

**United States Statement at the 74th General Assembly Sixth Committee
Agenda Item 83: Rule of Law at the National and International Levels
Julian Simcock, Deputy Legal Adviser
United States Mission to the United Nations
October 11, 2019**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, let me join other delegations in thanking the Secretary-General for his report on this agenda item. I would also like to thank the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group and the Rule of Law Unit, which often perform work in dangerous and complex environments.

The Secretary-General's report identifies a number of concerning developments. Particularly alarming are its findings regarding the proliferation of hate speech and incitement to violence. As the Secretary-General has said, "Hatred is a threat to everyone – and so this is a job for everyone." We look forward to engaging on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. We believe we can work to address these problems, while remaining cognizant that efforts to counter hate speech must respect freedom of expression.

With respect to this year's subtopic – "Sharing best practices and ideas to promote respect for international law among states" – I wish to highlight some of the United States' engagement in the area of international humanitarian law, also known as "IHL."

States can improve their implementation of IHL through the voluntary sharing of State practice, including official publications, policies, and procedures. The United States has worked to share its own practices regularly and publicly, including through certain publications that provide explanations and guidance on the rules and principles of the law of armed conflict.

The United States has also participated in international fora that present an opportunity for sharing best practices for improving compliance with IHL and mitigating civilian harm. We thank the Austrian Government for hosting a conference in Vienna last month on Protection of Civilians in Urban Warfare. We hope that future discussions of this important topic will continue to emphasize sharing of state practice and concrete mitigation measures to improve the situation of civilians impacted by armed conflict.

With respect to the forthcoming negotiation on the resolution for this agenda item, we hope that the Sixth Committee will once again be able to reach consensus on a subtopic for next year. We think that the past practice of selecting subtopics can lead to more focused and productive debates on the rule of law in this forum.

Finally, let me say that this Committee has a long history of consensus-based decision making. We are optimistic that it will endure. At a time when the rule of law is under attack in many parts of the world, even where it was once considered sacrosanct, this practice is a welcome reminder of the power of collaborative legal discourse.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.