**U.S. Statement at the UPR of Bhutan, 19th Session, April 30, 2014**

The United States welcomes the Bhutanese delegation.

We commend Bhutan for making great strides in its democratization agenda, including its second democratic transfer of power in a largely free and fair electoral process. We are encouraged by Bhutan’s continued commitment to human rights, and we welcome its efforts to address domestic violence, particularly through passage of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 2013.

Given this notable progress, we are disappointed that Bhutan has failed to allow the return of any ethnic Nepali Bhutanese refugees who are now currently residing in camps in Nepal.

We are also concerned that certain laws and government practices significantly restrict religious freedom.  In addition to the explicit anti-conversion law, some religious minority organizations have been unable to register with the government and thus lack legal status.

Finally, we are concerned about provisions in the Bhutan Penal Code that criminalize consensual sexual acts between same-sex adults. While we recognize that the law is not enforced, we believe it is important for Bhutan to take steps to ensure permanent decriminalization.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we recommend that Bhutan:

1. Allow voluntary repatriation of ethnic Nepali Bhutanese refugees to Bhutan;
2. Protect religious freedom by allowing individuals to practice their religion freely, and provide religious organizations equal opportunity to obtain legal status;
3. Decriminalize sexual acts between consenting same-sex adults.