It is an honor to speak this afternoon at the launch of the Standards Alliance. First, I’d like to thank Mr. Bhatia for the kind introduction and thank both ANSI and USAID for funding the Standards Alliance and organizing this week’s activities. I am also grateful to see so many private sector participants here – I am a strong believer that cooperation on standards facilitates trade, and your input is absolutely essential to the process.

The U.S. Government strongly supports the Standards Alliance, the new, five million dollar partnership USAID has created with ANSI. This flagship initiative, the first of its kind undertaken by the private sector and U.S. government in terms of scope and ambition, will deliver technical assistance to developing countries to help improve their implementation of and compliance with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement and improve standards and regulatory development. Over the next five years, up to ten countries will be eligible for the program, and we’ve already received applications from a number of countries.

When USTR and USAID announced last November in Geneva, in the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, that we would be creating a new U.S.-sponsored assistance facility called the “Standards Alliance,” we did so recognizing the critical importance that standards and technical regulations play in global trade. This endeavor is a win-win. It will help further an essential component of the Obama Administration’s strategy to increase U.S. exports and promote economic development both at home and abroad. U.S. companies benefit when the standards and regulations adopted by developing countries better align with global norms and practices, as it reduces the costs and bureaucratic hurdles associated with exporting and enables U.S. producers to make one product and export it to many countries. And developing countries benefit when they adopt globally recognized standards and norms for products, and clarify and streamline their regulatory processes for products, as it enables developing countries to improve the quality, safety, and number of the products they export.

The initial phase of the Standards Alliance program will deliver technical assistance to Peru; Mexico; Central America; Colombia; the Middle East and North Africa (MENA); the East African Community (EAC); the South African Development Community (SADC); Yemen, in partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council; and the developing member countries within ASEAN. We’re very pleased that the first pilot programming was carried out earlier this year in Indonesia and in Peru.

In June, the first Standard Alliance workshop was held in Jakarta, which was an ideal choice; Indonesia is seeking to be a global and regional leader and is hosting both the APEC Summit and Ministerial meetings as well as the WTO Ministerial later this year. Indonesia is an important trade and investment partner for the United States – we had $26 billion in two-way trade in 2012, and our two-way trade so far this year is up almost six percent. As the 17th largest global economy and the largest in Southeast Asia, and with an economy that is growing at about 6 percent a year, Indonesia is becoming more integrated in the global economy.

The June workshop dovetailed well with the continuing efforts in APEC to improve Good Regulatory Practices across the region and was an opportunity to reinforce that work on a bilateral basis. The workshop brought together both the U.S. and Indonesian governments, as well as the two private sectors, and provided participants the opportunity to share experiences on transparent, predictable and effective regulatory practices that will encourage enhanced trade and investment between our two countries. Focusing on the benefits of internal coordination and public consultations, participants also discussed practices in each country and reviewed case studies in toys, tires and plumbing standards.

I have to thank Indonesia’s Bureau of National Standards for being an excellent partner. We look forward to building off this initial workshop with further engagements with Indonesia in the near future.

Our other pilot program this year is with Peru. I am particularly excited to see the Peruvian delegation here. Thank you, all of you, for taking the time out of your busy schedules to attend the training session this week.

This has certainly been an exciting and productive year in terms of bilateral relations between our two countries. We were very pleased to have
President Humala visit President Obama this past June. President Obama spoke of Peru as “one of our strongest and most reliable partners in the hemisphere.”

We have a strong commercial and trade relationship. This year, we celebrated the four-year anniversary of the entry into force of the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement. We had nearly $16 billion in two-way trade in goods last year, and the outlook for future growth is positive.

Both of our countries’ continued expansion in the global marketplace is supported by the enormous amount of work we are doing together: we continue to work closely in the WTO and under our bilateral free trade agreement, and we have been breaking new ground in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a comprehensive, high-standard trade agreement that will increase exports and jobs in both the United States and Peru, and address the issues that U.S. and Peruvian businesses and workers are facing in the 21st century.

The work Peru and the United States are doing in the Standards Alliance is also an important component of our work to bolster our bilateral trade relationship. I understand four, productive one-day seminars were held in Peru this summer to share best practices on implementing the WTO TBT Agreement, standards development, conformity assessment, metrology, and Good Regulatory Practices. During the workshops, participants shared information on effective regulatory practices developed by international and regional organizations, including the WTO, the Andean Community, and APEC. Participants in the workshops also reviewed case studies on textiles standards, regulatory impact assessments, and how to take stakeholder input into account when developing standards and regulations, among others.

While both of our governments notify proposed changes to our regulatory systems to the TBT Committee on a continual basis, having earlier opportunities to discuss these changes could increase the compatibility and alignment of our regulatory systems, further facilitating trade. Through the Standards Alliance, the United States is sharing its experience and expertise with Peru to facilitate its adoption of international standards for products, and to help Peru to clarify and streamline its regulatory processes for products. This will reduce the costs and bureaucratic hurdles for U.S. companies looking to export to Peru, and will enable Peru to improve the quality, safety, and quantity of its exports.

And I see that you’ve assembled an ambitious and impressive schedule of events for this week as well. I’m pleased that you’ll be discussing important regulatory trends that have significant impact on trade, such as nutritional labeling and the use of biotechnology. Discussions between the public and private sector can bring us closer together on these important issues. This, along with the discussion of good regulatory practices, such as regulatory impact assessment or risk analysis, will enhance our relationship and the understanding of each country’s regulatory framework and compliance requirements.

These two pilot programs – with Indonesia and with Peru – foreshadow the excellent work that we will accomplish with our other initial partners under the Standards Alliance.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of seminars and training sessions like this one, and I look forward to continuing to engage with all of you as we work on further developing and implementing this program over the coming years.

With that, I wish you the best of success in your discussions this week. Thank you.