

## **Joint Statement on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia**

*As delivered by Georgia on behalf of the following 43 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the European Union and its Member States, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States of America*

*1186th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 17, 2018*

Today, on 17 May, we mark the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, an occasion to celebrate diversity around the world.

As enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the universality of human rights and the intrinsic nature of human dignity apply to every human being. In adopting The Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents, OSCE participating States have committed themselves to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all and to “promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social and cultural and other rights and freedoms, which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development.” The participating States also have committed themselves without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. In Madrid in 2007, they reiterated their commitment to “effectively combat all forms of discrimination.” In that regard, we emphasize that there can be no hierarchy between different grounds of discrimination, all of which are equally reprehensible.

Over recent decades, huge strides have been taken to safeguard the human rights of LGBTI persons in our region. However, we still have a long road left to travel. Within the OSCE region, LGBTI persons continue to face discrimination or acts of hate and violence because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Same sex relations are still criminalized in a few OSCE participating States, and laws seeking to restrict the human rights of LGBTI persons have been passed or are under consideration in others.

We condemn any violence, arrest, detention, torture, and killing of people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as those subjected to abuse by association. All participating States must hold those involved accountable and take steps to prevent future violations and abuses.

We are fully aware of the sensitivity of LGBTI issues for some states around this table. We also acknowledge that, even in our own societies, violence and discrimination against LGBTI

people does not fully belong to the past. However, we stand firm in our commitment to ensure full human rights for all. By doing so, we live up to our shared responsibility to provide the conditions for safer and more tolerant societies as a part of our comprehensive approach to security.

This year's topic for the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, "Alliances for Solidarity," reminds us that no fight can be won in isolation. It highlights the importance for all vulnerable groups, as well as people subject to multiple forms of discrimination, to remain allies in the fight for the recognition of their rights and the elimination of all forms of intolerance. This fight could not happen without the courageous engagement of human rights defenders, activists, journalists and other media actors and civil society organisations working to advance human rights for LGBTI persons and other vulnerable groups.

In that regard, we recognize the contribution of the ODIHR in supporting civil society organisations working in the field of promoting mutual respect and understanding and combating intolerance and discrimination, including hate crimes, and in helping them build partnerships among themselves. We encourage the ODIHR, the other autonomous institutions, the field operations and the Secretariat to strengthen their cooperation in that regard and bolster their outreach towards civil society organisations.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to combat violence, discrimination, and criminalization on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.