

WELCOME FROM SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS

I EXTEND A WELCOME TO PARTICIPANTS OF THIS REGIONAL HEARING OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES. I REGRET THAT PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS IN WASHINGTON PREVENT MY BEING WITH YOU.

LAST YEAR I JOINED CONGRESSMAN PAUL SIMON AND LEON PANETTA TO HELP ESTABLISH THIS COMMISSION. MY INTEREST AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE GOES BACK TO MY CHILDHOOD IN THE MULTI-ETHNIC COMMUNITY OF LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS. IT WAS REENFORCED WHEN I SPENT TWO YEARS IN ETHIOPIA AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER. KNOWLEDGE OF AMHARIC WAS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM I WORKED. IT ENHANCED MY EFFECTIVENESS AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER.

IN CONGRESS I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF SEVERAL COMMITTEES CONCERNED WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES. OUR COUNTRY'S POSITION IN TRADE AND OTHER FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS, WILL BE IMPROVED IF OUR CITIZENS ARE BETTER ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THIS IS WHY WE MUST DEVELOP A NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY AND WHY YOUR WORK HERE TODAY IS SO IMPORTANT.

I EAGERLY AWAIT THE REPORT FROM THIS HEARING AND THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION. WITH OTHER CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, I WILL BE READY TO PUSH FOR THE LEGISLATION TO GIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY THE HIGH PRIORITY IT DESERVES.