

The United States of America

Position for the General Assembly Social, Humanitarian and Cultural – Third Committee

I. The Right to Seek Asylum

The United States of America recognizes the importance to protect those who flee their own country due to persecution by their own government. The U.S. also recognizes the right of individuals as specified by international and federal law to seek asylum. **Internationally**, the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provides aid and sustainable solutions for refugees, victims of conflict, and stateless people around the world, through repatriation, local integration, and resettlement in the United States. PRM remains committed to groups and individuals with particular protection needs, such as women, children, the elderly, disabled persons, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender refugees and asylum seekers across the international community. PRM has contributed nearly \$8 billion over the past years in support of international protection and assistance programs for refugees and other populations of concern. The United States plans to provide \$10 million in additional humanitarian assistance to help communities in the Middle Eastern region who are currently the host of more than 3 million refugees from Syria. U.S. diplomats around the world are working to influence other governments to improve discriminatory nationality laws in order to decrease, and eventually eliminate statelessness. The U.S. government provides the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with nearly \$245.2 million each year. This allows the UNHCR to help millions of refugees by offering life-saving assistance, safeguarding their basic human rights, and providing education and jobs. The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants cooperates with governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGO'S) on an international level to protect the rights and address the needs of persons in forced or voluntary migration worldwide by advancing fair and humane public policy, facilitating and providing direct professional services, and promoting the full participation of migrants in community life. The U.S. has created the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) which is comprised of federal agency organizations and non-governmental partners working together, both overseas and domestically, in order to offer resettlement opportunities and benefits, services, and assistance. Human Rights First, an independent advocacy and action organization in the U.S. works on a global scale to harness American influence to secure freedoms and respect for human rights. **Regionally**, through the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was created to ensure the rights of all persons subject to the jurisdiction of the Member States are protected, and establish that special attention must be devoted to those populations, communities, and groups that have historically been the targets of discrimination. In the Ninth International Conference of American States, the U.S. adopted the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, which provides that every person has the right, in case of pursuit not resulting from ordinary crimes, to seek and receive asylum in foreign territory, in accordance with the laws of each country and with international agreements. **Nationally**, The U.S. has formally granted asylum to about a 500,000 people since 1980, and nearly 3 million refugees have been resettled in the U.S. since 1975. The State Department has aggressively engaged in humanitarian diplomacy to encourage other governments to fulfill their commitment under international refugee law. The U.S. supports the objectives and principles of the two Statelessness Conventions which seek to provide minimum standards for stateless persons such as, affording them the same rights as citizens with respect to freedom of religion and education of their children, prohibiting the expulsion of stateless persons who are lawfully on the territory of the State, and facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of stateless persons into the community. Human Rights First works within the U.S. to create a political environment and policy situations necessary to protect refugees and defend persecuted minorities. Human Rights First consistently urges both governmental sectors and private companies to ensure basic human rights and the rule of law are respected. In an effort to expand the right to seek asylum on an international level the U.S. proposes a **3-point action plan**: **P**romote refugee self-sufficiency through connecting refugees with needed social or language services, arranging medical care, and creating employment opportunity as soon as possible after arrival in the host country in coordination with other refugee service and assistance programs. **E**xpansion of domestic resettlement agencies on a global scale that ensure refugees are settled into a community that has the appropriate resources and best fits the refugee's needs; **O**ffer financial incentives to increase the number of willing host families who will be responsible for providing the refugee with basic needs to start their lives including, but not limited to, providing furnishings, appliances, specific foods of their culture, and clothing.

II. Global Efforts toward the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation

The United States of America is firmly committed to the elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). **Internationally**, the United States has partnered with several different organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to primarily issue a joint statement on Female Genital Mutilation (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, 1997) which described the practice as a violation against public health and human rights, and declared support for its abandonment. The U.S. supports the United Nations General Assembly A/RES/67/146 establishing the ban on FGM/C worldwide. U.S. government agencies are actively engaged with internationally based working groups to address FGM/C, including the Donors Working Group (DWG), which is composed of key international governmental and intergovernmental organizations and foundations committed to supporting the abandonment of the practice. The U.S. supports the initiative, COMMIT, launched by UN Women, and the Secretary-General's "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" campaign, which works in collaboration with governments and civil society to advance legislation and social mobilization. The U.S. has signed the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child and is a state party to the Human Rights Committee, who have been working to condemn the FGM/C practice and recommends measures to combat it. These organizations have introduced initiatives, including the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation, which is observed on February 6th of each calendar year in order to raise awareness and funds for eliminating this practice. **Regionally**, the U.S. has established the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) who has officially incorporated the elimination of FGM/C into its development agenda. This organization pursues regional coordination among NGO's, community leaders, and governments to actively prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and specifically FGM/C. The U.S. supports the UN Population Fund-UNICEF Joint Programme entitled "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change." The U.S. is in support of a resolution proposed during the 54th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, urging regional member states to end FGM/C, among other things, and to enact and enforce legislation to prohibit the practice, develop social and psychological support services and care, and take measures to improve health in order to assist women and girls subjected to this type of violence. The U.S. stands behind a resolution adopted by The Human Rights Council in which members states are urged to accelerate efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, FGM/C being one of the key issues. This resolution calls for the provision of visible and sustained regional, national, and international leadership at the highest level to prevent all forms of violence against women. **Nationally**, the U.S. has established federal criminal penalties for performing FGM/C in the United States on any minor younger than 18-years-old, including fines and up to five years in prison, or both. In 2013, Congress criminalized the knowing transportation of girls younger than 18-years-old outside of the United States for the purpose of performing FGM/C. The Department of Justice (DOJ) maintains a hotline where people can anonymously report violations or potential violations of the FGM/C statute. Numerous U.S. states have criminalized the practice at the local level. The DOJ plans to develop and disseminate a newsletter to the U.S. Attorney's Offices providing guidance regarding investigations and prosecutions using the FGM/C statute. The U.S. federal government condones the review and reform of laws and policies as well as sectorial measures, especially within the health, education, social, and legal protection systems having to do with FGM/C. Several laws for the elimination of FGM/C include constitutional recognition of the rights of girls and women, criminal laws incriminating those who practice this violence, and various other child protection and civil laws. These legal measures are intended to make explicit the government's disapproval of female genital mutilation, support those who have abandoned the practice or wish to do so, and act as a deterrent. With this, the United States is also using different media outlets in order to educate citizens about understanding what is occurring in regards to said topic, inviting them to act as advocates in order to completely eradicate the practice of FGM/C. To further combat this heinous practice, the United States proposes an action plan under the acronym **R.I.G.H.T.S:** **R**equests that professional organizations, such as medical associations and nursing councils, promote ethical guidelines in medical training and in practice. Associations for teachers, lawyers, social workers and others can also contribute towards eliminating FGM/C within their respective fields through activities such as lobbying, advocacy and conducting appropriate training activities. **I**nstruct and promote, within the general framework of integration policies, effective and specific targeted measures for refugee women and female migrants and their communities, in order to protect female children from female genital mutilation, including when the practice occurs outside the country of residence; **G**uaranteeing action for those who are against the practice of FGM/C including, but not limited to, aiding in the rescue of young women who do not want to be cut; **H**ousing various social organizations that are committed to eradicating the practice at all levels and who are banded strictly to focus on the elimination of FGM/C; **T**reatment for those who are already affected by the practice; **S**tress the significance of the empowerment of women through education.