SENATE CONFIRMATION FOR MICHELLE J. DEPASS

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Inhofe for holding this hearing. It is an honor to be here.

I would like to introduce my husband, Joshua Paulson, who I am delighted is here with me. Allow me to also recognize my parents, Rupert and Marsyl DePass, in absentia, who have supported me and my decisions throughout my entire life.

I am deeply humbled President Obama has nominated me to be the Assistant Administrator for the Office of International Affairs at the United States Environmental Protection Agency. It would be a great privilege to work with, and for, Administrator Lisa Jackson. Lisa is a gifted leader and policymaker and I would be honored to serve with her in protecting our nation's environment and public health.

I sit before you today, almost two decades after my environmental career began. My professional and personal commitment to protecting our environment has been field tested and strengthened during this time. Protecting our environment for the benefit of all Americans has not only been my career, it is my passion. And for me this passion is not simply a question of protecting our precious natural resources. Rather, it is about protecting people and our future generations. I have dedicated my life to raising

awareness and taking action to help people gain access to cleaner air, land and water, regardless of where someone lives or his/her economic circumstances.

This passion began with a legal internship at the EPA, in Region Two in New York City. That extraordinary experience, working side-by-side with dedicated staff to investigate and initiate corrective action on our most hazardous waste sites, fueled two decades of experience in environmental policy and management. In that time, I have worked in and alongside non-governmental entities, local government, state government, and international institutions. I have helped empower local communities and organizations to ensure that their voices are heard when environmental policies are made that effect their lives. And I have worked in government to administer and develop such policies, first as an environmental manager of the City of San Jose, and later as Senior Policy Advisor of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

Currently, I serve as the Ford Foundation's Environment and Development Program Officer. In this position, I am responsible for supporting the development of sound environmental policies and practices in the local, national and international arenas. My background working with US and global institutions representing diverse constituencies with non-governmental organizations, coupled with my professional experience in government, has prepared me to foster cooperation on an international environmental agenda.

Since 1970, the United States Environmental Protection Agency has made great strides in giving our nation a cleaner, healthier environment. In today's era of globalization, these challenges to our health and our environment have grown. We cannot address them purely on a domestic level. President Obama's environmental initiatives are highlighted by five key objectives: reducing greenhouse-gas emissions; reducing other air pollutants; addressing toxic chemicals; cleaning up hazardous-waste sites; and protecting water. I share his commitment to these objectives, and I am cognizant of their global potential. International cooperation on environmental issues is not only desirable, but necessary, in ensuring the health of Americans. Pollution has no national boundaries.

I was raised in Queens, New York, the Nations most diverse county. My parents were immigrants who came to the United States from Jamaica, West Indies. They were intent on creating a better life for themselves and building a wonderful home for our family. Through my earliest experiences with family, community and education, I interacted with people of different cultures who spoke different languages. I embrace the opportunity to work with Administrator Jackson and the team of dedicated professionals at the EPA to achieve cooperative solutions to the world's environmental problems and to the transboundary problems of toxics, air and water pollution.

As one who has spent much of her career as a public administrator and lawyer in the public sector, I would be honored to lead the Office of International Affairs and to utilize the EPA's technical expertise in environmental science, research, education and

policy to tackle our global environmental challenges. If confirmed, I will administer with the priorities of our President as my guide in fulfilling the daily duties of my office. I pledge today to serve the President and Administrator Jackson, this Committee, Congress and the citizens of the United States who are depending on our global expertise and cooperation.

Thank you.