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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Human Rights Day

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 13, 2007

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

December 10 marked the 59th Anniversary of the adoption of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that affirms the inherent rights of people everywhere and enshrines basic freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and belief.

As we join men and women around the globe in observing International Human Rights Day and Week, we recognize the noble work of human rights defenders who risk harassment, beatings, arrest and even death for seeking to secure the rights of their fellow citizens. We applaud the hard-won gains for human rights and democratic government that have been made in recent decades. However, as Secretary Rice, in her remarks in Washington on Monday at the 2007 International Human Rights Day Awards Ceremony said "Regrettably, some governments have responded to growing demands for personal and political freedom not by accepting their obligations to their people, but by oppressing those seeking to exercise fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. If the great promise of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to be fulfilled, the United States and other democratic nations must align ourselves with those who defend human rights and advocate for peaceful democratic change."

The United States stands in solidarity with the brave men and women across the globe who work to defend human dignity and advance the cause of freedom.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.