

International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association-ILGA

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PRESS RELEASE

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UNHRC Statement a major step in the fight against transphobia and homophobia

Today's joint declaration by 85 member countries of the United Nations' Human Rights Council, calling for an end to violence, criminal sanctions and human rights violations against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity is a very significant step forward towards international consensus on LGBTI people's rights, according to **ILGA**, the **International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association**. ILGA considers the fact that the amount of countries willing to sign on to a declaration like this is approaching a majority of UN members, is a credit to the increased sensitivity of national governments, and the work of international, regional and local LGBTI human rights activists all over the World, particularly the International Coalition of LGBTI organizations that worked together with national governments and provided the information they requested through the process of preparing the declaration.

"We welcome the Statement just read at the UN Human Rights Council and signed by 85 Countries, as a sign of the growing international, cross-regional consensus around the need to protect people persecuted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Also to engage in a truly universal application of human rights", said Renato Sabbadini, one of ILGA's two Co-Secretary generals, speaking from ILGA's headquarters in Brussels. According to Sabbadini "The strength of this Statement makes the defence of discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexual, trans and intersex people on the basis of a mistaken sense of "tradition" or "natural order" more untenable than ever. Homophobia and transphobia are more and more acknowledged for what they truly are: the last crumbling pillars of a patriarchal order which belong with other dark pages of our past, like slavery and the Inquisition."

Compared to a similar Human Rights Council joint declaration on this topic in 2006 and to a UN General Assembly Statement in 2008, this Statement acknowledges for the first time also the positive developments on recognition of LGBTI human rights in each region of the world. It also establishes as a principle that "no one should face stigmatization, violence or abuse on any ground, and that in dealing with sensitive issues, the Council must be guided by the principles of universality and non-discrimination. This was enabled by the preceding 2008 UN General Assembly Statement, which for the first time inserted sexual orientation and gender identity in the UN interpretation of the Universal declaration of Human Rights, by reaffirming the non-discrimination principle of international law, requiring that human rights apply equally to each human being.

“We are very pleased and proud of the results achieved through the hard work of the International Coalition of Organizations for LGBTI rights and each of the groups that made the efforts in its country. This work has raised awareness not only of more and more governments, but obviously has been steadfast in its commitment to human rights protection. It is a historical moment we're happy to be part of”, said Gloria Careaga, ILGA's other Secretary General today in Mexico-City. Careaga stressed that “This time more countries have joined. The ongoing discussions on violence and discrimination raised by LGBTI people in international arenas, especially in the Human Rights Council, have opened the eyes of those that did not recognize the abuse that happened daily”.

Apart from more countries signing the joint declaration, 85 this year to 66 in 2008 and 54 in 2006, there is also a shift towards more countries from the South signing on, including from regions where these issues are still highly sensitive like Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Among the newcomers in signing the declaration are countries like: Dominica, Honduras, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Seychelles.

ILGA is set to encourage countries all over the world to embrace the contents of this declaration by incorporating them in national policies and national law and as such will keep coordinating its work with the International Coalition of LGBTI organizations. In this context ILGA is presently planning an International Panel to be held parallel to the next Human Rights Council meeting in June on **“The Growing Consensus: Towards the End of Criminalization and Human Rights Violations based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity”**

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ILGA is a membership organization with almost 700 groups from over 100 countries, committed to equal human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex and transgender people.	The work of ILGA is supported by the Dutch organizations Hivos and Oxfam Novib, by the Dutch Government, by SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency), by BT (UK), by the ARCUS Foundation USA, and by ILGA supporters worldwide.
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