**Statement by Ambassador Anne Patterson, Deputy U.S. Representative to the United Nations, on Strengthening the UN’s Response to Gender-Based Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations
Security Council Open Debate on women, peace and security, 28 October 2004**

Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank Under Secretary General Guehenno for his candid introduction of the Secretary General’s report [ S/2004/814 ] as well as the reports of the High Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Executive Director Obeid.  I wish to congratulate you on your selection of this topic for your Presidency’s thematic discussion. This is a very difficult issue.  The United States agrees that the UN must strengthen its response to gender-based violence in both conflict and post-conflict situations.  The U.S. delegation would like to focus its comments today on one element of the problem, namely trafficking in persons.  This problem is often worsened by the upheaval of post-conflict situations, as Ms. Arbour said. Regrettably, it has also been associated with the presence of peacekeeping operations.

Mr. President, as you are aware, trafficking in persons is an issue that continues to grow, sometimes in those same places we are charged as members of the Security Council to protect.   Annually, 600,000-800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across borders.  These individuals are recruited, transported, or sold into all forms of forced labor and servitude including prostitution, labor, farming and child armies.  The victims range from a 12 year old girl in the Congo forced to have sex with more than a dozen foreigners a day, to child soldiers in the African continent, to a smuggled Mexican worker toiling in a Florida tomato field to pay off a hugely inflated “debt,” that never declines.  Of these victims, 80% are female.  70% of these girls and women are trafficked into the commercial sex industry.

Mr. President, the United States is deeply committed to ending the scourge of trafficking in persons that poses a security threat by lining the pockets of criminal groups, while grossly violating people’s human rights and serving as a public health threat through the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.  This also hampers readiness.  This is an issue that is receiving increasing attention from the international community and from the United States.  Last September, President Bush called on the international community to create clear standards and certainty of punishment for the crime of trafficking. Since 2000, the U.S. has given almost $300 million to support anti-trafficking in persons programs in more than 120 countries.  In the past year, 24 nations enacted new laws to combat trafficking in persons while 32 other countries are currently drafting or passing such laws.  As a result of these efforts, nearly 8,000 traffickers have been prosecuted worldwide while 2,800 have been convicted.

Mr. President, while these gains are admirable I am sorry to say they fall short of redressing the problem.  We need a concerted effort on the part of all member states to end this plague.  Not surprisingly, UN peacekeeping missions mirror attitudes and problems found in the armed forces of the member states.  As Security Council members, we should continue to support the efforts of UN leadership to effect change within UN missions.  Trafficking in persons violations within UN missions needs continued high-level attention.  In July 2004, the Under-Secretary-General Guehenno and the Secretary General officially approved an anti-trafficking policy for peacekeepers.  This policy supplements a bulletin issued by the Secretary General in October 2003, which also established guidelines of acceptable conduct by UN peacekeepers.  This bulletin prohibits acts of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by UN staff or UN forces conducting operations under UN command, including the “exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex” and sexual activity with persons under age 18.

However, a policy is only as good as its enforcement.  We welcome Mr. Guehenno’s statement that t he UN will enforce a policy of zero-tolerance in sex trafficking at every UN mission.  We must also enforce the same zero-tolerance policy with prostitution, as this fuels the demand for human trafficking victims by serving as a cover under which traffickers operate.  We also seek to put in place trafficking in persons training for all UN peacekeepers, which would be mandatory prior to their deployment.

Mr. President, the U.S. commends the work of the DPKO Best Practices Unit to this end.  In July of this year, the U.S. Department of State provided $200,000 in funding support to the Best Practices Unit for the production of anti-trafficking awareness materials.  Best Practices will produce over 60,000 posters, brochures and pocket cards, translated into 10 peacekeeping languages, for distribution to all missions, regional training centers, and to pre-deployment training centers of the main troop-contributing countries.  However, having one staff member dedicated to addressing the issues of trafficking in persons among all UN peacekeepers is not enough, especially when that one position will expire in the next two months.  And while these efforts are useful in raising awareness they will be meaningless unless Peacekeepers receive mandatory training which clearly outlines the U.N.’s “zero tolerance” policy and they receive proper punishment which fits the crime.  Most importantly, we need a dedicated U.N. leadership position to carry out these major goals.

Mr. President, by definition, post-conflict societies are those which suffer from weak rule of law.  United Nations peacekeeping missions need to be at the forefront of ensuring that gender based violence is eliminated and redressed.  We can do this by creating concrete steps and actions to ensure compliance.  Thank you.