

**30th session of the Human Rights Council – September 2015**

**NGO Joint Statement - Item 3 ID Independent Expert on the Rights of Older Persons**

**Joint statement by the Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot Integratie Van Homoseksualiteit - COC Nederland, the International Lesbian and Gay Association, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, LGBT Denmark - The National Organization for Gay Men, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgendered People, the Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights – RFSL, Allied Rainbow Communities International, European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Federation<sup>1</sup>**

***By Michael Pelz***

Mr. President,

I am honoured to make this statement on behalf of COC Netherlands and 6 co-sponsoring NGOs. This statement has been prepared in consultation with 10 human rights organizations around the world, all deeply concerned about human rights for older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

We welcome and support the important work of the Independent Expert on the rights of older persons. Indeed, 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, struggle with income security, and are faced with multiple forms of discrimination.

Mr. President,

We noticed that the report does not examine the distinctive challenges faced by LGBTI seniors. Challenges of specific and differing kind for intersex, transgender and LGB persons, depending oftentimes on the local context and traditions.

Research has indicated that LGBTI seniors 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 or cisgender counterparts. They live in fear of discrimination, violence and bullying, and remain fearful and resistant to accessing health services, often out of concern for being treated unprofessionally. Many are also scared to move into assisted living institutions or

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<sup>1</sup> *This statement is endorsed by 10 NGO's, see list attached.*

elder care, fearing that their identities, as well as their chosen partners, will not be recognized or simply ignored.

Those who work with elders 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 countries, LGBTI seniors are simply invisible. They face pervasive and unique forms of discrimination and human rights violations that require the Independent Expert's attention.

Mr. President,

Resolution 24/20 on the human rights of older persons clearly and rightfully recognizes that the Independent Expert has the mandate on enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. The 2015 annual report justly states that older persons should be included in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of care. Sensitivity programmes should be integrated in every care setting. We stand eager to work with and support the Independent Expert, to share best practices, and to ensure that the violations of human rights of LGBTI seniors are included within forthcoming reports.

Thank you Mr. President

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country/Region</b>
AKAHATÁ – Equipo de trabajo en sexualidades y generos	Argentina
Allied Rainbow Communities (ARC) International	Global
Egale Canada Human Rights Trust	Canada
Griot Circle	United States
ILGA Europe	Europe
Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot Integratie Van Homoseksualiteit - COC Nederland	The Netherlands
Global Initiatives for Human Rights – GIHR	Global
International Lesbian and Gay Association – ILGA	Global
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission - IGLHRC	Global
International Service for Human Rights - ISHR	Global
LGBT Denmark - The National Organization for Gay Men, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgendered People	Denmark
Samoa Faafafine Association Inc.	Samoa
Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders - SAGE	United States
Seta Finland	Finland
Sosaiete O Faafafine In American Samoa - SOFIAS	American Samoa
Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights – RFSL	Sweden
Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby	Australia