

**Opening Statement of Ambassador Tracey Jacobson
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Iraq
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 13, 2024**

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I would like to express my gratitude to the President and the Secretary of State for their confidence. If confirmed, I will work closely with the members of this committee to advance U.S. interests in Iraq.

During more than 30 years in the State Department, I have had the privilege of serving as U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kosovo, as well as Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, where my teams and I worked successfully to promote U.S. interests and shared goals. If confirmed as Ambassador to Iraq, my highest priorities will be the protection of American citizens and the advancement of our bilateral partnership to support our strategic interests.

If confirmed, I will safeguard U.S. security interests by advancing Iraq's stability, security, and sovereignty, which are critical to the region. ISIS remains a threat in Iraq. Our military provides vital support in an advise, assist, and enable role to the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Ten years after our troops returned to Iraq at the government's invitation to fight ISIS – and five years after ISIS's territorial defeat – it is time for our military to transition to a new role. If confirmed, I will ensure any transition from Operation Inherent Resolve to a bilateral security arrangement will be geared toward the defeat of ISIS and Iraq's security.

It is important for Iraq to strengthen its relations with many of its neighbors and Prime Minister Sudani has taken positive steps in that direction. Iran, however, remains a malign actor and a destabilizing influence in the region that threatens to undo all of Iraq's achievements. We recognize that the primary threat to Iraq's stability and sovereignty are the Iran-aligned militias. These groups receive

weapons, training, and other support from Iran, and use their arms and cash to promote Iran's influence over Iraq. If confirmed, I will use the full range of U.S. policy tools to counter these malign groups and stem Iran's influence. I will promote Iraq's energy independence so Iran cannot use energy as a weapon against Iraq. I will support Treasury's important work to modernize Iraq's financial sector and connect it to the international financial system, eroding Iran's ability to take advantage of Iraqi banks.

Fostering Iraq's economic growth is a critical part of the U.S.-Iraq 360-degree bilateral relationship. The Iraqi government aims to provide basic services to its people and expand opportunities for investment. If confirmed, I will promote U.S. investment and work with the Iraqi government to implement reforms to improve the investment climate for the private sector, including by reducing corruption and increasing transparency. I will strengthen the commercial ties that already exist between Iraq and U.S. companies and develop new opportunities.

Bolstering Iraq's democracy and good governance is another U.S. priority. Iraq needs to improve its protection of the rights and freedoms of its citizens, including its ethnic and religious minorities. Since 2018, the United States has provided over \$500 million in assistance to these minorities. If confirmed, I will prioritize U.S. policies and programs that strengthen Iraq's democratic governance and build durable solutions for Iraq's displaced and minority populations, including Christians and Yezidis and those at al-Hol in Syria.

Our partnership with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region remains a cornerstone of our broader relationship with Iraq. Stabilizing the Baghdad-Erbil relationship will bring benefits to all Iraqis. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in the context of our overall relationship with federal Iraq.

Mission Iraq is one of our largest and most complex diplomatic platforms, and leadership is important. For me, this means serving as an effective steward of taxpayer trust. It means creating an atmosphere of open collaboration, including with colleagues on the Hill. And it means building a culture of respect for our

team members who volunteer for these challenging assignments. If confirmed, it will be my honor to serve with the women and men of Mission Iraq.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today, and I look forward to your questions.