The United States is pleased to participate in this year’s Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We thank co-facilitators, Switzerland and Indonesia, and all of the participants for their continued commitment and leadership in strengthening effective and efficient humanitarian assistance. The United States is unequivocally committed to humanitarianism, multilateralism, and ensuring assistance reaches those most in need and vulnerable populations impacted by conflict, climate crisis, and COVID-19. We call on all of our fellow Member States to join us in this solemn commitment.

The United States continues to play its part in countering the pandemic and prioritizing global health security. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the U.S. government has appropriated more than $16.2 billion in U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development funding to emergency health, humanitarian, economic, and development assistance specifically aimed at helping governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations fight the pandemic. This funding is helping to save lives by providing food assistance and protection, improving public health education; protecting healthcare facilities; and increasing laboratory, disease-surveillance, and rapid response capacity in more than 120 countries. The United States is working to improve vaccine access, production, and distribution. We support GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, and the COVAX Facility. Secretary Blinken helped launch the “One World Protected” investment opportunity in support of COVAX, and we conducted coordinated advocacy ahead of the June virtual event, which was co-hosted by the Government of Japan and raised $2.4 billion from nearly 40 donor governments to support low- and middle-income countries and economies participating in the COVAX AMC. We are also sharing COVID-19 vaccines with the global community. On June 10, President Biden announced that the United States will provide 500 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Gavi, for distribution through COVAX, as part of our effort to end COVID-19 globally. This is in addition to our earlier commitment to share 80 million COVID-19 vaccine doses with those most in need, as well as the UN’s frontline workers. We continue to ensure that the substantial U.S. funding and scientific efforts on this front remain a central and coordinated part of the worldwide effort against the disease. We will continue to offer our assistance to those in need, working within the international system and with our bilateral partners and allies, to both address the immediate challenges presented by COVID-19 and strengthen health systems for future shock and bio-threats.

In the midst of the pandemic response, the United States continues to respond and provide assistance to people affected by rapid-onset disasters, slow-onset crises, including drought and conflict. The United States is the single largest donor of international humanitarian assistance, and last year provided more than $10.5 billion in life-saving aid around the world. We are also the largest provider of food assistance in the world.

The United States remains concerned over the continued obstruction of humanitarian access by parties to conflict and unacceptable attacks on humanitarian workers. In Ethiopia, increased
conflict among the parties, the presence of armed actors at checkpoints throughout the Tigray region, and continued bureaucratic impediments by the Government of Ethiopia continue to impede humanitarian access to vulnerable populations in need, including survivors of widespread gender-based violence, especially in rural areas. A famine may already be occurring in the region. USAID estimates that 700,000 to 900,000 people are facing catastrophe levels of acute food insecurity, with the situation expected to further deteriorate in the coming months. Since the beginning of 2020, there have been more than 400 violent incidents against aid workers. We have also seen a troubling rise in violence against humanitarian workers in South Sudan. Unfettered humanitarian access to populations in need is critical to saving lives, including in Northwest Syria, where 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. Of those, 2.4 million rely on the UN Security Council cross-border mechanism, which must be renewed in July, for lifesaving aid. In Yemen, the long-term solution to the food insecurity crisis is lasting peace. We must continue encouraging all parties to the conflict as well as our partners to support the UN-led inclusive peace process. The appointment of U.S. Special Envoy Lenderking demonstrates our commitment to peace and stability in Yemen. We must do more to encourage all parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and respect and protect those providing humanitarian aid. We must support using all tools available to promote accountability, consistent with international law, for those responsible for unlawful attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel. Maintaining the safety of humanitarian personnel and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need is critical to keeping people alive.

A key component of humanitarian work is to protect and assist people in crisis; however, both humanitarian institutions and States have fallen short in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. We must prioritize and strengthen our collective efforts to proactively implement prevention and risk mitigation strategies and ensure that perpetrators face the full measure of accountability for sexual exploitation, harassment, and abuse of authority. When aid workers commit SEA, they not only damage the credibility of the UN and humanitarian institutions, but harm the very populations they are there to protect. We need to hold ourselves to a higher standard. We commend those who put their lives at risk to provide life-saving assistance to vulnerable populations and we owe it to them, and to our beneficiaries, to take concrete steps to prevent SEA in the first place and to hold all perpetrators accountable when it does occur. The United States takes this responsibility, and these objectives, very seriously.

The pandemic has a disproportionate impact on migrants who are unable to access essential services, including health care, and face discrimination, xenophobia, and restrictive border measures, which have limited legal pathways for asylum. We also caution that the exclusion of migrants from national efforts to counter the pandemic may actually undermine efforts to overcome the pandemic. With over 280 million migrants worldwide, it is critical that all member states work together to promote safe, orderly, and dignified migration. The United States is already engaged in actions worldwide that are consistent with the vision of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, including its recognition of the need to incorporate the health needs of migrants in health care policies and plans, which supports inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery measures. We are committed to improving cooperation on international migration, recognizing our shared responsibilities regarding
migration, countering misleading narratives and information about migration, and addressing the root causes of irregular migration.

We are also gravely concerned by increases in gender-based violence – known also as the “shadow pandemic” brought on by COVID-19. More than one in three women experience violence during their lifetime, usually at the hands of an intimate partner. Women and girls have faced increased violence due to economic insecurity, lockdowns, and necessary public health measures. In our continued response and recovery efforts, it is of paramount importance to address the immediate and second-order impacts of the pandemic, including its effects on access to education, economic participation, access to sexual and reproductive health services, and peace and security for women, girls, and communities.

The United States continues to be a leader in pursuing the collective advancement of effective, principled, and accountable humanitarian action. We are committed to leveraging our resources to respond to humanitarian crises, lead in humanitarian diplomacy, and lead donors to the global humanitarian system. We are also looking to enhance engagement with and support for local and national actors as they are vital to expanding humanitarian access, reducing dependency, and better aligning humanitarian, peace, and development efforts to forge complementarity across sectors. The United States is proud to have a longstanding commitment to humanitarian assistance as the single largest donor, but we need other donors to increase their support commensurate with the vast humanitarian need. As donors, we must do more to help and protect the most vulnerable populations around the world.

Finally, the United States will continue to work towards significant progress on efforts to advance management reforms across UN agencies that enhance efficiency, performance, and accountability to improve humanitarian outcomes for affected populations. With the number and severity of complex humanitarian crises outpacing global capacity to respond, the U.S. Government also seeks significantly improved coordination within the humanitarian system on joint needs assessments and joint analyses that inform and improve prioritized humanitarian response plans and appeals. The U.S. Government expects that all UN agencies engaged in humanitarian assistance should make significant advances in each of these areas.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our priorities, and we request that this statement be made part of the official record of this meeting.