

**Statement of Islam A. Siddiqui
Nominee for Chief Agricultural Negotiator,
Office of the United State Trade Representative
Before the Senate Finance Committee
September 12, 2011**

Thank you, Chairman Baucus, Senator Hatch and Members of the Finance Committee.

First, I would like to thank President Obama for nominating me to serve as Chief Agricultural Negotiator in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and of course, Ambassador Kirk for his continuing support. I am especially grateful for the bipartisan support of my nomination by Members of this Committee after my last hearing in November 2009.

I would also like to express my deep and sincere appreciation to my wife, Tabassum, and to our daughters Arshi and Sophia, who are here with us this morning as well.

Since March 2010, it has been an honor and a privilege for me to serve as Chief Agricultural Negotiator. If confirmed, I look forward to serving in this position with humility and dedication.

My entire academic and professional career has centered on agriculture – ranging from research after receiving my PhD from the University of Illinois to 28 years with the California Department of Food and Agriculture. As a result, I am acutely aware of the challenges related to agriculture, as well as the importance of agricultural exports to our long-term economic outlook.

Agricultural exports are particularly critical to supporting jobs and revitalizing rural communities. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, every \$1.0 billion in agricultural exports supports around 8,400 jobs both on and off the farm.

The good news is that agricultural exports continue to grow. Last year, agriculture exports increased 17 percent over 2009. In the first six months of this year alone we are on track to set a record of \$137 billion for 2011.

These numbers reflect the ingenuity and productivity of U.S. farmers and ranchers, who are able to out-compete their foreign counterparts despite higher costs of inputs and labor. The adoption of new technologies and state-of-the-art farm management practices has been critical to this extraordinary success. We can build on this record to achieve even more -- by diligently working to remove trade barriers and open new markets.

I look forward to continued and ongoing consultation with this Committee in our efforts to remove the non-tariff barriers around the world faced by our farmers and ranchers. While dialogue and diplomacy with our trading partners can deliver significant results, in some cases a more aggressive approach is warranted. In these instances, we must continue to exercise our rights under the WTO Dispute Resolution process and file complaints to remove non-science based barriers and address WTO violations. I am also committed to close coordination with U.S. agencies to achieve these goals.

As Ambassador Punke mentioned, the Doha Negotiations are facing a difficult moment and the gaps in agriculture, non-agricultural market access (NAMA) and services are wide. We are being asked to make significant concessions in the first two pillars of the agricultural negotiations – domestic support and export competition. To balance these concessions, a final agreement would have to provide new market access for U.S. products under the third pillar of an agricultural agreement. Whatever the future direction of the Doha negotiations, I will be a strong advocate for achieving new market opportunities for U.S. agricultural products, including in the markets of emerging economies.

Mr. Chairman, the last 17 months have afforded me the opportunity to work on a number of trade issues to promote U.S. agriculture, including the resumption of U.S. poultry exports to Russia, and negotiating the Brazil Cotton Framework Agreement. If confirmed, I look forward to continued work towards implementing President Obama's trade agenda under the leadership of Ambassador Kirk and USTR's outstanding team.

I also look forward to working closely with the Members and staff of this Committee on the many challenges and opportunities that we face in agricultural trade. Thank you once again for your consideration of my nomination.