

EU Remarks - United Nations: High-Level Meeting of the Members of the LGBT-Core Group

Summary: 26 September 2013, New York - Remarks by Ms. Mara Marinaki, Managing Director Global and Multilateral Issues Department, EEAS, European Union, at the High-Level Meeting of the Members of the LGBT-Core Group on The Role of the UN in ending violence & discrimination against LGBT-people

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Compliments to the Netherlands for taking the initiative for this ministerial level meeting and the OHCHR for its leadership, an initiative that can count on the warm support of all the members of the LGBT Core Group, as gathered here today. This event, the first ever of its kind at the UN, can prove to be ground breaking.

Reaffirm the commitment of the European Union to the entitlement of all people, wherever they are, to enjoy the full range of human rights - and to do so without discrimination.

Around the world, the issues of gender identity and sexual orientation continue to be used as a pretext for serious human rights violations. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people are still subject to persecution, discrimination and ill-treatment - which often involves extreme forms of violence.

Around 80 states still criminalise same-sex adult relations, and a number of states may even impose the death penalty. Let us be clear: this is incompatible with international human rights law and we have an obligation to act on it. Also regarding laws that criminalise public discussion and/or expression of homosexuality. These are an unacceptable limitation to the freedom of expression, association and assembly.

LGBTI persons have the same rights as all other individuals: no new human rights are created for them and none should be denied to them. The EU is committed to the principle of the universality of human rights and reaffirms that cultural, traditional or religious values cannot be invoked to justify any form of discrimination, including discrimination against LGBTI persons.

The Council of the EU has recently (24 June 2013) adopted Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. These are at the core of the EU's human rights policies.

The EU Guidelines - based on international legal standards including those set by the United Nations and Council of Europe - provide for different tools within the EU's external action. The four priority areas of action are Decriminalisation and combatting discriminatory laws and policies, Promoting equality and non-discrimination, Combating LGBTI-phobic violence, Support and protection for human rights defenders.

The Guidelines are put in concrete action by my service in various ways, just to mention a few: démarches by the EU Delegations, at numerous occasions I have issued public

Statements (e.g. 20 June 2013, on adoption of 'anti-propaganda law' Russia), by raising LGBTI rights in the political dialogues and human rights dialogues with third countries, by supporting civil society (e.g. Cameroon, ever more pressing after death of gay activist Eric Ohena Lembembe) including support via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR, numerous projects empowering NGOs to combat prejudice and discrimination).

The EU is well aware that the promotion of human rights on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity can lead to sensitive discussions, worldwide and including in the EU itself. However, that doesn't ever justify silence where one should speak out. Building on international standards and its own legislative framework the EU is committed to advancing the human rights of LGBTI persons in a meaningful and respectful way.

Our meeting today is a perfect illustration of how we can and should work together, reaching out to other countries, with the overall goal of the same human rights being applied to every person everywhere without discrimination - in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1:

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'.

Also available at: http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_14003_en.htm