

**Statement of Cesar Cabrera  
Ambassador-Designate to Mauritius and Seychelles  
Before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
August 3, 2006**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before this committee today as President Bush's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles. I am grateful for the confidence and trust that the President and Secretary Rice have placed in me.

As a native of Puerto Rico, I believe I am well suited to understand and address the bilateral issues in our relationships with the two island nations of Mauritius and Seychelles. Growing and processing sugar cane and the production of textiles and apparel have been central features of the economies of both Puerto Rico and Mauritius. Puerto Rico, Mauritius, and Seychelles all support vibrant and growing tourist industries and confront the challenges of natural disasters, whether it be hurricanes or tsunamis. My goal is to turn my understanding of small islands into policies and programs that advance the interests and welfare of the United States and the people of Mauritius and the Seychelles.

Trade continues to be the primary focus of our bilateral relations with the Republic of Mauritius. Though

its economic growth has slowed recently, Mauritius stands out among African nations for its strong economic performance over the past four decades, its political stability, its commitment to democracy, and its ethnic tolerance. Mauritius has become a reliable partner for the U.S. under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and in the Doha Development Round trade negotiations. Embassy Port Louis seeks to further strengthen our trade relations and assist with Mauritius' transition to a more open, globally competitive economy.

I bring over 35 years of success as a businessman to the task of promoting and expanding trade with Mauritius. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Mauritius to strengthen our trade relationship by promoting AGOA to the fullest, by identifying U.S. markets for Mauritian products and new partnerships with American suppliers, and by assisting with the restructuring of the economy to find new engines for growth. I look forward to continuing the Embassy's close relationship with the American Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius.

The Republic of the Seychelles is a relatively wealthy country, but I believe it is not yet realizing its full economic potential. The 2006 presidential elections offer an opportunity for the introduction of badly needed reforms

by President Michel, who has thus far been unable or unwilling to push through broad economic change. The U.S. Department of the Treasury is considering technical assistance for the Seychelles in the area of debt management, and I will continue to engage the government and private sector on the Seychelles' economic challenges. In addition to their economic importance, Mauritius and the Seychelles both offer opportunities for the U.S. in furthering democracy in the region. As one of Africa's most stable democracies, Mauritius is a model and a regional leader in the promotion of democracy and human rights. The U.S. Government was pleased to see Mauritius run for - and win - a seat on the newly established UN Human Rights Council. The Seychelles, which has not had a democratic transfer of power since independence in 1976, held presidential elections last week. I am hopeful that the peaceful conduct of this election will herald a new opening in Seychelles' democratic tradition.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to report that both Mauritius and the Seychelles have proved reliable and valuable partners in the U.S.-led fight against international terrorism. Both nations continue to participate in U.S. counterterrorism training and are central to regional efforts to combat money laundering and piracy. The

Seychelles, in particular is playing an important role in anti-piracy efforts by the U.S. Navy. I will build on this cooperation and encourage both nations to share their expertise with neighboring governments.

If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador, my primary task will be the protection of American citizens and the promotion of U.S. interests, while strengthening our relationships with each country as we help them achieve economic progress. In this way, each country can pave its own path to greater success and prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, I believe my background and experience qualify me for this position. My long career in the private sector demonstrates my ability to work with others, to find common ground, and to reach common goals. I also have a lengthy career in the public sector as an active participant in this country's political process. In whatever I have undertaken, I have been committed to making a difference and achieving success. I assure you that if confirmed I would sustain a commitment to high quality public service from all of the U.S. Government personnel serving at Embassy Port Louis, beginning with my own commitment to their security and well being.

I am guided by an abiding faith in the values of this country and a desire to give back a portion of what America

has given me. Growing up in Puerto Rico, I have been the beneficiary of the great opportunities this country has to offer, and I am deeply proud to represent the United States of America to other nations.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed by the Senate, I would look forward to working with you and other members of the Committee on matters related to Mauritius and the Seychelles, as well as on developments in the region. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

