

Statement of Jennifer Yue Barber
Nominee to be Representative of the United States of America
to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
August 5, 2020

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and distinguished Members of the Committee – thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am humbled to be considered for the role of U.S. Ambassador to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and if confirmed, would be honored to have the opportunity to serve our country in this capacity.

A special thanks to Leader McConnell for his introduction and support.

I would also like to express my gratitude to President Donald Trump and Secretary Mike Pompeo for nominating me, and to Ambassador Kelly Craft for the confidence and trust she has placed in me.

In particular, I want to thank God for preparing this path. My husband Andy, thank you for your constant love and support. Our daughters, Molly and Lucy, the next generation for whom I am determined to make this world a better place. And the many members of my family – and friends – who are watching this right now. Thank you for the many meaningful ways that you have impacted my life.

I would also like to recognize my parents, Kenneth and Laura Yue, who immigrated here from China 50 years ago. My mother is one of seven children and one of four that my grandparents brought to the United States – making the difficult decision to leave three behind – to pursue the freedom, opportunity, and promise of America. She was reunited with her remaining siblings who immigrated to our country 19 years later.

I grew up working alongside my parents and late grandfather, Sik Chee Yue, in our family's restaurant. Their daily example of sacrifice and hard work, and their determination to provide greater opportunity, is why it is possible for me to appear before you today and it inspires me to shine America's light brightly on the UN stage.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my colleagues at Frost Brown Todd for their support throughout my legal practice and now as I pursue public service.

Finally, I would like to thank the team at the State Department who helped guide me through this process.

It has been 75 years since that day in San Francisco when representatives of 50 nations, weary of the human toll of World War II, signed the UN Charter to create a new organization designed in part to solve “problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character” and to encourage “respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.”

The United States remains central to those ideals, and if confirmed, I will proudly carry to the United Nations the unyielding American commitment to human rights, humanitarian response, and economic development.

As you know well, that commitment is tested frequently. Many UN Member States work to undermine the values that shape the UN to advance their narrow agendas and elevate authoritarian ideals.

We see this in some of our most pressing challenges today – from the Chinese Communist Party’s mismanagement of the COVID-19 crisis and its suppression of democracy in Hong Kong to the Russian and Chinese opposition to providing necessary humanitarian relief to besieged communities in Northeast Syria.

If confirmed, I will use my voice and energy to advance the American vision for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I will also carry with me the determination to empower women and girls. It is vital that girls have access to education and women are given equal opportunity in the workplace. We must fuel entrepreneurship and diminish sexual violence and exploitation.

The United States must also continue to play a central role in sustaining the UN’s humanitarian response system. That system, built around organizations such as UNICEF and the World Food Program, is extensive and, where permitted to operate, is effective – feeding millions daily and providing assistance to displaced populations.

The demands on that system are growing, as the world tackles a record number of humanitarian crises and swelling populations of displaced people. I know the deep commitment of Congress in providing for those in dire need. There is no country more

generous than ours. Yet, as those needs grow, so does the need for more nations to share that responsibility.

Finally, I will note that American objectives at the United Nations will only be realized if the UN is efficient, effective, and transparent. Reform of UN agencies has been an American priority spanning decades, and considerable progress has been made. If confirmed, strengthening that progress will be among my priorities, as will advocating for robust civil society participation and private sector engagement.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, for the United Nations to be relevant for the next 75 years, it must remain true to the values that shaped its original purpose, and also rise to meet the needs of today. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly toward that goal and partner with you in Congress to further American values and interests.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.