of strength, support and wise counsel since we were married 30 years ago in Dakar, Senegal, our first Foreign Service post. While I have also served in Europe and the Near East, two thirds of my career has been at our posts in Africa or in the Bureau of African Affairs in Washington. On the continent, I have had the pleasure to serve as Consul General in Cape Town, two tours in Nairobi, and tours in Harare and Dakar. This affinity for Africa is not accidental. My father, Bernard Nolan, was a Foreign Service officer until his death in Yemen in 1973. His example, with encouragement from my mother, inspired my career choice, but it was my family's years in Kenya and Sierra Leone that sparked my life-long interest in Africa. I am sure he is looking down on these proceedings with a smile on his face.

During my career with the Foreign Service, I have been responsible for handling a variety of management and policy issues, most recently, as Executive Director of the Bureau of African Affairs. The rapid growth of health, development, and security assistance programs at many embassies in

recent years has stretched human and financial resources, but I am proud of how our bureau's dedicated American and locally engaged personnel have risen to the challenge. This is an issue I plan to remain focused on as we need to ensure that we have adequate staffing to match the increase in program funds for proper management and accountability. Africa stands at a critical juncture, and Botswana is destined to play a key leadership role in the realization of Africa's future, particularly in southern Africa. If confirmed, I will work with dedication to promote stronger U.S.-Africa relations and to deepen our excellent bilateral relationship with Botswana.

The highest priority for any ambassador serving overseas is to protect American lives--whether private citizens or those working in the mission. My extreme sensitivity about this is based on my experience; when Al-Qaeda bombed our embassy in Nairobi in 1998, I was serving there as the Administrative Counselor. This catastrophe and its aftermath underscored the importance of leadership and experience. Should I be confirmed, I will use both in carrying out this critical responsibility.

Botswana's stability and legitimacy derive from the strength of its leadership and institutions, adherence to democratic norms, and prudent management of revenues from its diamond industry. Yet Botswana, for all its storied success, still faces many critical challenges that will affect the sustainability of its remarkable development. Although democracy and good governance are firmly established in Botswana, the ruling party has won every national election since independence in 1966 and civil society organizations are not yet fully mature. The success of diamonds and the related broad-based and deeply rooted growth of the public sector have limited the emergence of a robust and entrepreneurial private sector.

Diamond dependency (diamonds account for 33% of GDP) highlights the need to diversify the economy. The gap between rich and the poor is wide and growing. An estimated 30% to 40% of Botswana live in poverty, largely in sparsely-populated rural areas. Furthermore, co-epidemics of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis have devastated families and affect every member of Botswana society. If I am confirmed, helping Botswana address these challenges will be central to my tenure.

Our strong relationship with Botswana provides many opportunities for positive engagement. Today, I would like to focus on several areas where the United States can contribute to the continuing success of Botswana and an even brighter future. First, with the inauguration of a new president in Botswana and a general election approaching in 2009, the U.S. has a unique opportunity to help Botswana move forward with improved democratic practices and respect for human rights. Working with the government, civil society and the media, I will endeavor to foster more robust and dynamic democratic institutions to ensure more Botswana feel like they have a stake in their own polity and economic future.

Economic development and expansion of trade will also be key priorities. Botswana has already made great gains in just over four decades, financed largely and prudently by Botswana's "diamonds for development" program and guided by sound fiscal and monetary policies. Despite these gains, uneven development, skewed income distribution, and highly visible and palpable poverty are clear signs that more must be done. The realization has increasingly set in that "diamonds are actually not forever," and there is an urgent need for greater diversification in Botswana's economy. The United States is currently helping Botswana to become more competitive in

the global marketplace and to make maximum use of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Our government is also working with Botswana to help develop its energy resources, agricultural exports, and public-private sector policy dialogue. If confirmed, I will make fostering increased and diversified economic growth a priority, while seeking to expand U.S. commercial engagement with Botswana.

I will continue our close collaboration with the Botswana government in the fight against the co-epidemics of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. As with many of its neighbors, Botswana has been devastated by HIV/AIDS. The national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is estimated to be 24.1%, with a much higher rate in certain age categories. Botswana also has one of the world's worst tuberculosis (TB) epidemics and about 80% of TB patients also have HIV. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the United States has provided roughly \$300 million in funding to support prevention and treatment efforts and to help the Government of Botswana achieve its goal of an AIDS-free generation by 2016. If confirmed, I would be proud to shepherd the continued development of this critical program.

Supporting Botswana's role as a regional partner on peace and security issues through the International Military Education and Training Program, maximizing the impact of the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, and working to help protect Botswana's environment and unique natural heritage would also be important objectives, should I be confirmed.

Finally, as the Secretary of State's Representative to the Southern African Development Community, known as SADC, if confirmed, I would continue Ambassador Canavan's efforts to identify areas for closer collaboration with this important regional organization, where we have already enjoyed useful cooperation in the areas of regional trade expansion and management of Southern African ecosystems. More recently, SADC has shown leadership in coordinating a regional response to the electoral crisis in Zimbabwe. It is important that we continue to engage fully with SADC, supporting its expanding voice as an advocate for constructive economic policies and deepening democratic institutions throughout southern Africa.

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, should I be confirmed, I will work hard to maintain and expand our excellent relationship with Botswana for the betterment of both the American and Botswana people. Thank you for this opportunity to address you. I look forward to answering your questions.