

July 11, 2022

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Members,

As leaders in foreign policy, national security, or the Jewish community who have served and supported presidents of both parties, we write today to convey our strong support for Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes's nomination to serve as Assistant Administrator for the Middle East at the United States Agency for International Development.

Many of us have worked with Dr. Wittes for years, and know her to be a pragmatic policy leader with an exemplary history of bipartisan policy making. She is open-minded and principled, and we know from personal experience that she always finds time to listen to alternative views and give them full consideration. She is a valued mentor and a champion for women in national security who has been recognized for this work with leadership awards from Tufts University and Foreign Policy for America.

As this role includes responsibility for the new Nita Lowey Partnership for Peace Fund, as well as cooperation with Israel's Mashav development agency, we applaud the Biden Administration for choosing a nominee with such a deep background on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and such strong relationships in Israel. Dr. Wittes lived and studied in Israel as a young adult, speaks Hebrew, and has close family there. She began her Washington career working on U.S.-Israel relations at the American Jewish Congress. At Brookings, she organized the annual Saban Forum, a U.S.-Israel strategic dialogue, which was for thirteen years the premier platform for dialogue between senior American and Israeli leaders, including members of the Senate. Last year, the *Jerusalem Post* named Dr. Wittes one of its "50 Most Influential Jews."

Dr. Wittes is one of the foremost experts on the Middle East, whose views on Israel and Arab-Israeli relations are respected and valued by experts worldwide. She has written extensively on the region and on issues such as the Abraham Accords. As Dr. Wittes said during her hearing, the Abraham Accords "offer a foundation for regional cooperation between Arab states and Israel, on shared issues like energy, water, and health. If I am confirmed, I look forward to engaging with you on how we can build on the Abraham Accords to bolster positive engagement across the region." Dr. Wittes has worked in partnership with Israelis, Arabs, and international actors like the World Bank to advance common understandings and confront challenges to peace and development. With strong relationships across the region, she is well positioned to bring Israelis and Arabs together for cooperative endeavors.

Dr. Wittes's scholarship demonstrates a clear-eyed approach to the Middle East and American relationships there, as well as a concrete commitment to advancing partnerships rooted in shared values, like those between the United States and Israel.

Dr. Wittes is eminently qualified for this critically important role, having served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and Deputy Special Coordinator for Middle East Transitions under President Obama. She has decades of experience as a Middle East policy analyst, has given expert testimony regularly before Congress, and is widely respected as a leader in the national security field. She also served as the Board Secretary for the National Democratic Institute under Secretary Madeleine Albright and Senator Tom Daschle.

As you know, for nearly two years, the administration has been working to stabilize areas liberated from ISIS, meet challenges from malign actors like Iran, end brutal conflicts, and advance the cause of peace in the Middle East – all without the strong, principled leadership of an Assistant Administrator for the Middle East. We believe Tamara Cofman Wittes is the right person for this role, and that America’s foreign assistance investments to bring stability to this critical region urgently need her expert attention. We simply cannot afford any further confirmation delays.

Dr. Wittes is one of the most sober and widely respected scholars in her field, a committed champion of women’s inclusion, and an advocate for democracy and human rights. We are proud to support Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes’s nomination , and we urge the Committee and the Senate to vote to confirm her as Assistant Administrator at USAID.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amb. Dan Shapiro, *Former U.S. Ambassador to Israel*

Jenna Ben-Yehuda, *President and CEO, Truman National Security Project*

Halie Soifer, *CEO, Jewish Democratic Council of America and former National Security Advisor to Senators Kamala Harris and Chris Coons*

Brian Atwood, *Former Administrator of USAID*

Maureen White, *Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Institute, SAIS/Johns Hopkins University*

Ambassador Harriet Babbitt, *Former Deputy Administrator of USAID*

Congressman Howard L. Berman, *Former Member of Congress and Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee*

Francis Fukuyama, *Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow, Stanford University*

Jeremy Bash, *Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Dept of Defense*

Michèle A. Flournoy, *Former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy*

Congressman Mel Levine, *Former Member of Congress*

Ann F. Lewis, *Former White House Director of Communications*

Congressman Robert Wexler, *Former Member of Congress, President, S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace*

Ambassador (ret.) Daniel Kurtzer, *Former U.S. Ambassador to Egypt and Israel*

Gahl Hodges Burt, *Chairman Emeritus, American Academy in Berlin*

Gary J. Schmitt, *Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute*

Congressman Sam Gejdenson, *Former Member of Congress*

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Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, *Former NATO Deputy Secretary General, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Ambassador to Russia*
Annie Pforzheimer, *Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Afghanistan*
Dr. Michael Koplow, *Chief Policy Officer, Israel Policy Forum*
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Ambassador Frank Wisner
Ira N. Forman, *Former U.S. Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism*
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Honorable Dov S. Zakheim, *Former Under Secretary of Defense*
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Jeffrey Feltman, *Retired Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs*
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Ambassador Fitz Haney, *Former US Ambassador to Costa Rica*
Ambassador Gerald Feierstein, *Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs*
Ambassador (ret.) Gordon Gray, *Former U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia; Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs*
Ambassador Jake Walles (ret.), *Former Ambassador to Tunisia*
Ambassador James B Cunningham, *Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Israel and the UN*
Ambassador (Ret.)
Janet A. Sanderson, *U.S. Ambassador to Algeria; NEA Deputy Secretary of State*
Joel Rubin, *Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State*
Michael Posner, *Former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor*
Ambassador Miriam Sapiro, *Former Deputy and Acting U.S. Trade Representative*
Nancy Rubin, *Former Ambassador*
Nazanin Ash, *Former Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State*
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Robert S. Ford, *Ambassador (retired)*
Robert S. Gelbard, *Former Ambassador to Indonesia and Bolivia, former Assistant Secretary of State*
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Will Wechsler, *Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combatting Terrorism*
Sherri Goodman, *Former Deputy Undersecretary of Defense*

Wendy R. Anderson, *Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of Defense*
Caroline Tess, *Former Special Assistant to the President*
Lionel C. Johnson, *Former Foreign Service and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury*
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