

**1001st Meeting of the Permanent Council
22 May 2014**

Joint statement on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

Delivered on behalf of the following 43 participating States: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, the European Union and its member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Monaco, Moldova, Mongolia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and the United States.

Mr. Chairperson,

Every 17th of May, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia is celebrated because it was on May 17, 1990 that homosexuality was removed from the International Classification of Diseases of the World Health Organization.

This is an occasion for us to reflect on the situation of LGBTI persons in the OSCE region. Every day, LGBTI persons face discrimination or are even victims of acts of violence solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is hard to believe that in this day and age homosexuality is still criminalised in some OSCE participating States.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms belong to every human being, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

All OSCE participating States have an obligation to protect the rights of LGBTI persons under international human rights law. Therefore, we express our concern that some OSCE participating States have adopted laws that restrict the human rights of LGBTI persons and subject them to discrimination.

Mr Chairperson,

We are fully aware that, for some, LGBTI issues are “sensitive”. We represent societies in which these persons not too long ago would often meet little respect, and in some of our countries they would even have been treated as criminals. But cultural, traditional or religious values cannot justify any form of discrimination, including discrimination against LGBTI persons.

We have seen that change in attitudes does not happen overnight. Political leaders should help fight intolerance, and not reinforce it by taking action against members of this group, or by introducing legislation curbing their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association. LGBTI persons have the same universal human rights as all other persons.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that we will continue to press the participating States of the OSCE to live up to their commitments to fight against all forms of discrimination, and uphold the basic contract any government should have with its people. The criminalisation of and intolerance towards homosexuality is clearly incompatible with the fundamental OSCE commitments regarding human rights.

Thank you.