53rd Human Rights Council Session
30th June 2023
Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women
Panel 1: Gender-based violence against women and girls in public and political life
Statement by the International Lesbian and Gay Association

Mr. President,

This statement is made on behalf of the International Lesbian & Gay Association, ILGA World.

Women’s rights to equal and active participation in public and political life and decision-making at all levels are key to achieving gender equality, peace and development¹ and are enshrined in major human rights instruments.²

We would like to draw the attention of the Council to the fact that lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women³ remain significantly underrepresented in public and political life and decision-making, including in the institutions of all states and in representative positions at the international level.⁴

This underrepresentation is caused and exacerbated by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including barriers to public and political participation and human rights violations that LBTI women continue to face, including criminalization, gender-based violence, the denial of socio-economic rights and political opportunities and lack of autonomy.

Restrictions on the rights of LBTI women have immense consequences for their participation in public and political life. For example, the inability to move and appear in public due to legal restrictions or the fear of violence violate LBTI women’s rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, which in turn limits their political agency⁵ and prevents them from achieving the full realization of their political rights.⁶

LBTI women also continue to face multiple barriers within political parties, where fear and violence may discourage LBTI candidates from running for elections.⁷ Moreover, organizations led by LBTI women continue to be particularly marginalized from political influence⁸ and LBTI women need to be stronger, more skilled and perform better than their non-LBTI counterparts to reach positions of power.⁹

LBTI women also face higher rates of online violence and abuse in attempts to undermine their political engagement and to silence LBTI women’s voices.¹⁰ LBTI activists and politicians who take an active role

---

¹ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
² Universal Declaration of Human Right; ICCPR (Articles 19, 21, 25); CEDAW (Articles 2, 3, 7), SDG 5.
³ LBTI women.
⁵ Human Rights Watch, “This Is Why We Became Activists” Violence Against Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women and Non-Binary People, 2022.
⁷ Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making, 2021.
⁸ UN Women, Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Lesbian, Bisexual Women, Transgender and Intersex Persons, 2016.
⁹ Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making, 2021.
¹⁰ Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights, No space for violence against women and girls in the digital world, 2022.
in public fora are particularly targeted for their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Such attacks further spread hateful narratives, limit their access to the democratic debate and discourage LBTI women from being politically active.

LBTI women stand at the core of women’s rights movements. Safeguarding and amplifying their voices is crucial to shed light on and to combat attempted backlashes against the human rights and women’s rights protection systems.

We call on states to take measures to prevent and combat violence and discrimination against all women and girls and to ensure the equal and active representation and participation of LBTI women in public and political life.

11 Amnesty International, Toxic Twitter, Triggers of violence and abuse against women on Twitter.