**Agenda Item 2, High Level Panel on The Right to Development**

**as delivered by Ambassador Keith Harper**
**U.S. Representative to the Human Rights Council**

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Thank you, Mr. President.

The United States reaffirms our long-standing commitment to international development and the promotion of human rights.  We are dedicated to incorporating respect for human rights into our development strategies, as a means to promote inclusion and dignity of all.  Respecting the dignity and well-being of everyone is critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.  Truly sustainable development depends on accountable governments that respect human rights, provide access to justice, and follow the rule of law.

Discourse at the Council regarding human rights and development has largely emerged under the construct of a “Right to Development.” Our concerns regarding the existence and definition of a “Right to Development” are long standing and well known.  Nevertheless, we see great value in the Council discussing – in the words of the Vienna Declaration – how “development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” are “mutually reinforcing.”  In fact, now that the Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted, this conversation is more important than ever.

The fact is, every month, more and more empirical data is collected that conclusively demonstrates that respect for human rights and establishment of rule of law are key to successful development.  For example, it is unmistakably clear that to ensure successful and sustainable development, countries need to effectively address discrimination against women, including without limitation promoting gender equality in the work place, education for girls equal to that for boys, and addressing violence against women.  The SDGs recognize this reality, especially through Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 16 on Peace Justice and Strong Institutions.

While development is not a necessary precondition for human rights improvements, the United States recognizes that development can provide resources that permit the building of stronger institutions, which can aid in better protection of human rights and promotion of rule of law.

The mutually reinforcing nature of human rights and development is, in short, far too critical to ignore. At this important moment, following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Council can play a particularly pivotal role in advancing human rights and development.  We look forward to collaborating with other states to advance this conversation and make sure the Council plays its appropriate role with respect to human rights and development.

Thank you.