

Mr. Arun Madhavan Kumar
Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Global Markets and Director General of the U.S. and
Foreign Commercial Service
International Trade Administration
US Department of Commerce

When I landed at Boston's Logan airport the Labor Day weekend of 1978, I would not have dreamed that 35 years later, I would be here in front of this august committee of the Senate of the United States of America.

Three days later, on my first day at MIT, one of my classmates remarked that I seemed shell-shocked. It must have shown on my face how different an experience America was for me. This despite the fact that I had grown up on a staple of American history and literature, from the ample shelves of the United States Information Service library in my hometown of Trivandrum. I had been inspired by the accomplishments and eloquence of America's historic leaders – Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln. I had been moved by the words of John F Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

If I seemed shell shocked then, today I feel a sense of awe and honor to be here in this great city where many of those heroes influenced the trajectory of this great nation., I am humbled to have this chance to talk to you of my interest in serving this great country that has been my home for almost all of my adult life and has offered me so many great opportunities. I am deeply grateful to President Obama for nominating me and to Secretary Pritzker for her confidence and support.

With me today, to share in this experience, are my wife of 35 years, Poornima, and my younger son Vikram. Our entire life together, as a married couple and then as a family, has been in this great country. A molecular biologist by training, Poornima has worked in the biotech industry in California for the last 25 years. Our sons, Ashvin and Vikram, were born in Palo Alto, California. Ashvin, who could not be with us today, lives in Mountain View, California, and is founder and CEO of a Silicon Valley ecommerce company, and Vikram works here in Washington for an internet company. Ashvin's wife Melisa was born in Georgia, and is a physician in San Jose, California. Ashvin, Melisa and Vikram are graduates of great American universities, Stanford, Emory and New York University. In addition, my late father in law was a Fullbright scholar from India and earned his graduate degree from Harvard University in 1955. Thus three generations of my family have gained from the best of what America offers.

I am before you today as I feel impelled to give back to this great country. My late father, who was a public servant in India all his life, and my high school headmaster both taught that it is more important to give than to receive. It is in that spirit that I would like to pursue this calling of public service.

My almost forty years of business experience, global orientation and engagement with broad industry issues has prepared me for the role with regard to which I appear before you.

My experience comprises a blend of leadership roles in a large organization (KPMG, with 23,000 people in the US) and in entrepreneurial organizations in Silicon Valley. Prior to KPMG, I was involved in founding three companies in Silicon Valley, covering the entire cycle from the business plan stage through funding, staffing, product development, manufacture and sales.

In my advisory career, I have worked with companies in North America, Europe and Asia. I founded the US India Practice at KPMG, to assist US companies with their entry into the Indian market and Indian companies with investing and operating in the US. I was a member of the Board of Directors of KPMG Americas. Over the years, I have been involved in business negotiations in the Americas, Asia and Europe. .

As a member of the Board of Directors of the US India Business Council (USIBC), I have been deeply engaged in the mission of promoting US exports to India.

In my new role, should I be confirmed, I will strive to execute our national priorities of increasing exports as well as increasing the amount of foreign direct investment in our country and our communities, both with the express purpose of creating valuable jobs here in America.

In the past couple of weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of the dedicated civil servants who constitute the leadership of the International Trade Administration's Global Markets and the US and Foreign Commercial Service. I find their knowledge and desire to help American businesses succeed at home and abroad to be inspiring. If confirmed, I look forward to having the opportunity to lead this organization and will come to it with my global experience business background that I believe can help enhance its effectiveness.

As the Assistant Secretary for Global Markets, should I be confirmed, I would like to strengthen the focus on the markets offering the biggest opportunities for American products and services, and on orchestrating efforts to increase our market share in those markets. I would make sure that my organization fully embraces efforts to work with cities and communities across this great country to attract foreign direct investment to create high value jobs. The creation of high value jobs and the enhancement of our global business are of critical importance to the well-being of our people, the strength of our economy and our influence in the world. I would look to you for ideas, support and counsel to help Global Markets contribute to its important goals in the service of our country.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.