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

**37th Session, January 19, 2021**

The United States values our friendship and partnership with the Government of Mauritania and the Mauritanian people.

We recommend that Mauritania:

1. Increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict slaveholders with appropriate prison terms in accordance with the 2015 Anti-Slavery Law and 2020 Law on the Prevention and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons.

1. Promote freedom of association by passing and implementing the Law on Associations, strengthening non-governmental organizations’ and civil society’s capacity to combat human trafficking.

1. Strengthen the justice system by increasing funding for anti-slavery courts, and improving training and resourcing for judges, prosecutors, and police, ensuring that authorities also respect and support victims throughout the judicial process.

We applaud Mauritania’s efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism and its leadership role in the region.  We commend Mauritania’s efforts to tackle human trafficking, hereditary slavery, and other human rights abuses while noting further action is necessary.  We further encourage the repeal of laws and the death penalty used to punish blasphemy and apostacy. We also express concern about child labor.