Madam President,

The current public health crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19, is a global emergency with far-reaching human rights consequences. Vulnerable groups, including LGBTI persons, have been disproportionately affected by this pandemic. We welcome the recognition of these specific effects by the UN’s OHCHR1 and by the Secretary General2.

We also welcome the statement signed by 96 human rights experts, including the UN IE SOGI, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Council of Europe that highlights how COVID-19 and the measures taken must not exacerbate inequalities, discrimination and violence against LGBTI persons. The experts are urging states to ensure the continuity of the work of civil society and human rights defenders3.

Best practices to protect the right of persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics have also been noted in other contexts in the past months.

In the United States of America, in a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court declared that SOGI are protected grounds of discrimination under the Civil Rights Act. Costa Rica became the first central American country to recognize same-sex marriages. Germany’s parliament has passed a law banning so-called “conversion therapy” for young people nationwide. Meanwhile, a federal court in Malaysia granted permission to hear a challenge to a Sharia law ban on sex “against the order of nature”7, and in Zambia a couple who was sentenced to 15 years in prison for consensual same-sex acts was released8.

We hope that governments and international institutions continue to engage in constructive dialogue and share their best practices in this arena to ensure that the momentum surrounding SOGIESC issues continues to grow.

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2 UN Secretary General. COVID-19 and Human Rights: we are all in this together. <https://bit.ly/2zh7IRV>
6 BBC News. Germany passes law banning ‘gay conversion therapy’ for minors < https://bbc.in/2Y8BAJ2>
I thank you, Madam. President.