



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Holy See and Russian Federation on International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOT)

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 21, 2015

I would just like to express on behalf of my delegation, the deep regret we have that the Holy See found it necessary after there was, what I heard to be, a chorus of voices not arguing for any special rights, but laying out the principle that has been often affirmed in OSCE decisions, which is that human rights apply to all persons without exception.

To his objection that he received no heads-up: unless the Vatican claims special purview over the topic of LGBT people, I don't think that there is a right to heads-up when the tradition in this chamber is that we make a courtesy effort to give each other a heads-up when we are talking about something that pertains directly to a colleague's own country. But unless the Holy See sees LGBT people as its specific purview, I don't see why there is any objection.

To the statement that there is no consensus on this topic: well, I agree, and think it is deeply regrettable that a Church that has such a long tradition of defending human dignity has so far been unable to join the vast majority of those in this chamber in publically affirming its commitment to the human dignity of all people. I would remind him - I would remind our distinguished colleague - that, in fact, consensus is not a criterion for what is allowed to be raised in the Permanent Council. Arguably, what we already have consensus on is the stuff we don't need to raise, except where it is not being observed. The Permanent Council is a forum for raising issues we would like to reach consensus on, or for identifying areas where our commitments have not been upheld.

Finally, I'd like to say that, despite objecting to the first two-thirds of the Holy See's statement, I do think that the view that the representative of the Holy See expressed toward the end of his statement – that attacks on people because of their sexual orientation are deplorable, and that they deserve condemnation – is completely in consensus with the statements made by many of the rest of us. So perhaps there is more consensus here than was first recognized.

And finally, I cannot help but agree that attacks on people who express a dissenting view, who are, as of yet, not willing to recognize that all people deserve the same rights, who are not willing to endorse the universal principles of human rights, or who choose to espouse views that would exclude certain people: they may be wrong, they may even be evil, but they do not deserve attacks. They do not deserve attacks. They deserve debate, they deserve respectful debate and exchange of views, but they do not deserve attacks. And I share the concern that anybody would be attacked for espousing a view on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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With great respect for the long-standing and numerous statements about human dignity that have been offered by a variety of leaders in the Catholic Church, I would submit to our distinguished colleague from the Holy See that the fact that the Russian Federation is the State that is jumping to his defense is worth reflection.

Thank you.