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

**35th Session, January 21, 2020**

The United States welcomes the Lao delegation to the UPR Working Group.

We recommend that Laos:

1. Undertake domestic independent investigations into the disappearances and deaths of democracy and human rights activists.
2. Amend Decree 238 and its associated amendments to align it with Laos’ international human rights obligations and commitments, including by eliminating the following: burdensome registration requirements; arbitrary curtailment of activities and finances of associations; criminalization of unregistered associations and the government’s harassment of their members; and the ability to arbitrarily dissolve non-profit associations, without the right of appeal.
3. Bring the Criminal Code in line with obligations under the ICCPR and immediately release individuals whose arrest and detention under these provisions restricted the legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of opinion and expression.

We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Laos, particularly severe restrictions on fundamental freedoms that deprive the country’s citizens of an opportunity to exercise basic rights and deprive the government of an opportunity to engage meaningfully with its citizenry.