



Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI)

7th July 2020

44th Session of the Human Rights Council

Webcast: [1st Part](#) - [2nd Part](#) - [3rd Part](#)¹

Independent Expert on SOGI

- The report I present before this Council today includes a succinct indication of the activities that I carried out from 1 May 2019 to 30 April 2020 in furtherance of Human Rights Council resolutions 32/2 and 41/18. In addition, given its importance as a human rights concern, I chose to focus on practices known as “conversion therapy,” a term used to describe interventions that claim to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Practices of “conversion therapy” are rooted in the belief that persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity are somehow inferior - either morally, spiritually or physically - because of their orientation or identity, and that they must modify that orientation or identity to remedy that inferiority. The validity of practices that claim to attain “conversion” has been constantly debunked by the scientific community.
- While investigating the economics behind these practices, persuasive evidence attested that they are, in many cases, a lucrative business for providers around the world.
- Practices of “conversion therapy” are not only ineffective, but they can also be extremely harmful. They often lead to pain and suffering that will last far beyond their occurrence, leaving indelible scars on a person’s body and mind. Acts of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, electrocution, forced medication, isolation and confinement, verbal abuse and humiliation with slurs are all examples of methods applied to attempt conversion
- Children and the youth are particularly vulnerable, as early exposure to such interventions is significantly associated with anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.

Uruguay on behalf of a cross-regional group of 42 countries

- The current public health crisis caused by the global spread of the COVID-19 is also a human rights crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic further perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities, placing persons in vulnerable and marginalized situations or belonging to vulnerable or marginalized groups at particular risk. LGBTI persons are subjected to multiple and intersectional forms of violence and discrimination in their everyday life, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in health systems. Such patterns have unfortunately been reinforced during this pandemic, negatively affecting the enjoyment of their human rights.

¹ Due to the measures taken by the HRC Secretariat because of the COVID19 situation, the Interactive Dialogue with the IE SOGI was splitted in three different days.



- there is growing evidence that some of the State responses regarding the access and delivery of healthcare, the enactment of states of emergency, the implementation of lockdown and “stay at home” measures, as well as the adoption of policies to mitigate the economic consequences of the pandemic, can have additional, disproportionate and discriminatory impacts on LGBTI persons
- We therefore encourage all States to learn from the lessons of the current crisis to ensure the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of LGBTI persons, without discrimination of any kind, condemning and eradicating all forms of criminalization, as well as fostering social transformation, by combating the root causes of inequalities and promoting inclusive societies
- Finally, we confirm our full support to the mandate of the Independent Expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal Borloz, and we welcome his technical guidance and active work during the crisis.

European Union

- Take note of the recent Guidelines on COVID-19 response and recovery issued by the Independent Expert on 18 June as well as the open letter on COVID-19 to the LGBT community of 27 March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about particular challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons in many parts of the world. LGBTI youth have been particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Welcomed the report on conversion therapies practices.
- Question: Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, in your report you recommend that States support the development of research and data collection, disaggregated by all relevant dimensions on the specific issue of practices of “conversion therapy”. Can you elaborate further on this suggestion?

Denmark on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries

- We thank the Independent Expert for his report and reiterate our strong support to his mandate and work. We condemn the continued existence of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity globally.
- We welcome your focus on so-called “conversion therapy”, a disturbing practice that aims “to effect a change from non-heterosexual to heterosexual and from trans or gender diverse to cisgender”. The report provides critical information and analysis about this practice. We are concerned that it persists in all regions of the world, including our own.
- Question: Could you elaborate on your recommendations by exemplifying measures taken by Member States to address the human rights concerns arising from “conversion therapy”?

Germany

- Welcomed the IESOGI for his work and his report.
- Germany has just passed a law on this subject that: prohibits conduct of conversion treatments on minors under 18 and on persons of legal age whose consent is based on a



lack of volition, prohibits advertising, offering and brokering of conversion treatments, offers counselling opportunities for affected persons and their relatives, as well as for persons who deal with the topic on a professional or private basis, and includes penal provisions for violations of these prohibitions.

- We call on all states to increase their efforts to protect the rights of LGBTI persons, including by decriminalizing same-sex conduct and offering protection from so-called “conversion therapies”.

Ireland

- Ireland thanks the Independent Expert for his report and we reiterate our strong support for his mandate.
- We welcome the focus of the report on so-called “conversion therapy” and we urge Member States to examine and give careful consideration to the recommendations contained therein.
- As you note in your report, Ireland’s National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy contains a commitment to prohibit the promotion or practice of “conversion therapy” by health professionals. As part of this work, we are undertaking research to establish the extent to which “conversion therapy” is occurring in Ireland and a review of international best practice in this area.
- Question: Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, can you expand on the practical measures that States can take to protect children and young people from so-called “conversion therapies”?

United Nations Children's Fund

- UNICEF welcomes the report of the Independent Expert that presents a harrowing picture of so-called “conversion therapies” around the world, and the devastating impact they leave, particularly on children. According to the report, referencing a global survey, half of the persons who were subjected to those practices were under 18.
- Such practices constitute violations of multiple child rights. The profoundly harmful consequences on children are numerous: homelessness, socioeconomic deprivation, depression, anxiety and long-term mental health problems, including suicidal attempts.
- In most cases, children and adolescents are victims of so-called “conversion therapy” to conform to the expectations of their parents or communities. Sadly, medical and mental health professionals, who have an ethical duty to do no harm, were identified as the main perpetrators.
- Parents and care givers must be supported in understanding that gender identity, sexual orientation and biological sex characteristics are part of the child’s identity. These elements, along with other rights, should be taken into account in determining the child’s best interests, which must be a paramount consideration at all times.

UN Women

- UN Women welcomes the report of the Independent Expert with its focus on practices of so-called ‘conversion therapy’. We share his views that justifications for such practices are built on outdated, unscientific and unethical notions.



- UN Women expresses grave concern at how sexual violence is employed as a practice of so-called conversion, with harrowing effects on its survivors. Alarming, these human rights violations still occur throughout the world but mostly fail to be outlawed, despite being inherently degrading, inhumane, cruel and carrying severe risk of torture.
- UN Women amplifies the Independent Expert's call to states to prohibit these practices, while commending states taking this step. Decriminalization of sexual and/or gender diversity must occur in unison to avoid reinforcing these practices.
- In recognition of the centrality to its mandate on achieving gender equality and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, UN Women is dedicated to upholding the rights of all persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and to leave no one behind.

Liechtenstein

- Liechtenstein thanks the Independent Expert for the presentation of the report on practices of so-called "conversion therapy".
- Practices of conversion therapies, carried out by a diverse range of actors, including private and public mental health-care providers, faith-based organizations, traditional healers and State agents, are by their very nature degrading, inhuman and cruel and create a significant risk of torture.
- If we want to adequately and effectively tackle practices of conversion therapies, we would first need to combat stigma and prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or gender-diverse people and promote their social inclusion.

Belgium

- Belgium thanks you for the presentation of your work on the practice of conversion therapy. We fully share your view that the practice constitutes an act that is clearly discriminatory and infringes on a variety of inalienable human rights.
- Reducing an identity to a pathology is unacceptable. Indeed, this year, on 17 May, it was exactly 30 years ago that the World Health Organization decided to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder. Consequently, any notion of conversion therapy has no basis in science and is de facto a harmful superstition that needs to be rooted out.
- Mr. Madrigal, even though harmful acts of forced conversion therapy are punishable under existing law in Belgium, a legislative initiative is under way to facilitate its prosecution and to protect the rights of targeted persons. Question: In your opinion, what are the main obstacles to ensuring legislation is adequate and practical?

China

- China always advocates that the international community should respect regional, cultural and religious values of the countries and their different social systems and avoid imposing their own values on others.
- The IE SOGI uses unverified information in the report making comments on many countries including China. China expresses its dissatisfaction. China opposes all forms



of discrimination and violence, including based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

- As early as 2001 the Chinese Psychiatrist Association removed homosexuality from the category of mental disorder. The IE's allegations do not conform to the facts. We hope that the relevant actors will take an objective, impartial and serious approach, verifying the information used and avoid unfounded charges against the states.

Ecuador

- My delegation thanks the Independent Expert for the presentation of his report and agrees that so-called "conversion therapies" represent a serious threat to human rights, with profound consequences for the physical and psychological integrity and well-being of LGBTI people, particularly children and young people.
- Such practices should be prohibited in all spheres including health, religious and community settings.
- Measures to address harmful practices and eliminate prejudices associated with sexual orientation or gender identity from a human rights and cross-sectoral perspective are essential to protect LGBTI people from violence and discrimination and to promote their full inclusion in society.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

- We appreciate the presentation of the report of the IE. Article 21 of our constitution establishes that all people are equal before the law and prohibits any form of discrimination. In this context, the Venezuela Government has a principle of equality for LGBTI people and we have executive order 6, signed by the president that adjusts to this. Our Constitutional Court interpreted article 75 and ruled on the inclusion of same-sex household and the eradication of all discriminatory practices and the empowerment of vulnerable groups are a priority for Venezuela.
- The Ombudsman office compiles information on same-sex couples in order to ensure that vulnerable groups are protected in their rights.

France

- We welcome for your report on Conversion Therapy and the impact on the victims' human rights. France recalls its support for your mandate.
- The report tackles the difficult subject of the so-called conversion therapies and calls on all states to ban them. Consideration is on its way in France on this subject. In December 2019 the National Assembly established an information-gathering mission to fully identify the scale of this phenomena in our country. Our work has led to a draft law being submitted with the goal of prohibiting practices aiming to modify the sexual orientation or gender identity of a person. This draft law has several aspects, one being the education of the youngest members of our population, providing information on respect to different sexual orientations and gender identities.
- France is also mobilizing a new plan to fight discrimination and anti-LGBTI hate.



Cuba

- We thank the IE for the report and the consultations. We agree that all persons should have full respect for their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- In our country, CENESEX and the Health Ministry are responsible for the National Programme on sexual health, which includes education, research and care for LGBTI people and victims of child abuse.

Montenegro

- We thank the IE on her report. We are committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. These efforts are reflected through the improvement of the legislative framework and other measures important for the effective fight against homophobia and transphobia.
- Just a couple of days ago, Montenegro legalized same-sex partnerships thus becoming the first European country outside of Western Europe to legally recognise same sex couples.
- We strongly oppose all types of conversion therapies that have been well recorded in the IE report. Moreover, Montenegro and its health care system is offering a free of charge treatment to those transgender citizens who wish to go through the procedure of sex change.
- In the near future, we plan to initiate the procedure of regulating legal gender identification, which will enable changes in gender and identification numbers in personal documents, without the obligation to complete all procedures of medical gender reassignment, especially surgical interventions, in accordance with the ECRI recommendation and European court of human rights.

Australia

- Australia thanks the Independent Expert for his presentation and report and reiterates our strong support for his mandate.
- Australia is deeply concerned that violence and discrimination against LGBTI people has risen during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We thank the Independent Expert for bringing attention to the negative human rights implications of 'conversion therapy' practices. Diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are not an 'illness' requiring treatment. Australia recognises that these so-called 'conversion therapy' practices are thoroughly discredited and not supported by scientific or medical evidence.
- As a federation, Australia is working with its constituent jurisdictions to ensure such practices are not supported or occurring. We therefore ask the Independent Expert how governments can support community-level efforts to combat the stigma and discrimination that underpins so-called 'conversion therapy'.

Portugal

- Portugal welcomes the Independent Expert and his report.



- The so-called “conversion therapies” are based on the false assumption that sexual orientation and gender identity are disorders or “deviations” and that they could be healed, changed or suppressed.
- This attempt to pathologise SOGI and its derivations, which can go as far as the so-called “corrective rapes” of lesbian persons, constitute humiliating and degrading harmful practices that may amount to torture.
- Mr. Madrigal-Borloz’s, According to your report, almost half of these harmful practices are carried out by medical or mental health providers followed by faith-based organizations. Beyond the prohibition of such practices how can governments best engage with these actors in order to put an end to them? And what strategies would you recommend to governments to protect the mental health of persons who have to endure such practices?

Spain (video message)

- We have received with great interest your comprehensive report on the practice of so-called "conversion therapies" where it is evident that much remains to be done, especially in the field of education and awareness raising.
- In Spain, the express prohibition and limitation of these practices has been legislated so far at the regional level (by Autonomous Communities) but there is a short-term project to include it in future national legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, and the legal protection of trans people.
- Could you please detail from what age or on the basis of what criteria the supervision of educational or religious institutions mentioned in your report would be made?

Panama

- We thank the IE for the report on so-called conversion therapies which seeks to make pathological the existence of LGBTI persons.
- These practices are cruel and often due to asymmetric power relations. These therapies lack scientific foundation. We agree with the IE on the need to ensure the protection of LGBTI people and gender-diverse people.
- Panama does not promote these procedures and the Ombudsman office will file for complaints to investigate such cases.

Luxembourg

- Luxembourg thanks the independent expert for his report and for his exemplary work. We urge all member States to cooperate fully with his mandate.
- Conversion therapies" are likely to cause psychological and physical suffering and to provoke deep trauma. Subjecting LGBTI people to these practices is inherently degrading, inhuman and cruel and can be equated with torture.
- As you have pointed out, some harmful practices amount to forms of torture or inhuman treatment and are directed primarily at children and young adults up to the age of 24.
- Questions: How can the international community help to ensure that the voices of these young people are heard, to strengthen their legal capacity, and to break the



intergenerational forms of violence that these harmful practices entail? How do you plan to strengthen your collaboration with the various treaty bodies concerned in the future?

South Africa

- Thanks the IESOGI for the report and the recommendations as to what can be done to put an end to it. My Delegation supports its findings that conversion therapy is degrading and inhuman and cruel, a clear violation to the right of sexual and reproductive health and is irreconcilable with human dignity and it is particularly harmful practices on children.
- The South African Society of Psychiatricians states in a position statement that there is no scientific evidence that such therapies are effective in changing a person's sexual orientation. In 2015, owners of a conversion therapy camp in South Africa were found guilty of murder, child abuse and assault. And we have our experiences of harm during the apartheid period.
- Question: In his report, the IE identifies four models for legislating against conversion therapy. Which of these are, in his view, the most effective?

Costa Rica

- Thanks the IE for his report. We appreciate his dedication in fulfilling the duty of his mandate and we affirm our commitment.
- Conversion therapy is an unacceptable practice and takes place in at least 68 countries in all regions of the world, including in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- We are concerned that in the majority of cases children are subjected to these practices to meet their parents or community expectations regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.
- In Costa Rica we have a draft law that aims to prohibit these treatments. We echo the recommendations in the report. We raise our voice to put an end to conversion therapy and to protect the emotional and physical health of our children.
- I am pleased to report that since May, Costa Rica recognizes same sex marriage.

Czech Republic

- We thank the Independent Expert, Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz, for his report.
- 'Conversion therapies' based on an incorrect understanding of gender diversity are causing permanent and deep harm. Misguided practices, ranging from invalid use of medication to heinous physical and psychological violence often amount to criminal offences and their perpetrators must be held accountable.
- We need to keep in mind that victims of such degrading practices are typically children, sometimes as young as 13 years old. Promoters of these therapies are often family members, religious leaders and other authorities in the position of trust. These – instead of protecting young and vulnerable members of their community – coerce them to undergo the treatment and 'cure their disease'.
- The Czech Republic joins the Independent Expert and calls upon all countries to ban all forms of so-called 'conversion therapy'. We urge the international community to create



an environment that enables young people to explore and affirm their sexual orientation and gender identity freely and without fear.

- Question: Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, what measures can we take to mitigate the impact of current Covid-19 pandemic on young LGBT persons?

Comments and Answers by the IE SOGI

- Thanked the comments and the cooperation by the states.
- Drafting the report involved the inputs of many states, stakeholders and expert meetings and reports by victims. I hope that I am complying with the mandate on not only providing visibility in which violence and discrimination manifests itself on the everyday life of LGBT and gender-diverse persons, but very importantly, to also maintain the idea of open dialogue and open avenues of evidence gathering. This is why I appreciate the enormous participation.
- Regarding the point raised by the delegate of China, it would have been great to receive this information in the call for inputs or in the consultation. I want to highlight that the data that I used was both based in reports prepared by academia and civil society and Chinese courts themselves.
- A number of states have raised the issue of how these mechanisms operate in the real life of people. I really appreciate the engagement not only of states but of two UN agencies which work is absolutely fundamental in addressing this scourge of conversion therapy, UNICEF and UN Women.
- This mandate works with the notion of intersectionality, we hold in a body many identities in one physical space, that creates experiences of unique privilege or unique discrimination. Therefore I am grateful for the support on this issue by UNICEF and UN Women.
- I also wanted to let you know that my report aims to identify good practices in terms of states and I always focus very much on the issues of state responsibility, therefore public policies, legislation and access to justice. And what is very clear is that fighting conversion therapy requires a combination of these measures through integral policies from the state.
- I would like to underline the aspect that my mandate is dedicated to the thematic analysis to provide what we can see as theoretical and conceptual building block in the work of analyzing and deconstructing violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. And those building blocks interact with each other. The idea of decriminalization, raised by a number of delegations, the idea of depathologization, the idea of eliminating stigma lies on the root of all those building blocks. And now we have one other building block, which is the one relating to conversion therapies as practices leading to this strong call that I have made and that I hope I will be receiving acting upon today, which is the call for a global ban on these practices, which according to my legal analysis are cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Netherlands

- The Netherlands expresses its full support to Mr. Madrigal-Borloz and welcomes his report on practices of so-called 'conversion therapy'. We also welcome the guidelines



the expert has recently presented on COVID-19 response and recovery and the position of LGBTI persons.

- The report provides an exceptionally clear analysis leading to the conclusion: practices of “conversion therapy” are by their very nature degrading, inhuman and cruel and create a significant risk of torture. States have a responsibility to act and to examine specific cases in the light of international human rights obligations. We stress that the right to freedom of religion or belief cannot be invoked to justify such violations.
- We also emphasize the role of the Equal Rights Coalition and the UN LGBTI Core Group in New York to address this issue, to discuss the existence of this practice around the world and to keep this topic on the international agenda.
- In the Netherlands, there is an ongoing independent research about conversion therapy, which will result in recommendations on the options to deal with this practice.
- Question: Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, given the role of religion and belief and the position of children and young people when it comes to conversion therapy, what possibilities do you see to pro-actively address conversion therapy together with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Ahmed Shaheed, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, Najat Maalla M’jid?

Greece

- We would like to thank the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity for the presentation and the report on “conversion therapy”. Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, we agree with your assessment that “Practices of “conversion therapy” are discriminatory in nature, and may include actions akin to degrading, inhuman and cruel treatment.
- We would also like to thank you for your engagement on COVID-19 related issues.
- Greece is firmly committed to the protection and promotion of SOGI rights. Our legislation has been deeply reformed to reflect this commitment, inter alia as regards anti-discrimination legislation, the institution of the Civil Union, foster care by same-sex couples, as well as the lifting of major gender recognition restrictions regarding adults.
- The Greek Government will therefore continue taking initiatives aiming at improving the situation of LGBTI rights in greek society, seeking to ensure that there is no place for discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and gender Identity in Greece.

Finland

- Finland thanks the Independent Expert Victor Madrigal-Borloz for his report to the Council.
- Finland is strongly committed to equality and non-discrimination. Practices of “conversion therapy”, based on the incorrect and harmful notion that sexual and gender diversity are disorders to be corrected, are discriminatory in nature. They are also cruel and degrading and increase the risk for torture.
- It is clear that all Member States but also other stakeholders such as faith organizations, health workers as well as private sector actors should do more to combat this phenomenon.



- The role of faith leaders is particularly important in changing wrongful practices and attitudes regarding SOGI. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) has also recently reported on this. In Finland, the former Ark Bishop had a decisive role in bringing questions regarding diversity to the core of the discussion, not only in his church but also in the society at large.
- Question: Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, Could you further elaborate and give guidance on the opportunities of closer cooperation between LGBTI groups and faith leaders with the view of eliminating these harmful practices.

Austria

- We would like to thank Mr. Madrigal-Borloz for his report. It unfortunately reminds us once again that the lived experience of LGBTI people is often characterised by contempt and violence. It is precisely these experiences that make the work of the Independent Expert both challenging and essential. In this regard, we commend the work of Mr. Madrigal-Borloz and welcome his efforts to give visibility to the particular challenges faced by the LGBTI community in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Austria expresses its strong support for his mandate.
- We are deeply concerned by the false belief that a person's sexual orientation and gender identity can and should be changed. In this regard, the Austrian parliament unanimously adopted a resolution calling for a ban of the practice of conversion therapy.
- Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, could you elaborate on how practices of so-called "conversion therapy" specifically affect transgender people?

Nepal

- We appreciate the Independent Expert for the presentation of the report. The Constitution of Nepal has enshrined rights to equality and social justice as fundamental rights and provides for the right of gender and sexual minorities to inclusive participation in the State bodies. Citizenship certificates and passports have made "third" gender or "others" as a category. National census and electoral rolls include third gender as an option.
- Social inclusion and participation is an important aspect of Nepal's development approach to the accelerated achievement of sustainable development agenda. In this context, due attention has been paid to the participation of gender and sexual minorities in addition to public awareness on their sensitivities.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

- The United Kingdom underlines its support for the work of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. We welcome the report on the practices of "so called Conversion Therapy" by Mr Madrigal-Borloz to the Council.
- The UK Government agrees that efforts to end the barbaric practice of Conversion and regards all of these practices as abusive and harmful. We are considering proposals to end these practices for good in the UK, as clearly set out in the UK's 2018 LGBT Action Plan.



- We would welcome suggestions from the Independent Expert on how States can take practical steps to end Conversion Therapy everywhere.

Israel

- Israel wishes to thank the Independent Expert for his very relevant report on the issue of “conversion therapy”. Israel has always been a strong supporter of this mandate, and would like to encourage the Expert to focus his activities on issues such as this one.
- The practice of conversion therapy is widely condemned in Israel, and Israeli lawmakers are currently considering a bill designed to ban this practice. The proposed bill includes the removal of the license of a psychologist who uses conversion therapy, the imposition of a fine and even the possibility of jail for repeat offenses.
- Israel is strongly committed to insuring the protection and promotion of the rights of LGBTI people. Through the years we are proud to have undergone what has already been coined as “the Proud Revolution”. This constant improvement and strive for equality is also happening in the case of LGBTI youth, who today enjoy more acceptance in social and educational settings, and have access to supporting mechanisms on both the municipal and national levels.

Albania

- Albania wishes to thank Mr Victor Madrigal-Borloz for his extremely relevant report. We fully share his views on the practices known as "conversion therapies", namely that they are discriminatory in nature, and as described in this report, there is a particular urgency to protect children and young people from "conversion therapies", their prohibitions are desirable and the perpetrators must be punished, while recognizing the remedies available to the victims of such practices.
- Albania took a historic decision last month, approving the protocol to end medical interventions at birth in cases of intersex children.
- The Albanian government has adopted some of the most progressive LGBTI legislation in the region in close collaboration with LGBTI representatives. The National Action Plan 2016-2020 provides for a number of measures including legislation, strategies and policies to combat discrimination against LGBTI persons and to improve their inclusion.
- Finally, Albania expresses its support for the mandate of the EI and commends its technical advice and active work during the COVID-19 crisis.

Malta

- We warmly welcome the Independent Expert and thank him for his comprehensive report.
- The current COVID-19 pandemic affects us across all regions and poses an unprecedented threat to public health and leaves the most marginalized even more vulnerable. LGBTI persons are amongst the most excluded.
- Malta shares your concern on the imposition of practices of “conversion therapy” on LGBTI persons, particularly on children. In 2016, Malta enacted the Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression Act to end harmful conversion practices and affirm that all sexualities and genders are equal before the



law. Since then, we have cooperated with other countries in the sharing of our best practices and stand ready to continue doing so, as part of our unwavering commitment to promote and protect the rights of members of the LGBTI community both at home and abroad.

- In closing, I wish to ask you to share your views on the perceived notion that violations such as “conversion therapy” may be justified with religion and how this could be countered.

Brazil

- Brazil thanks the Independent Expert for his report on the so-called "conversion therapies".
- In Brazil, these therapies are prohibited. Such was the understanding of the Supreme Court, while assessing a Resolution from the Federal Council of Psychology on this matter.
- The Brazilian government has taken several steps to fulfill our continued commitment to the protection of the rights of LGBTI people. In addition to the work carried out by a dedicated unit on LGBTI rights in the structure of the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, we note that the Supreme Court has ruled that homophobia and transphobia are crimes equivalent to that of racism.

Georgia

- We thank the IE for providing a comprehensive report and we reinforce our support for his mandate. Let me stress that the matter of discrimination and violence against persons of diverse SOGI is a matter of serious concern to Georgia.
- In February 2020 Georgia adopted the first document on SOGI rights. Namely, chapter 15 of the National Human Rights Action Plan. It aims to combat hate crimes and raise awareness about SOGI and deliver services tailored to LGBTI people needs.
- COVID19 pandemic exposes that LGBTI people are experiencing multiple forms of vulnerability and the need for systemic support for the community.

Iceland

- Thanked the IE for his work and the important report. Iceland advocates for LGBTI rights and for your mandate. And thanked the IE for calling attention to the uneven impact of the pandemic on LGBT persons.
- Last year the Iceland Parliament passed new legislation on gender self-identification granting individuals above the age of 15 the right to register themselves with the identified gender. In addition, without specific requirement of medical diagnosis or interventions. The legislation is also intended to protect the right to bodily integrity.
- Conversion therapy goes against the spirit of this law. We would then like to thank the IE for drawing attention to this harmful practice and its different manifestations. Iceland stands firmly against these practices and will examine your report indeed.
- Question: In the absence of specific legal ban on conversion therapy, what type of existing legislation can be used to tackle these practices?



Italy

- Italy aligns itself with the EU statement and thanks the Independent Expert for his report. "Conversion therapy" is discriminatory and causes unacceptable profound psychological and physical damage.
- The fight against all forms of discrimination, including based on sexual orientation, represents a priority of the current Italian mandate on the Human Rights Council and, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are determined to further strengthen our efforts on the issue. The coronavirus has imposed unprecedented challenges to LGBTI persons.
- Italy joined the Equal Rights Coalition statement regarding the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTI persons and, in line with your call, urges all States to take into account the LGBTI specific needs and vulnerabilities when designing and implementing national, regional and international policies against the coronavirus.

Choice for Youth and Sexuality

- There is no scientifically accurate evidence that conversion therapy succeeds in changing the sexuality or gender identity of an individual[1]. There is ample evidence, however, that the effects of conversion therapy are intensely damaging to the psyche and mental state of the individual forced to endure the destructive practice. Conversion therapy disproportionately targets youth
- Attempts to change the sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression of children and youth is associated with multiple indicators of poor health and adjustment in young adulthood, such as depressive symptoms and suicidal behaviour, lower levels of life satisfaction, social support and socioeconomic status
- We call on states to adopt anti-discrimination laws that protect the LGBTI community and break the taboo of being LGBTI. Moreover, we call on states to forbid entities to practice conversion therapy based on their belief.

COC Nederland

- This statement was prepared in consultation with the Public Organization 'Insight' and LGBT Human Rights Centre 'Nash Mir'. We welcome the Independent Expert's report and recommendations to Ukraine.
- There is an increase of attacks against LGBTI communities by right-wing radicals in Ukraine. These hate crimes are not acknowledged therefore not investigated with the General Prosecutor's Office stating, "we have not had and will not have such crimes".
- Recently, three bills on criminalization of hate crimes against LGBTI people have been introduced in Parliament. However, the Law Enforcement Committee, influenced by religious groups, rejected these bills. This significantly impacts the chance these bills will be adopted.

ILGA-Europe (Joint Statement with ILGA World)

- The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association wholeheartedly welcomes the report presented today by the Independent Expert.



- This is the first time that a United Nations mandate holder devotes a whole report to shed light on the phenomenon of so-called “conversion therapy” and we are glad that such attention has been given to this issue.
- Policy makers need to take into account that these practices have the potential of leading people to extreme anxiety, depression and suicide. This harm and these completely unfair, avoidable deaths are one of the most deplorable outcomes of the ideas that support the existence of “conversion therapies”.
- We truly hope that this report will contribute to raise awareness among UN Member States, and even within UN mechanisms, about these and other many harms caused by “conversion therapies”.

Citizen Go

- “ ‘Sexual orientation’ involves an individual's internal perceptions of their sex, attraction, or sexual preferences. By definition it is about thoughts and feelings that the individual can change or want to change. “
- Do the Independent Expert and his supporters intend to limit the possibility of people seeking assistance from professionals, and do they want to limit the freedom of citizens to seek physical, psychological or even spiritual help?
- CitizenGO and the thousands of citizens who have signed its alerts and supported its initiatives call on international bodies, the Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations, Special Rapporteurs as well as independent experts to protect all rights and fundamental freedoms in an effective manner without being led by exclusive postulates of gender ideology or the LGBTI agenda.

ILGA World

- We welcome the Independent Expert’s report on ‘conversion therapies’. We specifically commend the inclusion of data on so-called ‘corrective rape’ against LGBT persons, particularly, women.
- Most states do not have adequate legislation to prevent and combat ‘corrective rape’. For example, the very definition of rape may not be gender-neutral or may be limited to only certain acts thus excluding sexual violence against LBT women and persons.
- From a legislative point of view, a good example is the Penal Code of Brazil. In 2018, it introduced a definition of ‘corrective rape’ as a rape committed “to control the victim's social or sexual behavior” and established increased penalties for it.
- Other factors, such as barriers to accessing legal and psychological aid or shelters, family pressure, lesbophobic or transphobic attitudes of police or doctors, even contribute to the problem.
- The problem of ‘corrective rape’ is real and urgently needs robust measures, including legislative and policy changes, organization of support services for survivors and data collection.



RFSL

- Statement on behalf of the Trans Advocacy Week
- We thank the Independent Expert on SOGI for his important report on so called “conversion therapy”. We complement the mandate holder to have given due consideration to trans persons.
- In fact, the few policies and laws that protect LGBT persons from conversion therapy often fall short of addressing the matter comprehensively and leave trans persons un- or weaker protected behind.
- Trans and gender diverse people, in particular children and adolescents, are at risk of being forced into “conversion therapies” because of their gender identity and gender expression.
- They aim to cancel our very personhood and can amount to torture and ill treatment. They lead to trauma, self-harm, breakdown of self-esteem, the inability to love oneself and increased suicide rates.
- Being a trans or gender diverse person is not a pathology; our gender identities are not conditions requiring to be treated or cured. On the contrary, gender diversity is a key step towards gender equality – this should be celebrated – not converted.

Right Livelihood Award Foundation

- We welcomes the report of the Independent Expert and appreciates the comprehensive overview on conversion therapy practices across the globe and their human rights implications.
- We would like to draw your attention to the worrying situation of the LGBTI community in Uganda, where not only some of these practices are widely used, as highlighted in the report, but homosexuality is illegal and same-sex relations can carry a life sentence.
- We urge the Council to call on the Ugandan government to decriminalise same-sex activity.

International Humanist and Ethical Union

- We welcome this excellent report revealing how the practice of “conversion therapy” remains a painful reality for many LGBTI individuals in the world today.
- The report directly implicates religious institutions as one of the main driving forces behind “conversion therapy”. One of the main religious arguments we have seen suggests that banning conversion therapy would violate freedom of religion or belief. This is misleading. Freedom of religion or belief is a limited right, and cannot be used to persecute others. We reiterate the report’s finding that a ban on conversion therapy would not affect practices that provide genuine support to LGBTI individuals in a manner that is respectful of their gender identity or sexual orientation.
- We need to subject to greater scrutiny the religious pseudo-scientific beliefs that underpin practices such as “conversion therapy”. We support a comprehensive ban on the practice, and we call on States to re-evaluate the charitable status of organizations that shamelessly promote it.



Final Remarks (IE SOGI)

- In my report, I presented ample evidence of the existence of practices of conversion therapy, my analysis that they are cruel, inhuman and degrading and create significant risk of torture, and the conclusion that decided action to eradicate them is an imperative under applicable international human rights law. I am thankful for the rich collection of statements that have been proffered by State and non-State entities during this Interactive Dialogue, including those that contain constructive criticism.
- I am delighted that many States have requested information as to what constitutes best practice; in general, I am of the opinion that only a combined action of public policy, legislation and access to justice within the context of a wide program of social inclusion will achieve that aim, a task for which I am so thankful to hear the generous words of UNICEF and UNWomen.
- I have already mentioned that, at my end, I designed the Interactive Dialogue having the experience of those joining it remotely in mind, and that I made significant efforts to attract thousands of stakeholders to our session. Out of respect for them, and because of my accountability to them, I must convey to you my observations about the conditions under which this event was carried out during the last three days.
- I am concerned that the meaningful participation of that person, of each and all of those persons, was impeded as a result of the design that was given to my Interactive Dialogue
- I urge you to use this experience as a base to evaluate current methods and procedures, so that these can be put at the service of the useful purpose of these Interactive Dialogues for the remainder of this session.