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**Oral Statement**  
**International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)**  
**24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Item 8: Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action**

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013**

*Statement read by: Dana Zhang*

Thank you Mr. President

This statement is made by the International Lesbian and Gay Association – the world federation of human rights-based LGBTI organizations, with over 1000 member organizations from 120 countries and all regions of the world.

This council has heard many times of the human rights violations faced by LGBTI people. These human rights violations continue unabated while this council deliberates.

In spite of this, in many places positive change is taking place. People of various religions, creeds, cultures, values, and politics are realizing that it is all people that have human rights, even those who might seem different.

This is happening partly because LGBTI people all over the world are “coming-out” and being open with parents, relatives, friends and communities about their sexual orientations, their gender identities and expressions, and their sex, with particular reference to intersex people. We pay tribute to those who are Intersex, Trans, Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay, and come out, often in the face of hardship and sometimes danger. Fear and hate can be driven out by understanding and acceptance.

While such incremental change happens at a local level, similar change should be fostered here in the international arena. On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vienna Declaration, we recognize the need for continued, open, inclusive and constructive dialogue between governments on this urgent issue.

This Council voted two years ago to “remain seized of the priority issue” of human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We thank South Africa for its commitment then in bringing that resolution. Many other States are supporting that process: having worked with South Africa in many different ways. In that light, we wish to thank Argentina, Brazil, France, Nepal, Norway and Poland, though there are many others.

We are thankful for South Africa’s continuing commitment and are looking forward to it convening the African Regional Workshop, the High-Level Seminar in Geneva, and then bringing this matter back to the Council in a timely manner. We, and other civil society organizations, are ready to continue our engagement with South Africa and others as this takes place, to ensure that the dialogue includes the voices of those most-affected.

Thank you, Mr. President