

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia

Joint Statement by Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and International Lesbian and Gay Association

Delivered by James Ambrose Bruce

Mr President,

This statement is also made on behalf of Micro Rainbow International, an organisation that addresses the issue of poverty of LGBTI people across the world and a coalition of Cambodian NGOs who work on the subject of human rights, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

We would like to congratulate the Special Rapporteur for his outstanding work in monitoring the situation of human rights in Cambodia over the last six years and we commend him for having consulted with local LGBTI NGOs.

Mr President

Cambodian LGBTI people are severely discriminated, abused and subjected to socio-economic exclusion from family, community members, employers, local authorities and the police.

Family rejection forces many LGBTI people to leave home, many give up school at a young age, become homeless and live in poverty. Families with LGBTI children feel ashamed and are pressurised by neighbours and relatives to reject them.

We are also aware that gays and transwomen are often arrested by the police and that lesbians and transmen are forced to marry by their families.

According to Cambodia's Ministry of Planning latest report, MDG1 is "*seriously off-track and requires robust intervention*". Such situation of poverty is widespread but when combined with sexual orientation, gender identity or expression issues, discrimination, and lack of access to public services it creates a situation of massive inequality for LGBTI people in Cambodia.

Mr President

We call on the Cambodian Government to:

- Immediately repeal laws that indirectly criminalize sexual orientation and gender identity and expression
- Take all measures necessary not only to reduce the widespread situation of poverty, but also to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence, which undermine LGBTI people's full enjoyment of their human rights;
- Engage with and consult the LGBTI community and those working on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression
- Depathologize sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, promote the psychological wellbeing of LGBTI people and ensure equal access to health and social services

Finally, we call on the future Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia to investigate the human rights situation of LGBTI people in his future reports.

We thank you.

This statement is endorsed by the following local NGOs:

- *Rainbow Community Advocacy Team (Rainbow CAT)*
- *Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK)*
- *Cambodia LGBT Legal Support (CLGBT)*
- *PFLAG Cambodia*
- *CamASEAN Youth's Future*
- *Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)*