

UPR Intervention for Gabon, 14th Session October 23, 2012
(as drafted and read)

The United States warmly welcomes **[head of delegation]** and the Gabon delegation to the UPR Working Group.

We applaud the Government of Gabon's efforts to address human trafficking, especially to ensure that victims of trafficking receive access to necessary protective services.

We are concerned, however, with the Government of Gabon's increased restrictions on the media and on freedom of expression, including censorship imposed under Gabonese laws which provide overly broad administrative discretion. We urge the government to recognize that democratization includes tolerance for public criticism without retribution.

We note the steps taken by the Government to engage in dialogue with civil society and would like to encourage continued efforts towards even broader engagement. We stress the many benefits of fostering and maintaining public dialogue with civil society, including with political opposition parties, especially regarding electoral processes.

Bearing in mind these concerns, the United States makes the following recommendations:

1. Increase prosecutions and strengthen sentencing of human trafficking offenders, and fully implement the Palermo Protocol to prohibit and penalize all forms of trafficking.
2. Discontinue overly broad restrictions on the media and freedom of expression, and engage in regular dialogue with journalists to create an environment that encourages free expression without fear of censure.
3. Foster increased dialogue with civil society, especially regarding strengthening electoral processes.