**U.S. Statement at the UPR of Panama, 22nd Session, May 6, 2015**

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

We welcome Panama’s commitment to ratify various human rights agreements and to promote equal opportunities for women and their organizations. We congratulate President Varela for Panama’s success as host of the April Summit of the Americas and its commitment to the inclusion of civil society in that Summit.

We note Panama’s efforts to implement reforms to its justice system, but note the length of pre-trial detentions for many prisoners is still of concern. In addition, Panamanian prisons tend to be overcrowded, unsanitary, and lack adequate healthcare.

We commend Panama for the steps it has taken to combat sex trafficking and forced labor. However, we encourage the government to take additional steps to identify and protect victims. We also note that the rights of asylum seekers, who experience unduly long processing times, are limited, and urge they be given more rapid access to education and basic services.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we recommend that Panama:

1. Take steps to end lengthy pre-trial detention and reduce prison overcrowding, such as by increasing the number of court hearings per week and fully implementing pending reforms to the justice system; and
2. Increase the availability of specialized services for the victims of forced labor and sex trafficking, in partnership with civil society, including by implementing the dedicated victim assistance fund as required by law.