Thank you. The United States would like to highlight that a major focus of this year’s Advancement of Women agenda item concerns women’s political participation. The Secretary-General’s report encourages member states to exert political will to eliminate barriers to women’s participation at all levels of decision-making, including in situations of political transition. The small percentage of women serving in elected or appointed office, in the judiciary, and running for office is disappointing. The scarcity of reliable data on women’s participation in elections also is cause for concern. The Equal Futures Partnership, launched by the United States and other partners during UNGA 2012, aims, among other goals, to encourage participants to take concrete actions to promote women’s political empowerment. This international, multilateral effort involves new high-level commitments— including legal, regulatory, and policy reforms – to increase women’s and girls’ participation in public life and help ensure that they lead and benefit from economic growth. We are pleased that a year later, 24 additional countries have joined the 12 original founding countries. We also recognize and welcome the ongoing involvement of multilateral entities in this partnership, including the World Bank and UN Women, as well as the contributions of leading businesses and nonprofits.

Recognizing that women and girls must be able to live free from the fear of violence, not only for their physical well-being, but also to take advantage of new political and economic opportunities, Secretary of State Kerry recently announced a new U.S. initiative called “Safe from the Start.” Designed to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian crisis situations worldwide, the initial $10 million the United States has committed through this initiative will enable the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNHCR, and other partner organizations to hire specialized staff, launch new programs, and develop innovative methods to protect women and girls starting right at the onset of an emergency. Preventing and responding to all forms of gender-based violence globally – both in conflict and non-conflict settings – is a top priority for the United States. We welcome ongoing commitment and action to address this global scourge, which includes intimate partner violence, sexual violence in conflict, and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting.

Another focus of the agenda item we are now considering is the situation of women in rural areas. The United States recognizes the important role rural women play, particularly in agriculture, and their disproportionate impoverishment. In September the U.S. Agency for International Development and the retailer Walmart signed a Global Memorandum of Understanding to empower women economically. Their first effort will help 40,000 women farmers in Bangladesh take on more prominent roles in agriculture production and marketing.

Let me conclude by raising an ongoing priority for the United States: women’s equal right to a nationality. Nationality laws that discriminate against women are a significant cause of statelessness, and recent research has shown that this form of discrimination threatens family unity. Stateless persons often lack access to lawful employment, face travel restrictions, and are unable to pass on nationality to their children. These factors increase their chances of being
exploited and abused, including through forced migration and trafficking in persons. We note that the report before us on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women’s July 2012 session lists “nationality” as a key area of concern on which country Rapporteurs should focus. The United States’ **Women’s Nationality Initiative** has two broad objectives. The initiative seeks to increase awareness of the importance of equal nationality rights for women and the consequences of discrimination. It also asks governments to amend nationality laws that discriminate against women; ensure universal birth registration; and establish procedures to facilitate the acquisition of citizenship for stateless persons.

Looking ahead, as member states formulate our objectives for the period following the 2015 target date for the Millennium Development Goals, it is critical that gender issues, including women, peace, and security issues, be considered.

Thank you for your attention, and the United States looks forward to working with member state on this year’s many resolutions to advance the status of women.

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