**U.S. Statement at the Universal Periodic Review of Somalia,**

**24th Session, January 22, 2016**

The United States warmly welcomes Minister Samantar and her delegation to the UPR Working Group. We offer condolences for those killed yesterday in apparent terrorist attacks.

Somalia has made significant political progress since its previous UPR in 2011. The formation of the federal government in 2012 laid the foundation for building an inclusive federal system. This progress must continue.

We welcome President Hassan Sheikh’s repeated commitments to hold an electoral process in 2016 and the National Consultative Forum’s agreement not to extend the executive or legislative mandates. We urge that an electoral process occur on time and that it be fair, transparent, and as inclusive as possible. This includes ensuring that Somalis are able to exercise their right to freedom of expression, including for members of the press. We are concerned about allegations that security forces continue to subject journalists to harassment and arbitrary arrest.

Somalis continue to suffer from conflict-related abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence and the unlawful use of child soldiers. All security forces in Somalia, including those of regional administrations, the federal government, police, and African Union Mission in Somalia troops must fully respect their international obligations, including under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as applicable.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we recommend that Somalia:

1. Hold an on-time electoral process in 2016 that is fair, transparent, and as inclusive as possible.

2. Ensure that security forces do not arbitrarily harass and arrest journalists or otherwise prevent the exercise of freedom of expression, including for members of the press.

3. Strengthen accountability mechanisms for security forces, including by ensuring these mechanisms protect the rights of victims.