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PRESS RELEASE

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Statement by Ambassador Sichan Siv, U.S. Alternate Representative to the General Assembly, on Agenda Items 71 (b) (c) and (e), in the Third Committee, October 31, 2005

Mr. Chairman, The United States approaches this UN General Assembly Third Committee with a renewed sense of mission, based on the guidance adopted by our leaders last month. Universal human rights standards recognize the intrinsic and inalienable dignity of the human person, and the rights and freedoms that stem from that dignity. It is the responsibility of governments to respect and safeguard those rights for their citizens. It is the responsibility of UN Member States to promote the protection of these rights and freedoms.

As Secretary of State Rice said to the Community of Democracies, "we must usher in an era of democracy that thinks of tyranny as we think of slavery today: a moral abomination that could not withstand the natural desire of every human being for a life of liberty and dignity." We see that freedom's call is resonating with more and more people around the world. Even a cursory glance at the global headlines of the past two years shows that these principles have moved from dream to reality for many citizens. From Georgia to Ukraine to Iraq to Lebanon to Afghanistan, the cynicism of skeptics and the oppression of autocrats have been answered by peaceful protests, ballot boxes, and constitution drafts. Though we are optimistic about the human yearning for liberty, we are realistic about the challenges and obstacles. Freedom's appeal is resilient, yet freedom itself can be fragile. We see the promotion of freedom as the calling of our time, and of this Committee. The survival of liberty in our land is dependent on the growth of liberty in other lands. We have come here with ideas and initiatives in-hand to help implement our collective pledges in the Outcome Document. It is "to support democracy by strengthening countries' capacities to implement the principles and practices of democracy and resolve to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to assist Member States."

Towards this end, the United States will introduce a resolution on "**The Incompatibility Between Corruption and the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights.**"

- Corruption is a tremendous challenge to democracy. Its impact on the enjoyment of human rights is profound.

- Corruption in elections and among politicians reduces accountability and representation in the political system.
- Corruption in the judiciary undermines the principles of the rule of law and the rights and safety of the individual citizen.
- Corruption in the public sector creates unequal access to public benefits.
- The role and capacity of public administration is undermined because procedures are disregarded, resources are diverted, and appointments are skewed. As a result, confidence in politicians and public authorities and their reputation and legitimacy is impaired in the minds of their own population and internationally.

Furthermore, corruption hits the poorest and weakest the hardest of all. The poorest cannot afford to pay bribes or offer other forms of remuneration in order to safeguard their rights. This can mean that they do not get into schools or receive fair treatment in the judicial system and that they are excluded from political influence. The poorest are also hardest hit by the impact corruption has on the economy, employment, crime and the environment. Social disparities are cemented and marginalization of the poor is reinforced. Democracy and respect for human rights are essential in the fight against corruption; its elimination helps people enjoy human rights and strengthen democratic governance. Independent media and an active civil society are vital if the fight is to be effective. Corruption is more easily detected in a transparent society and transparency can have a preventive effect.

Elections are the first step to ensuring the democratic process and accountability of a government to its citizenry. The United States will also introduce a biennial resolution on elections to commend the work of the UN in monitoring and encourage Member States to continue contributing to this vital effort.

In other forums, the United States is actively participating in the informal and formal process to develop the Human Rights Council. We are seeking the creation of a UN mechanism that can more effectively assist countries in meeting their human rights commitments and obligations. We seek a body that can better offer immediate attention to human rights by quickly addressing urgent or continuing human rights violations; including "gross and systematic violations" as cited in the Outcome Document. We seek a body that also offers technical assistance and capacity-building resources for countries seeking to strengthen their domestic human rights protections. These activities should be the main focus of the Council and the essential component of its mandate.

The United States looks forward to the opportunity to work together with our partners to ensure that this body is both representative and effective, with the capacity for decision-making by a strong, committed, and smaller membership. The latter should believe that one of the UN's fundamental purposes is to assist states in meeting their human rights obligations. We can best do so through a course of both dialogue and cooperative assistance. Ultimately, UN Member states should not make room on the Council for countries that seek to undermine the effectiveness of the UN's human rights

machinery— much less governments under Security Council sanctions or investigation for human rights reasons.

The Outcome Document's call to "reaffirm the solemn commitment of our States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all..." will remain as our guide for this Third Committee, as well as for the subsequent negotiations on the Human Rights Council. We look forward to productive sessions in both areas and wish all delegations well in their endeavours in the upcoming months.

Thank you.