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

**29th Session, January 17, 2018**

Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

The United States warmly welcomes the delegation from Botswana.

We commend Botswana for its leadership on the promotion and protection of human rights and its commitment to democracy both domestically and internationally. We commend recent Court rulings affirming the rights of transgender persons and encourage further action to protect members of the LGBTI community from discrimination. We look forward to continuing to work together on human rights issues.

The United States remains concerned, however, by government efforts to stifle dissenting voices through restrictions on freedom of expression, including by members of the press, in particular by pressuring journalists to portray the government positively. We are also concerned that the changes to the Trade Disputes Act represent a step backward regarding Botswana’s respect for internationally recognized worker rights.

The United States recommends the government of Botswana undertake the following:

1. Build upon recent court decisions upholding the human rights of transgender persons and take action to decriminalize LGBTI status or conduct;
2. Ensure that all journalists can report freely on government activities without threat or harassment;
3. Amend the Trade Disputes Act and Trade Unions and Employees Organizations Act to conform to international standards, including protecting workers’ right to organize.

Thank you.