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

**28th Session, November 8, 2017**

Thank you Mr. President,

The United States warmly welcomes the Guatemalan delegation to the UPR Working Group.

We commend Guatemala’s progress in prosecuting those responsible for human rights crimes committed during the civil war, in particular in the Sepur Zarco sexual slavery case. We note the progress made by Guatemalan government and institutions to combat corruption and impunity in cooperation with the UN’s International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG, pronounced SEA-sig). We commend the work CICIG has done, and continues to do, under the leadership of Commissioner Ivan Velasquez. We also commend Guatemala’s efforts to maintain order in the peaceful citizen protests of 2015 and September 20, 2017.

Recognizing Guatemala’s efforts to provide institutional continuity and support to combat impunity, we are concerned by President Morales’ attempt to oust CICIG Commissioner Ivan Velasquez and its consequent effect on public confidence in Guatemala’s anti-corruption commitment. We are also concerned about criminalization of and violence against human rights defenders, journalists, and justice sector actors, in particular those working on human rights cases.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we recommend that Guatemala:

1. Ensure that CICIG is able to operate without interference and that government institutions key to anti-corruption efforts continue to be adequately funded with dedicated leadership;
2. In consultation with civil society groups across Guatemala, finalize and implement a public policy for a human rights defenders protection mechanism;
3. Increase funding and political support for government human rights institutions and programs, including the Presidential Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Ombudsman’s office, and the National Reparations Program.

Thank you Mr. President