

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE OSLO CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS,
SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY**

Oslo, 15-16 April 2013

Your Excellency, Espen Barth Eide, Foreign Minister of Norway,
Your Excellency, State Secretary Gry Larsen,
Your Excellency, Director-General Bente Angell-Hansen of Norway,
Your Excellency, Director-General Jerry Matjila of South Africa,
Your Excellency, Minister for Women's Rights of the French Republic, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem,
United Nations Assistant-Secretary General Ivan Simonovic,
Excellencies,
Distinguished friends,

I am pleased to greet the participants in this important conference.

We should all be outraged when people suffer discrimination, assault and even murder – simply because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

We should all speak out when someone is arrested and imprisoned because of who they love or how they look. This is one of the great, neglected human rights challenges of our time. We must right these wrongs.

Governments have a legal duty to protect everyone. But far too many still refuse to acknowledge the injustice of homophobic violence and discrimination.

We need to document this problem and share information with States on a regular basis for discussion and action.

We must institutionalize our efforts to address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We need public education to change popular attitudes.

Some will oppose change. They may invoke culture, tradition or religion to defend the status quo.

Such arguments have been used to try to justify slavery, child marriage, rape in marriage and female genital mutilation.

I respect culture, tradition and religion – but they can never justify the denial of basic rights.

My promise to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members of the human family is this: I am with you. I promise that as Secretary-General of the United Nations, I will denounce attacks against you and I will keep pressing leaders for progress.

I am committed to leading a global campaign in partnership with the United Nations human rights office. I count on others to join us.

Together, we can make the world safer, freer and more equal for everyone.

Thank you.