**Explanation of Position: Ad Hoc Committee on Complementary Standards**

**Friday, March 25, 2010**

**United States Government**

**Human Rights Council, 13th Session, Geneva**

http://geneva.usmission.gov/2010/03/26/eop-donahoe-comp-standards/

Thank you, Mr. President.

The United States returned to the Human Rights Council last year with a sincere desire to pursue the important work of combating racial and religious intolerance and discrimination. These disturbing incidents occur in all parts of the world. We owe it to the victims of intolerance, discrimination and violence to take effective measures to strengthen our collective efforts against these scourges.

Mr. President, in recent years these efforts in the Council have been polarized. Lines have been drawn that have made it difficult to make progress.

Some of the disputes are substantive: For example, some delegations believe that a key step in combating negative stereotypes and hate crimes involves governments banning and hate speech. Others, my government included, believe strongly that such restrictions on expression are unacceptable and dangerous. Other disagreements are over form – whether measures such as new treaty instruments need to be adopted or whether greater efforts need to be adopted or whether greater efforts need to be made to strengthen implementation of existing obligations. Our long standing belief is that actions rather than new norms are required to address these concerns. In this respect, we share the concerns raised by other delegations here today.

Mr. President, the United States has made an all out effort over the last six months to try to find a way to break this impasse. We have searched for an approach that would command support sufficient to make real progress. We offered a comprehensive Action Plan in the Ad Hoc Committee last fall designed to put into action the ideas most members do agree upon, even as we continue to debate those on which there remains strong disagreement.

We join consensus on this text today in the sincere hope that it represents a new spirit of cooperation towards bridging old divides and focusing on positive actions to directly help victims who face intolerance and discrimination. We end on a positive note, seeing the consensus achieved on this issue at long last, as the first step towards putting into action things most members do agree upon, actions that will give meaningful help to those who need it the most.

We will look forward to continuing our efforts in the months to come, with a view toward developing a common agenda for efforts in the United Nations system to combat these scourges.

We thank all the members of the Council who have worked so hard to allow us to come to consensus today.

Thank you, Mr. President.