

41st Human Rights Council Session

Annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights

Theme: Technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of the human rights of older persons

10 July 2019

Statement by International Lesbian and Gay Association

**Joined by: the Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot Integratie Van Homoseksualiteit - COC
Nederland, Help Age International and LGBT Denmark**

Delivered by: Diana Carolina Prado Mosquera

Mr. President,

This statement has been endorsed¹ by organizations working on LGBTI issues and older persons.

We welcome and support the important work that this Council has made on the rights of older persons. The rights of older persons are an understudied and often poorly understood subject area. We know that older persons in many countries lack of adequate living standards, have only limited access to healthcare and face a higher poverty risk.

We would like to reiterate the important recognition of multiple challenges of discrimination, abuse and violence against older persons, especially women, who tend to suffer from intersectional discrimination and bear the brunt of the cumulative effects of gender and other forms of discrimination endured throughout the course of their lives. These cumulative effects are also very much valid for people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, but to date, little has been said or done about the distinctive challenges faced by LGBTI older persons.

Mr. President,

LGBTI older persons are exposed to a wide range of human rights violations which are compounded with specific challenges that they face. They experience elevated levels of prejudice and discrimination among their peers and often depend more significantly on the help of others – which makes them more vulnerable to malpractice, ridicule, exclusion and violence.

Research has indicated that LGBTI older persons are far more likely to live alone, face elevated rates of disability and poor health, and suffer from higher levels of mental distress than their heterosexual, cisgender or endosex counterparts. They live in fear of discrimination, violence and bullying, and remain fearful and resistant to accessing health care services, often out of concern for being treated unprofessionally. Many are also scared to move into assisted living institutions or elder care, fearing that their identities, as well as their chosen partners, will not be recognized or simply ignored.

Those who work with older persons frequently indicate that they have received no training on LGBTI rights and issues, while few states have explicit policies to protect the rights of older LGBTI persons. In many

¹ Egale Canada, ESMULES, MANODIVERSA and Synergia Initiatives for Human Rights.

countries, LGBTI older persons are simply invisible. They face pervasive and unique forms of discrimination and human rights violations that require this Council's attention.

Mr. President,

To strengthen technical cooperation and capacity building activities LGBTI older persons should be included in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of care and health policies developed by States. Sensitivity programmes should be integrated in every care setting. Communities of LGBTI older persons in some countries, such as Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, have shared their best practices with the independent expert on Older Persons. Many more organizations supporting this statement, from Bolivia to the United Kingdom, are ready to share their best practices.

Finally, a question to the panel: *How can we fulfill our international human rights obligations and guarantee that LGBTI older persons are not left behind and ensure their inclusion through technical cooperation and capacity-building activities?*

Thank you Mr. President