

UN Human Rights Council 15th Session**Item 2: Update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights****Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America***Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe*

Thank you, Mr. President. The United States would like to once again commend the work of the High Commissioner and her team and to offer our support for the important work of the OHCHR and its field missions. We would also like to take a moment to recognize the courage and persistence of human rights defenders worldwide – we draw inspiration from the work they do to defend and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms in their communities every day. Yet, we still live in a world where some who simply seek to exercise their fundamental rights are under attack. As High Commissioner Pillay notes, “peaceful dissidents, human rights advocates, lawyers, and press representatives have been targeted and violently attacked” in countries throughout the world. We as an international community must stand up for these human rights advocates and stand against the repression they endure in retribution for peacefully calling for the enjoyment of their rights.

The upcoming review of the Human Rights Council in 2011 is one opportunity to promote the work of the Council to more positively and proactively address the situation of these human rights defenders and, more generally, affect human rights conditions on the ground. The United States joins others who call for a strengthened Human Rights Council that is ready and able to address country-specific situations, especially human rights crises, under a common rubric with an integrated toolbox of options available to do so. We also see the need to increase the visibility and value of the work of the special procedures mandate holders, prioritizing improving the availability of financial and staff support, as well as strengthening the field presence of OHCHR to ensure active and effective follow up on findings and recommendations of mandate holders. We value the contribution OHCHR can bring to this field with its experience and expertise in addressing human rights abuses. The United States looks forward to hearing the views of others on this important initiative during the Open-Ended Working Group session in October.

Turning to the work of OHCHR in the field, the United States commends the High Commissioner and her team in field offices who have made an impact on the ground. We note the significant role OHCHR has played in Kyrgyzstan as that country began to emerge from violence and instability in April and June. OHCHR’s offices in Bishkek and in Southern Kyrgyzstan have promoted respect

for human rights in those areas during a time when such expertise was most needed, but much work remains to promote reconciliation through accountability and to promote stability and rule of law throughout the country.

We note, too, the serious and ongoing human rights concerns in Iran and the plight of human rights advocates, religious minorities, women, and other ordinary citizens seeking the free enjoyment of their human rights. The United States renews its call for the High Commissioner to visit Iran in the near future and urges the Government of Iran to facilitate genuine access for this trip. All Iranians deserve due process and fair treatment under the law by courts and in prisons, yet we recognize that this is not a reality for many in Iran.

Finally, the United States would like to register our disappointment with the High Commissioner's comments about the United States' compliance with human rights and due process when it is compelled to use lawful force. U.S. targeting practices comply with all applicable law, including the international laws of war, and the United States takes all feasible precautions to minimize harms to protected civilians."

Thank you, Mr. President.