

Statement for the Record by

Vilma Martinez

Ambassador-Designate to Argentina

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

July 15, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am deeply honored to be here today, as the President's nominee to be the Ambassador of the United States to Argentina. I want to thank President Obama and Secretary Clinton for their confidence and trust in sending my name to the Senate for your consideration. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and with your colleagues in the Congress to advance our interests in Argentina and in the region.

This is a moment and opportunity I could not have anticipated, but one which I embrace with an open mind and full heart. As we sit in these august chambers, I am thinking of my humble, non-English speaking beginnings; and the many family members, teachers and colleagues who inspired and taught me and our country's public education system which worked to provide me this

opportunity. My parents, who taught me the value of hard work and perseverance; my paternal grandmother who taught me Spanish; my first grade teacher Ms. Butler, who taught me English--as well as my more recent mentors at Munger Tolles & Olson--all are on my mind and I take this opportunity to thank them. And, of course, I am deeply grateful for the love and support of my family--my son Carlos Singer, his wife Jessica Uzcategui and their daughter Solana Maya, and my son Ricardo Singer.

I have worked as a lawyer for over forty years in diverse fields. First, as a young staff attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund where I tried some of the early Title VII cases in the south and where I was privileged to work on two of the leading Supreme Court cases in the area. I spent a year with the New York State Division of Human Rights before working at a Wall Street law firm, Cahill Gordon & Reindel. From there I moved to California to serve as President and General Counsel of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund for nine years. For over 25 years I have been a partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP working on a range of commercial litigation and equal opportunity matters. In addition, I have been privileged to serve on a number of corporate Boards, including my current service on the Boards of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation, Bank of the West and Fluor Corporation. And, I have served on the boards of numerous non-profit organizations, including fourteen years as a member

of The Board of Regents of The University of California, including two terms as Chairman. Through this work experience I have honed a few skills--the ability to listen to all sides, analyze complex issues and articulate and implement a going forward plan. If confirmed, I would hope to take full advantage of the vast reservoir of knowledge of the men and women who work on our foreign policy agenda at the State Department and elsewhere to strengthen the ties between these two great nations--ours and Argentina.

Over the course of my career as an attorney, I have dedicated myself to pursuing equal rights and civil liberties for all Americans. The President of Argentina, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, and many members of the Argentine administration came of age in an era when the rights and freedoms of many Argentines were repressed by a brutal military dictatorship. President Fernandez de Kirchner has long sought to bring justice to those whose human rights were violated under that regime. I believe the commitment to the values of democracy and human rights that our nations share will serve as common ground in advancing the bilateral relationship between our two nations.

During my career, I have also worked to promote prosperity for all Americans through the private sector. This experience will serve me well in Argentina. Over 500 U.S. businesses operate in Argentina. Many of these companies are consistently rated among the top places to work in Argentina.

However, as many of you know, Argentina suffered a devastating economic and political crisis at the beginning of this decade. While Argentina's economy has recovered substantially over the last several years, outstanding debts and arbitration disputes are legacies of the crisis that still linger. If confirmed, I will do all I can to help create an environment in which U.S. investment is welcomed and secure, and in which Argentina can reap greater benefits from international investment to sustain growth, create jobs and reduce poverty. Social justice can best be achieved in the context of a growing dynamic economy which is a full participant in the global economy. If confirmed, I will seek to facilitate normalization of relations with all of Argentina's creditors and mutually satisfactory resolution of disputes with U.S. companies. Respect for sovereign obligations is a fundamental component of the international economy.

In today's globalized world, no country stands alone – not only when it comes to our economies -- but our security as well. The activities of our neighbors and fellow governments in our region can have a striking impact on each nation. In Argentina we have a partner dedicated to promoting democracy, regional stability, and global security. Argentina is a regional leader in international peacekeeping, with nearly 900 troops deployed worldwide, including 572 troops and police on the ground to support Haiti's democratic transition. The Government of Argentina has also developed a joint peacekeeping initiative with Chile, the

“Cruz del Sur,” and provides regional assistance at its peacekeeping training center. These efforts contribute to regional cooperation and allow the international community to continue efforts to maintain the peace and save lives.

Argentina, like the United States, has also been a victim of international terrorism. The bombings of the Israeli Embassy and AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires and the September 11 attacks have strengthened U.S. and Argentine resolve to work together to fight international terrorism. Argentina is one of our most cooperative counter-terrorism partners in the region.

In the area of nuclear nonproliferation, Argentina has a special role to play due to its active scientific community and long tradition of sophisticated research into peaceful uses of nuclear science. Argentina continues to play an active role in many nonproliferation regimes, including the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime. Argentina has voted with the United States at the International Atomic Energy Agency to find Iran in noncompliance with IAEA safeguards, and voted again to report that noncompliance to the United Nations Security Council. If confirmed, I will encourage continued close cooperation to avoid the spread of nuclear weapons while we seek to use nuclear science for energy and to promote health and food security.

Citizen safety is a major concern for both our governments. If confirmed, I will work with Argentina to further enhance already exemplary cooperation on

counternarcotics and law enforcement issues. Argentina cooperates closely with the U.S. government and other regional counterparts on drug interdiction efforts of both narcotics and precursor chemicals, as well as fugitive arrests and information sharing. Our coordinated efforts have resulted in increased drug seizures and successes against trafficking organizations. We will continue to work with Argentina on a broad range of law enforcement activities that enhance the personal security of citizens in Argentina and throughout the region.

The United States and Argentina have a dynamic trade relationship, with two-way annual trade exceeding \$13.4 billion in 2008. The Obama Administration has been clear with our trading partners that we wish to work together to keep global trade flowing and provide economic opportunities for all of our citizens. Our preferred tools of engagement are direct dialogue and discussions to resolve differences as quickly as possible so that we can keep trade flowing efficiently.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I pledge to give the highest priority to ensuring the safety and security of the 126 official Americans, their families, the 34,000 non-official U.S. residents in Argentina, and the 400,000 American tourists who visit Argentina annually. I will put all of my experience, intellect and energy into advancing our country's interests in Argentina, the broader region, and in the global arena. To achieve the United States' objectives, I know I would have the great benefit of working with outstanding Civil and Foreign Service professionals,

as well as experienced Foreign Service Nationals, at our Mission in Argentina.

Our accomplishments thus far are a prelude to what remains to be done. I look forward to a productive dialogue with President Fernandez de Kirchner, Foreign Minister Taiana, other Argentine government officials, members of Argentina's legislative and judicial branches of government, the private sector, and civil society as we seek to further advance bilateral relations and strengthen the ties between our two countries.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your distinguished colleagues, and your staffs to advance our agenda with Argentina.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.