**U.S. Statement at the UPR of Bulgaria**

**22nd Session, May 7, 2015**

The United States welcomes the Bulgarian delegation to the UPR Working Group.

We commend the Government of Bulgaria’s efforts to improve its democratic elections and its general respect for freedom of assembly, including for the purpose of protest, since its last review.

We remain concerned that corporate and political pressure are increasing media self-censorship, and that corruption is undermining trust in the judiciary and other government institutions. We are also concerned about restrictions on workers’ rights to organize and collectively bargain.

Regarding minority populations, our concerns include: anti-Muslim demonstrations, increasing anti-Semitism online, prejudice against members of Romani and Turkish ethnic minorities, societal discrimination against LGBT persons, and governmental infringements on the religious freedom of members of minority religious groups. In addition, we continue to be concerned about reports that people in search of international protection are being expelled from Bulgaria, often with violence, without access to adequate procedures. We urge Bulgaria to promote and protect the human rights of migrants and asylum seekers.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we recommend that Bulgaria:

1. Take the necessary measures to fight marginalization of Romani individuals by addressing intolerance and discrimination, and improve their opportunities for education and employment;
2. Work to decriminalize defamation and prevent legal retaliation against journalists for exercising their right to freedom of expression, and increase transparency of media ownership; and
3. Ensure the independence of anti-corruption authorities and increase the resources available for anti-corruption investigations and prosecutions.