

SURESH KUMAR  
OPENING STATEMENT TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE  
ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

January 21, 2010

Chairman Dodd, Ranking Member Shelby, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored and humbled to come before you today as President Obama's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service. I want to thank President Obama for the enormous trust he has placed in me with this nomination and Secretary Locke for his support.

Over the past few weeks, I have had the pleasure of meeting members of this committee and your staff. Thank you for your hospitality and generosity in taking the time to share your insights and perspectives on the economic landscapes of your home states. If I am confirmed by this committee and your colleagues in the Senate, I look forward to continuing this dialogue and working closely with you and your staffs.

I am particularly grateful to Senator Menendez from my home state of New Jersey for his gracious introduction here today.

Let me also take this opportunity to introduce you to the members of my family that have joined me here today — my wife Sheila, my daughter Pooja, and my son Aditya.

Sheila, my college sweetheart, has provided me her unshrinking support through a global journey that has spanned three decades and five countries. Sheila is amazing- not only is she a distinguished business executive in her own right, but she also managed to raise our two wonderful children.

Our daughter Pooja is a physician who is pursuing her passion for public health. She has served the underprivileged in remote corners of the world – from working with displaced people from Azerbaijan to East Timor, and vulnerable children from the streets of Kolkata to the Congo.

Our son Aditya has been a management consultant who has worked with the homeless in America, as well as victims of child labor in Asia. He had the honor of interning for this distinguished body, the United States Senate, in the office of the late Senator Ted Kennedy. Nine years, three cities and two coasts later he is back in DC with the distinct privilege of serving in the White House.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention my parents – Colonel Sundaram and Vasantha – who instilled in our entire family the importance of public service. Although they cannot be present here today, thanks to technological advancement that makes the world a global village, broadband and bandwidth permitting, they are watching these proceedings via webcast from their home in Delhi.

As I prepared these remarks, I could not help but reflect on the incredible journey from Mumbai, India, via Indonesia, Singapore and Canada that brought me to the USA sixteen years ago. I stand before you as a first generation immigrant and a testimony to our great country. It has provided me and my family the opportunities most could have only dreamed about. If I am confirmed for this position, you will have given me the opportunity to repay a small measure of the debt to a country that has already given me and my family so much.

In the thirty years that I have been actively engaged in the international business community, I have seen firsthand the immense possibilities, potential, and prosperity that follow global trade. In the last several years as an international development consultant, I have worked with civil society and nonprofit organizations to improve lives and livelihoods and support small and medium enterprises in establishing sustainable and scalable businesses. I have worked for multinational and local companies across six countries, culminating in my position as the Head of Worldwide Consumer Pharmaceuticals for Johnson and Johnson. Through my work in emerging economies, both as a businessman and as a development consultant, I have seen the tremendous opportunities for U.S. businesses to more fully engage in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The value and values of free and fair trade are embedded in my DNA. I have a deep appreciation for the unique challenges that face U.S. businesses seeking to expand overseas. If I am confirmed, I pledge to help American enterprise enhance its competitiveness and grow its global footprint; to increase U.S. exports and help create jobs; and to protect our interests, patents and intellectual property that are so critical to encourage innovation and support technological advancements particularly in emerging technologies in the environment, energy and healthcare sectors. These are the priorities that have been articulated by Secretary Locke for the Department of Commerce, and I am humbled by the opportunity to work daily to advance them.

If confirmed, I will leverage my experience and passion in international business to maximize the efforts of the U.S. Commercial Service in increasing the global competitiveness of the American business community, with a particular focus on small and medium enterprises. I will work tirelessly with the wonderful trade professionals throughout the extensive global network of U.S. Export Assistance Centers in over 100 U.S. cities and in U.S. embassies and consulates across 77 countries to increase U.S. exports, and by doing so, to create good American jobs.

International trade has always been a proven path to global prosperity. Very simply, by increasing U.S. exports, we will be creating good, high paying American jobs. The current economic climate makes it even more compelling to prioritize and pursue this course. With 95 percent of the world's consumers living beyond our borders, we must encourage, nurture and support U.S. companies, particularly small and medium businesses, to export goods and services into foreign markets. We must grow our exports to stimulate the economy, create and maintain American jobs and to help reduce our trade deficit. These are challenges, but they also present tremendous opportunities – that is why I am so excited by the prospect of leading the U.S. Commercial Service at this pivotal moment in time.

If I am confirmed, I will work closely with this Committee and your colleagues in Congress to expand U.S. exports and advance U.S. commercial interests abroad, to forge new economic ties

for America overseas, and to ensure that America maintains its leadership in the global economy while advancing U.S. national security interests through a renewed focus on commercial diplomacy.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your consideration of my nomination and for the opportunity to address any questions that you and your colleagues might have.