Statement by Suzanne Nossel, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, during an Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Third Committee

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Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States would like to 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. The United States strongly believes in the independence of the work of the Office of the High Commissioner, as well as that of the High Commissioner herself. This institution is the voice of the voiceless, raising the plight of the victims of human rights abuses wherever they occur. We thank the High Commissioner for coming to New York to participate in this dialogue.

We appreciate the High Commissioner’s report on the work of the UN Human Rights Council. Since joining the Council in September 2009 we have worked hard to expand the range of country issues on the HRC’s agenda, to strengthen the Council’s engagement on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to build bridges across political divides. We are pleased to have been able to support passage of new Council resolutions dealing with recent events in Guinea, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan and to have strengthened the Council’s engagement on Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and other country situations. We particularly welcome the Council’s creation, by consensus, of two critical new mechanisms to advance protection and implementation of freedom of assembly and association and of the elimination of laws that discriminate against women. We appreciate the expertise and secretariat support that the Office of the High Commissioner has lent to these and other Council initiatives.

We appreciate the High Commissioner’s comments on the value of the Universal Periodic Review process and its role in catalyzing positive steps by governments. We are currently preparing for the United States’ review in early November and have used this process as an opportunity for intensive dialogue with citizens across the country on the U.S.’s human rights record.

We hope this spirit of cross-regional cooperation and commitment to tangible steps to advance human rights carries over into the 2011 review process. As part of that process we hope steps are taken to build upon the superb support provided by the OHCHR for the special procedures and to ensure that their work is debated and implemented more fully. We appreciate the High Commissioner’s call on Member States to increase the “toolbox of mechanisms” available to the Council to allow it to better deal with pressing human rights situations included in paragraph 23 of her Report.

We would appreciate the High Commissioner’s views on what new tools she thinks could be valuable to improve the work of the Council and what steps might be taken to lower the barriers to utilization of tools that already exist.

We would also be interested in hearing more about how the High Commissioner thinks we can extend greater support to the special procedures so that their valuable work has greater visibility and impact

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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