

**Statement of Linda Thomas-Greenfield
U.S. Ambassador-designate to Liberia
Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Wednesday, May 7, 2008**

Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, I am honored and delighted to be here today as President Bush's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia. I would like to thank the President and Secretary Rice for the confidence and trust they have shown by nominating me for this position. Liberia is one of the United States' closest friends on the continent of Africa, and I am grateful to be nominated to serve there as the U.S. Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce my husband Lafayette Greenfield, a retired Foreign Service Officer, who enticed me nearly 30 years ago to pursue this career. I also recognize my two children, Lindsay and Deuce, both of whom grew up in the service and who with their dad have supported me throughout my 26 years in the United States Foreign Service.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I have spent the better part of my career working in Africa and on African issues. For the past two and a half years, I have served in the Bureau of African Affairs, first as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for West Africa and now in my current position as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. Nearly half of my Foreign Service career focused on refugee and humanitarian issues, including as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration where I had oversight for refugee, humanitarian, and migration programs in Africa, Europe and Latin America.

Not long ago, Liberia was mired in civil war and spreading conflict throughout the region; now it is well along the road to recovery. I was honored to be an observer for the first round of Liberia's national elections in 2005 that

eventually led to the inauguration of Africa's first woman President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. With those democratic elections, Liberians chose peace over war; a future over stagnation; and a return to the community of nations. Now we are five years past Liberia's civil war, and the government of President Sirleaf is making major strides, reforming its institutions, attracting investment, and setting Liberia on the right path to stability and economic growth.

But Liberia, as they say, is "not out of the woods" yet. Its peace is fragile, its economy remains weak, and high unmet expectations risk compromising Liberia's future. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would work diligently to continue the strong engagement of the United States to keep Liberia moving in the right direction, and I would ensure that our attention and commitment to Liberia does not waver or diminish during this crucial post-conflict period.

Liberia will face many challenges over the next several years. It must grow economically, creating jobs and reviving the agricultural sector. It must develop its civil society, independent media, and community organizations to reverse the social and cultural damage done by years of conflict. The government must fix its broken justice system, train and develop its civil service, and build its security services to keep the peace. In 2011, Liberia will face another major test when it holds presidential and legislative elections. Liberia must continue on the path of democracy.

Throughout this period, U. S. engagement will remain critical to Liberia's success. Thanks to the generous support of the Congress, our assistance to Liberia spans the entire range of program areas and averages some \$180 million per year. Liberia has the second largest USAID program in Africa, after Sudan. In a country with only three-and-a-half million people, that support has an enormous impact on

the health and education of Liberia's people and the improvement and reform of its government.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I would work with our excellent Embassy, USAID, DOD, and other agency staff to ensure that our assistance achieves maximum impact, and is coordinated with the efforts of other donors and of the Government of Liberia. I am pleased to report that Peace Corps, an important face of America, has already begun reestablishing itself in Liberia and volunteers will be arriving soon.

If confirmed, I would also use my position to confront those who threaten Liberia's recovery. I would not hesitate to publicly attack corruption, human rights abuses, and the "old ways of doing business" in Liberia that contributed so much to its breakdown and civil conflict. Liberia's proud and strong people deserve a government that will serve the public interest, not private agendas, and that will protect the people, not prey on them. President Sirleaf has made that commitment and, if confirmed, I, as the President's representative to Liberia, will stand with her.

Governance reforms are also important as a means of attracting foreign investment. I believe Liberia's growth and recovery will depend on inflows of private capital, particularly from American businesses seeking opportunities in mining, agriculture, services, and other sectors. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would work to advance U.S. business interests for the benefit of both the American economy and the Liberian economy.

Finally, on a personal note, I am especially pleased to be here today, to come full circle back to Liberia. In the late 1970s, I spent a year and a half in Liberia as

a graduate student from the University of Wisconsin, where I studied political science. Liberia opened my eyes to the wider world and inspired my passion for Africa and my decision to make the Foreign Service a career. Now, some thirty years later, if confirmed, I hope to have the chance to contribute to Liberia's development and to advance our important bilateral relationship. Thank you again, Chairman Feingold, for today's hearing. I look forward to your questions.

