

High-Level Meeting of the Members of the LGBT Core Group

Statement delivered by Gerard van Bohemen Deputy Secretary, MLG 26 September 2013

New Zealand is a strong supporter of human rights equality and non-discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. We condemn acts of violence against LGBT persons and are concerned by the incidence of discrimination and violence based on perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in all regions of the world.

We welcome the increased visibility that the UN is affording to the fight against violence and discrimination based on perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, and we have been pleased to see leadership from the very top of this organisation, from the Secretary-General himself and from the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I wish to reaffirm New Zealand's commitment to this Group and leadership it is taking on the issue. We must continue to work together to raise awareness and respect for LGBT equality among member states.

New Zealand's commitment to ending violence and discrimination against LGBT people at the United Nations reflects the progress we have made on LGBT rights as a country –

New Zealand elected the world's first transgender Member of Parliament;
We have introduced transgender passport options; and
The New Zealand Parliament has recently adopted marriage equality legislation.
The last point is particularly important because it means not only can same sex couples marry, they are also eligible under the Adoption Act 1955, to apply jointly to adopt a child.

As we acknowledge in today's declaration, the situation in our countries is not perfect. In New Zealand we recognise that violence experienced by gay, lesbian and transgender people in family relationships is one area that remains a challenge. But we are committed to working for the larger freedom referred to earlier by Secretary of State Kerry.

We look forward to working with the LGBT Core Group, civil society, and other states in forging a cross-regional path forward on this important issue.