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

**43rd Session, May 1, 2023**

**Delivered by Ms. Kaitlin Sandin**

Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

The United States welcomes the delegation from the Kingdom of Tonga.

We commend Tonga on a successful 2021 election, which international observers characterized as generally free and fair. We remain concerned about discrimination toward LGBTQI+ persons, infringements on women’s rights, and corruption.

We recommend Tonga:

1. Decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual relationships by repealing provisions 136 and 140 in the Criminal Offenses Act that criminalize “sodomy” and strengthen protections from discrimination for LGBTQI+ persons.
2. Address impunity for official corruption by investigating and prosecuting corruption cases, and by empowering the Office of the Auditor General and the Office of the Ombudsman through increasing their political independence and funding.
3. Broaden legislation protecting women’s rights, including broader definitions of sexual assault and rape, and adjust land inheritance rights to include women and girls.

I thank you.