

**Remarks delivered by Ambassador Carmen Lomellin, U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS, at “The Role of the IACHR in the Promotion of Human Rights (1:30 -2:45)” Panel of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ Preparatory Seminar on the Strengthening of the Inter-American Human Rights System  
May 30, 2012**

- Good afternoon. The United States would like to thank the Commission for the invitation to participate in this important seminar. We look forward to our continued engagement with all of you on human rights’ issues in the region.
- As the United States has stated on numerous occasions over the past year, we strongly support the autonomy and independence of the Commission and the Court and their role in addressing particular human rights situations in particular countries.
- The Commission has been, and remains, an important voice in addressing human rights situations in all countries of the hemisphere, including the United States.
- We can all take pride in the Commission’s role, historically and today, as an independent entity that is respected throughout the world for its steadfast and valiant commitment to promoting and defending human rights throughout the Americas, even in the face of the harshest criticism.
- Today, we are delighted to be participating in an important dialogue about the period of reflection and hearing the Commission’s views on the process. Our position has always been that it is up to the Commission to consider and implement, as it sees fit, these non-binding recommendations in a manner that strengthens its work.
- We believe it is critical that we allow the human rights’ organs to operate without political interference.
- As everyone knows, the United States participated in the reflection process and believes it led to some constructive proposals that should be considered by the Commission and other elements of the system,

including more robust use of friendly settlements and seeking greater financial support for the system as a whole – some of these issues were addressed earlier today.

- We believe this is a strong indication of the importance the Commission places on these recommendations and their willingness to dialogue with member states, civil society and others on strengthening the system.
- We would also like to highlight the fact that the Commission has universal jurisdiction over all countries in the hemisphere and there is no single country that the Commission cannot reach in its efforts to improve human rights in our region.
- The OAS Charter established the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as one of the principal organs of the OAS whose function is to promote the observance and protection of human rights of all member states and to serve as a consultative organ of the Organization in these matters.
- The Statute of the Commission, adopted by the OAS General Assembly, created a robust framework for its work, including procedures for individuals to file petitions with the Commission about an OAS member state's observance of human rights referred to in the American Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the OAS in 1948.
- The United States has deep appreciation for the Commission and treats all petitions with the utmost respect. We robustly participate in all hearings and working meetings, sending high-level officials to testify on difficult human rights issues facing our country.
- The United States knows that no one country has a perfect human rights record and the Commission's work assists countries, including the United States, to reflect on important issues and make changes, where appropriate, to address human rights' challenges.
- The human rights organs of the OAS are worthy of our strong support and we must not let disagreements with the Commission or the Court

overshadow our shared objective of bringing an end to human rights abuses.

- The promotion and protection of human rights is the foundation of the OAS and we must remain steadfast in our support.
- Respect for human rights helps to secure the peace, deter aggression, promote the rule of law, combat crime and corruption, strengthen democracy, and prevent humanitarian crises.
- The United States is committed to the Inter-American Human Rights system and understands that implementation of any recommendations will be difficult, if not impossible, without a substantial increase in the overall budget. To this end, the United States looks forward to continuing to support the Commission financially and will urge other member states to follow suit.
- We look forward to the discussion today and again, thank the Commission for the invitation to attend this important event.