

UN Human Rights Council

Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation

35th Session, Item 3 – June 6, 2017

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Equal Rights Coalition. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the first report by the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The report is a very valuable starting point for the Independent Expert's important work. We support the approach and methodology the Independent Expert has chosen. The Equal Rights Coalition members look forward to working with the Independent Expert.

The Equal Rights Coalition was established in 2016 by Uruguay and the Netherlands because of our deep concern about the serious levels of violence and discrimination targeting LGBTI persons as documented by various international, regional and national bodies. We have established the Coalition to advance the human rights of LGBTI-persons, working in close engagement with all relevant stakeholders. This includes regional and multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and of course the LGBTI-community itself. The [35] member countries of the Equal Rights Coalition have committed to strengthening cooperation in, coordination of, and communication about our efforts to advance the human rights of all persons regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics.

Like the Independent Expert, the Equal Rights Coalition aims to build bridges, to search for common ground and engage in a spirit of open, respectful and constructive dialogue and cooperation with all States and relevant stakeholders.

The Equal Rights Coalition consults with civil society and the LGBTI-community to ensure our individual and combined international efforts adhere to the principle of "Do No Harm". Our aim is to avoid undermining or further marginalizing LGBTI-persons or other persons in vulnerable situations and instead create an enabling environment in which their human rights can be respected, protected and promoted.

Mr. President,

The Independent Expert has chosen a theme - diversity in humanity, humanity in diversity – to which the members of the Equal Rights Coalition very much subscribe. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind.

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated: "I appeal to all governments and societies to promote the values of tolerance and respect for diversity, and to build a world where no one has to be afraid because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We wholeheartedly subscribe to that appeal.

Recognizing that also in our own countries there is room for improvement, we stand ready to learn from legislative processes and other positive examples aimed at strengthening the protection and promotion of equal rights for LGBTI persons and to share our experiences in repealing discriminatory laws, improve responses to hate-motivated violence, and promoting legal protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The member countries of the Equal Rights Coalition strongly encourage the Independent Expert to continue to fulfill his mandate as laid down in Council resolution 32/2 and look forward to cooperating with the Independent Expert.

Thank you, Mr. President.