

**Statement of Alan W. Eastham**  
**United States Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Congo**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**July 23, 2008**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, it is a privilege and a distinct honor to appear before you for a second time as the President's nominee to serve the United States in Africa. The first time, over three years ago, was as Ambassador to Malawi, a post I will be relinquishing next month. At present, I am seeking confirmation as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Congo (ROC).

If I may, I would like to introduce my wife Carolyn, who has been at my side for thirty-four years. She has also served our country in seven of the eight foreign posts to which I have been assigned. She is looking forward to seeing the Congo River for the first time, as no family members were allowed to live in Kinshasa during the two years I served there. I have to say that she works as hard as I do to support U.S. activities in Malawi, and she will do the same in Brazzaville if I am confirmed by the Senate. Let me also introduce my sons -- Mark, who attends Elon University in North Carolina - - and Michael, who will begin his studies at James Madison University next month. They have grown up in the Foreign Service and I expect that there is a good chance you will see them serving the United States abroad in some capacity in the coming years.

If confirmed, Brazzaville will be my fourth Africa post overseas. I have served in Nairobi, Kinshasa, and Lilongwe. I have visited

twenty African countries in an official capacity, and I have had other professional responsibilities relating to Africa, including a year as the U.S. representative to the Kimberley Process talks on conflict diamonds and three years as Director of Central African Affairs in the State Department. As Director, I had responsibility for the Republic of Congo. I have visited the country several times, both before and after the destructive civil war.

U.S. policy in the Republic of the Congo centers on promoting human rights, democracy and good governance in the country. We also support efforts by the Congolese leadership to play a positive and leading role in the resolution of regional conflicts.

If confirmed, I will fully exercise my mandate to promote and protect U.S. interests in that country, including U.S. investments, U.S. citizens, and U.S. values.

Economic governance is a strong priority for the United States. We must ensure that American commercial interests can operate in a free, lawful, orderly, and transparent economic and regulatory environment. This involves encouraging the authorities to combat corruption, invest oil revenues in human and social development, and manage the country's precious environmental resources.

Our political goals include supporting the country's democratic institutions, and promoting civil and political rights. This includes support to civil society as an effective mechanism of checks and balances to promote government accountability and transparency as well as encouraging the ROC to protect its most vulnerable populations, including victims of child labor, child trafficking and violence against women. It is also important to note that Congo will be holding presidential elections in 2009. It is important to support efforts to make those free, fair, and transparent.

There is also important work to be done to further the implementation of the 2005 Peace Agreement between the Government and the last remaining rebel group, in order to create a positive atmosphere for free and fair presidential elections in 2009.

Following the Republic of Congo's tenure as president of the African Union and non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2006, the ROC has enhanced its role in regional and multilateral issues. President Sassou-Nguesso was recently appointed as a co-mediator in the Chad-Sudan conflict, and has been actively involved in the Contact Group process, and hosted a meeting in Brazzaville. We appreciate the ROC's role, and urge them to work with regional partners to facilitate a resolution of the conflict.

The ROC is increasingly becoming a partner in the area of security cooperation. Last October, the Government of Congo hosted a U.S. Navy ship visit. We continue to support capacity building efforts to enhance the country's maritime security awareness. Our training of the Congolese military will also support the country's efforts to contribute to future central African peacekeeping efforts and promote awareness for human rights in the country's armed forces.

It is important to note that in both program and operational contexts the U.S. Mission in Brazzaville is in a re-building phase. The Embassy was closed for several years, followed by several difficult years of coverage by personnel under severe security strictures and based across the river in Kinshasa. The Embassy building was destroyed during the civil war, and a new building under construction is expected to be ready for occupancy early next year. This building is necessary to support our efforts in the ROC and will provide a strong visible indication of our commitment to strong relations with the country. The process of rebuilding professional staff and procedures is well under way. I

hope to be able to continue to strengthen the U.S. diplomatic platform if I am confirmed by the Senate.

If confirmed, I would support these policy efforts through diplomacy and close engagement with the government. I would also support public diplomacy initiatives that further our goals and strengthen the mutual understanding between our two countries. I also intend to examine our programs currently active in Congo, and recommend changes and propose new initiatives to support our objectives. In particular, I hope to be able to attract additional resources, clearly linked to U.S. policy objectives and to positive actions by the Government of the Republic of Congo, to add to our toolkit in Brazzaville.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you might choose to ask, and I look forward, if confirmed, to serving the United States in Brazzaville.