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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a. i. Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 19, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

May 17th marked the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. This day is set aside to promote respect for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons worldwide by coordinating international events, many of which are being organized or were organized by NGOs in the OSCE participating States.

The United States remains concerned that people continue to be killed, arrested, and harassed in the OSCE area because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This day serves as a reminder to us all of the importance of respecting the human rights of all people and of combating climates of intolerance that fuel human rights abuses against citizens in our states.

We are also troubled by the criminalization of certain forms of sexual orientation in many countries, including some OSCE participating States, and we urge governments to end such restrictions.

We are concerned as well by the inability of many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals to enjoy their right to assemble peacefully in Pride marches and other events because of denials of permits to organizers or an unwillingness to defend their physical safety when they peacefully assemble.

Too often, government officials in some OSCE states make public statements that isolate and decry lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, rather than acknowledging them as citizens equally deserving of human rights under the law.

We encourage participating States to address human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity and to explore opportunities for outreach and constructive dialogue to enhance understanding and awareness of these issues within a human rights framework.

With the persistence of hate crimes and other forms of intolerance against these communities in the OSCE area, we must work harder to implement the commitments that we have already undertaken. In particular, we urge participating States to implement Decision No. 9/09 on Combating Hate Crimes, which was adopted in December 2009 at the Athens Ministerial. Participating States must honor their commitments under the Decision to collect and report data to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and to adopt, as appropriate, and implement hate crimes legislation. We regret that some participating States

still claim that privacy protections prevent them from collecting data necessary for documenting and combating discriminatory practices.

The United States recognizes the broader responsibility we share to end human rights violations against all people, including those who are marginalized, and we take this opportunity to renew our commitment to addressing discrimination and intolerance in all their forms. As Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said earlier this year, "In our work, we must openly and explicitly affirm our commitment to the human rights of all persons, including LGBT people."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.