Mr. President,

First and foremost we want to thank the Independent Expert, Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz for his report.

For Belgium the fight against human rights violations based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression remains at the top of its national and international priorities. While fully aligning itself with the statement delivered by the EU, Belgium would like to add the following in its national capacity.

Alongside the legal recognition of gender identity, Belgium believes that special attention to gender expression, specifically as a legitimate ground for gender identity, would benefit the fight against LGBTQI-phobic violence and the enjoyment of human rights by all.

In accordance with this approach, the Belgian legislation prohibiting discrimination between women and men has been amended in 2014 in order to include, alongside an individual’s sex, their gender identity or gender expression as equally forbidden grounds of discrimination. Moreover, Belgium amended its domestic legislation on transsexuality in January 2018, allowing transgender individuals to change the registered sex of their official identification documents without medical certificates or involuntary medical treatment. This allows people to have their factual gender expression legally acknowledged, without the need to conform with all aspects, including medical ones, of predefined gender identities. The aim of the reform was to depathologize transsexuality and legally recognize gender identities and expressions.

Mr. Madrigal-Borloz, could you elaborate on how the role of civil society can help to create an environment conducive for national reforms to ensure respect of gender identity?

I thank you.