

**31st Human Rights Council session**

**23 March 2016, 15:00**

**ITEM 10 – Technical Assistance and Capacity Building**

**Statement by International Lesbian and Gay Association**

*delivered by André du Plessis*

Mr President

Under Item 4, we made a statement cataloguing just a few of the many situations around the world where LGBTI persons face a wide range of often-horrific human rights violations.

Under Item 10, in the spirit of technical assistance and capacity building, we wish to share just a few of the many good practices and positive changes that we are seeing in all regions.

Education

Mr President

Ignorance breeds fear, and fear breeds exclusion. Therefore education campaigns raising awareness on the human rights issues facing LGBTI persons are right at the core of making a difference.

In Cambodia, the Ministry of Information is working with LGBT rights groups to create a regular radio program that discusses LGBT issues, with the aim of making society more welcoming. As society understands that yes, LGBT persons are people too, attitudes change.

In Bolivia, the government is backing a new video campaign to increase respect for elderly LGBT people, who are considered to be among Bolivian society's most discriminated groups. When people hear about the life of an older person who is, say, a lesbian, they shift their attitudes.

In Costa Rica, a project called Caja De Herramientas has been launched to promote awareness and share good practices about the inclusion of LGBTI persons in the workforce. Supported by the government, the initiative has created a toolbox that companies can use to analyse how they are respecting the rights of their LGBTI employees, and to develop actions to promote their inclusion.

Civil Society Space

Mr President

In order to raise awareness in societies, civil society needs space to flourish and share visions for change.

In that light, we warmly welcome the landmark ruling in Botswana, where the Court of Appeal last week upheld the right to freedom of expression and association in the case of the NGO “Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana” (LEGABIBO), instructing the relevant government department to register them.

In a similar vein, we also welcome the court decision in Tunisia in February, ruling that a local NGO working on LGBT issues could resume normal activities.

### *Changes in Laws*

Mr President

Laws and policies are also changing.

For example, we warmly welcome the progress made in the Seychelles where the cabinet of ministers has recently proposed to the national assembly to repeal the law criminalizing same-sex sexual activity.

And just a few days ago, the Norwegian Ministry of Health published a proposal that would finally allow individuals to self-determine their gender without having to undergo any compulsory requirements, like sterilisation. If passed, this would be a great step forwards.

These are just a few places experiencing positive changes. We encourage governments and other actors around the world to follow these and many other examples.

Thank you.