

38th session of the Human Rights Council - Item 3
Interactive dialogue with the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against
women in law and in practice

20 June 2018

Statement by the European region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association
joined by the International Lesbian and Gay Association and Federatie van Nederlandse
Verenigingen tot Integratie van Homoseksualiteit - COC Nederland

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This statement has been prepared in consultation with the European Lesbian* Conference.

To begin, we would like to congratulate the new members of the Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice for their appointment. We look forward to working with all the Working Group Members, with a particular focus on lesbians*.

We use the term 'lesbian' with an asterisk to encourage a broad range of people to join us – our goal is to promote the use of the term 'lesbian' as there still remains a large political and cultural struggle for lesbian* visibility, empowerment and representation.

Given that the Working Group's core mandate, we view that our important role is to ensure that your work product is sensitive to all women, and of course, such by necessity includes lesbians*.

We strongly welcome references to LGBT persons, LBT women & families as well as SOGI in past reports and communications by the Working Group. Nevertheless, we appeal to the Working Group to ensure consistent inclusion of lesbians* within the best practice findings that you deliver.

Likewise, studies on the ways and means of cooperation with States to eliminate discrimination against women must by definition, include specific strategies to eliminate laws used to disproportionately criminalize and violate the human rights of lesbians*.

As persons living with multiple marginalized intersecting identities, we call on the members of the Working Group to conduct their work with utmost attention to factors such as inclusivity, diversity and accessibility when making recommendations on the improvement of legislation and implementation of laws to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We are far too often set apart and historically invisible. We ask that you use your power to take significant steps to support and enable lesbians* to enjoy equality and visibility!

We share the Working Group's concern over the 'unprecedented pushback across regions by an alliance of conservative political ideologies and religious fundamentalisms'. An anti-LGBT group in France, for example, recently was seen selling plastic dolls to protest against opening up the possibility for lesbians* and single women to undergo in vitro insemination. This is yet another

example, where, under the guise of protecting the family, lesbians* continue to have their right to making autonomous decisions about their own body and reproductive functions violated.

For all reasons outlined above, we strongly acknowledge and applaud the impact stemming from the Working Group's undertakings since its establishment in 2010, and would like to make the following recommendation followed by a question:

- Recommendation: To cooperate with and support the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, UN Women and relevant civil society actors to undertake a comparative legal analysis in order to capture, evaluate and provide strategic advocacy tools to help states discontinue harmful legal practices towards lesbians*.
- Question: What steps is the Working Group taking to meet with organisations led by or focused on lesbians* in its upcoming country visits?