**U.S. Statement at the Universal Periodic Review of Ecuador**

**27th Session, May 1, 2017**

Thank you Mr. Vice President.

The United States welcomes the Ecuadorian delegation.

We are concerned about the government’s restrictions on freedom of speech and its severe restrictions on civil society organizations. The government continues to pressure civil society, the media, and independent journalists through fines, criminalization of social protest, and threats of dissolution. We saw an example of this when the National Teacher’s Union was arbitrarily dissolved for criticizing government actions.

The United States also remains concerned about the lack of judicial independence caused by executive branch pressure on the judiciary.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we make the following recommendations:

1. Promote the exercise of freedom of expression without undue restrictions, by amending or repealing the 2013 Organic Communications Law.
2. Ensure civil society organizations are able to operate freely, including groups that may be critical of the government, by amending or repealing Presidential Decrees 16 and 739.
3. Remove or alter the broad definition and arbitrary application of “inexcusable error” used by the Judicial Council to punish judges.

Thank you Mr. Vice President.