

Statement of Patricia M. Hawkins  
Ambassador –Designate to Togo  
Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
May 7, 2008

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Togo. I thank both President Bush and Secretary Rice for this opportunity and for their trust and confidence in my ability to serve our country in this position.

If confirmed, I will draw on 25 years of Foreign Service experience, twelve of which have been spent either in Africa or focusing on African issues, to advance U.S. policy objectives in Togo. Our overall vision for the direction of our relationship with Togo is focused on democracy and respect for human rights, prosperity and security, and health. In pursuing our goals, we face a dual challenge. We must maximize our impact in the three priority areas with the program resources at our disposal, while ensuring that Washington is poised to increase USG engagement if and when Togo completes the emergence from its long political and human rights crisis.

Togo, a small country on the coast of West Africa, has been poorly governed since the 1960s. In the 1990s, in response to a repressive government's violation of democratic principles and human rights abuses, Togo's multinational and bilateral partners, including the United States, terminated assistance programs. In the ensuing years, the economy has stagnated and the physical infrastructure has deteriorated.

Despite a flawed and violent electoral process in 2005, the new president, Faure Gnassingbe, son of long-time autocratic ruler Gnassingbe Eyadema, was able to initiate a dialogue with his major opponents that culminated in the Global Political Agreement in August 2006. The centerpiece of the agreement was the organization of legislative elections, which took place in October, 2007 and were declared free and fair by numerous local and international observers.

If confirmed, I will continue the work of my predecessor to encourage further progress on improving election legislation and processes so that future elections, including presidential elections in 2010, will be fair and transparent; on the development of stronger political parties; and on encouraging better collaboration among the parties. I intend to share American democratic values with the Togolese by focusing on principles of tolerance and equal access to media. I will seek to accelerate the improvement in civil-military relations, and press for a further reduction of

the military's involvement in the government and civil society. I will look for opportunities to cooperate with Togo's military and security forces to combat drug trafficking and transnational crime, including the trafficking of persons, and to promote Togolese participation in regional efforts to strengthen maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

President Bush recently designated Togo eligible to receive benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). I will work to promote Togo's full participation and enjoyment of those benefits for the prosperity of the Togolese people. The Mission will encourage the Government of Togo to privatize its hotel, communications, banking, cotton, and mineral parastatal organizations. Over the long term, I will assist the Government of Togo in its efforts to fight corruption and to promote the rule of law, using our limited Democracy and Human Rights Fund allocation and regional USAID programs.

As in so many countries in the world today, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other risks to health and well being menace Togo's stability and prosperity. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that our assistance in combating disease is utilized to maximum effectiveness. The Peace Corps will continue to play an important role in combating HIV/AIDS, with approximately one quarter of the volunteers working full time in the field of community health and all 114 volunteers engaged in some way. The Mission will cooperate closely with the Peace Corps to leverage the effects of the volunteers' grass roots health work. We will continue to collaborate with other donor countries and international organizations to increase the capacity of Togolese officials to combat HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and we will use strong media outreach to promote health education and awareness.

Mr. Chairman, Togo, as small and as poor as it is, holds promise for the future, despite the challenges of democratic and economic reform that remain. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the leaders and people of Togo to sustain the current forward momentum toward political and economic reform, so that the Togolese people might enjoy fully the fruits of freedom.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions.