

Statement of T. Vance McMahan
Nominee for U.S. Representative to the United Nations Economic and
Social Council
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

April 28, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. I am deeply grateful to President Bush and Secretary Rice for their confidence in me.

I hope that my legal background in the field of banking and finance as well as my extensive experience in government and work on a number of public policy issues, from education to health care to global competitiveness, will contribute to my effectiveness in this position. I strongly believe in the United States' role as a force for good in the world and that, working with the global community, we can help free people from hunger and disease, poverty and illiteracy, tyranny and violence-- allowing them to realize their full potential as human beings.

If confirmed, I will do my best to represent the values of this great country at the UN and build upon efforts to promote reform and increased effectiveness and accountability across the UN system. Our success is

critical to people around the world whose day-to-day livelihoods depend on an effective United Nations.

The United States has led an effort to bring new ideas and fresh approaches in a number of areas including the economic policy debate at the UN. Our approach, in line with the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development, emphasizes the importance of sustainable economic growth in development policy, linking new aid from developed nations to real reform in developing ones. Our guiding principle is based on building partnerships. It is a balanced approach, which promotes the central role of national governments in their own development, and the importance of international investment, trade, and credit markets in expanding economic opportunities for the world's poor. If confirmed, I will continue to advance our view that foreign assistance, in the context of good governance and sound domestic policy, can play a catalytic role, but it cannot substitute for open international trade and ability to attract private capital. Achieving sustainable economic growth will also help achieve the fundamental principles of the UN - peace, human rights, social progress, and a better quality of life.

The Economic and Social Council –ECOSOC – is at the center of these activities, and through its resolutions, functional commissions, and

regional commissions, is an important venue to promote key U.S. interests. The United States, as an ECOSOC member, has worked closely with other member states to integrate our shared views into UN policies on the role of economic growth and national development strategies that can bring real change to the lives of many. Through the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, we are also pursuing the global goals in the Millennium Declaration of reducing poverty and hunger, improving health and education, and combating major diseases. Achieving these goals will require greater focus on and innovative approaches to sustainable development in fragile and failing states, where many of the so-called “bottom billion” live, those who have been left behind as the rest of the developing world has moved ahead. The extreme poverty and instability in these states affects the entire global community. If confirmed, this will be one of the most important items on my agenda. Greater prosperity for all builds stronger institutions, better governments, peaceful societies, and a safer world in which the United States can thrive.

In addition to its important work on economic growth and development, ECOSOC also plays a critical part in the promotion of human rights and social justice. Unfortunately, the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, which in 2006 replaced the former Commission on Human Rights,

has been a grave disappointment in that regard. To date, that body and many of its members remain unwilling to meet the Council's mandate of addressing gross and systematic violations of human rights. Until the Council improves, we will not legitimize it with our formal participation. If confirmed, I would continue to press for the Council to approach its work with the seriousness that the United States and the international community expect, and to eliminate the selective bias that we have observed in its work so far. I would also continue to work with our partners to push for action by the General Assembly's Third Committee to hold accountable violators of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, I would also work to build on existing initiatives of the United States in the General Assembly and other fora to fight human trafficking and improve the status of women and increase their political participation and economic influence around the world.

I would also like to emphasize our strong commitment to the promotion of democracy. The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), created by Secretary –General Annan in 2005, plays an important role in strengthening democratic institutions at the level of civil society. The Fund is already supporting 122 projects in 110 countries and, if confirmed, I

would look forward to continuing our work as members of the Advisory Board to further the goals of the Fund.

Finally, I would like to underscore that I believe our work at the UN will only succeed in so far as the UN as an institution succeeds. The United States is spearheading the UN Transparency and Accountability Initiative (UNTAI) to improve the organization's efficiency across the entire UN system. The UN's daily impact on the well-being of so many around the world makes it vital that the entire UN system join the UNTAI effort to safeguard the UN's resources and its credibility.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for considering my nomination. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with Members and Committee staff to advance US efforts at the UN to promote international peace and security, sustainable economic development and respect for human dignity. I would be happy to respond to your questions.