



ALLIED RAINBOW COMMUNITIES INTERNATIONAL

Joint Statement:

Allied Rainbow Communities International, International Service for Human Rights, ILGA, IGLHRC, Federation for Women and Family Planning

Statement to Panel on “Protection of the Family and its Members”

- delivered by John Fisher, 15 September, 2014

Thank you, Mr. President, distinguished Moderator,

I take the floor on behalf of a group of NGOs to make three key points:

Firstly, families come in a **diversity of forms**. This is not a matter of political debate, just a matter of social fact. Any discussion of protection of the family at the Council must therefore include consideration of how to address the distinct needs of families in all their diversity.

Secondly, any discussion at the Human Rights Council must necessarily focus on human rights. Families are not themselves rights-holders, but they can be sites for **transmission of values**, both positive and negative. Within the family, one can learn values consistent with human rights, to celebrate diversity, value gender equality, to treat others with the dignity and respect to which all human beings are entitled. Conversely, within the family, one can also learn values inconsistent with human rights, such as stereotyping or prejudice towards those of a different race or religion, sexual orientation or gender identity, caste or class.

Thirdly, individuals within the family are rights-holders. As the title of the panel recognizes, a rights-based approach to this topic must involve consideration of **protection of family-members**, particularly those who may be **vulnerable or marginalized**.

As Special Procedures and treaty bodies have recognized, marital rape, domestic violence and child abuse remain rife in all regions of the world, patriarchal laws, policies, practices and traditions continue to deny women equality within the family, LGBTI persons are sometimes disowned, or subject to abuse, forced to undergo involuntary psychological or medical treatment, and at greater risk of homelessness or suicide.

We would therefore ask the panelists:

1. What can States and this Council do to better address the reality of family diversity?
2. How can States help to encourage families to transmit values consistent with human rights, such as equal respect for all human beings?
3. What practical measures can be taken to ensure protection of the rights of family-members, particularly those who may be vulnerable or marginalised?

Thank you.