



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### Statement on LGBT Rights in Russian Federation and Moldova

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 22 , 2012

We take this moment to subscribe to the joint statement of Canada, Iceland, Switzerland, and Norway delivered at the Permanent Council on March 15, which articulated concerns about the newly adopted legislation in St. Petersburg, Russia, banning "public action aimed at propagandizing sodomy, lesbianism, bisexualism, and transgenderism among minors," as well as the recent administrative decisions in several Moldovan municipalities which aim to prohibit the promotion of "non-traditional sexual orientations" and to prohibit "homosexual demonstrations."

We are concerned when institutionally adopted decisions and legislative initiatives purposely attempt to discriminate against certain groups. The St. Petersburg legislation and the Moldovan administrative decisions violate the fundamental freedoms of persons on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. They are at odds with regional and international human rights standards, including the 1990 Copenhagen Document, which lays the foundation for our collective OSCE commitments on nondiscrimination.

For over twenty years, the OSCE has worked determinedly to combat all forms of discrimination, underscoring the vital role that tolerance and understanding play in achieving and preserving stable democratic societies. In 2009, we took an important step forward when we committed to the Athens Ministerial Decision on Combating Hate Crimes, which further developed OSCE principles on tolerance and non-discrimination and created new commitments for participating States on hate crimes. This decision recognized that "manifestations of discrimination and intolerance threaten the security of individuals and societal cohesion."

We note further that recently, the United Nations Human Rights Council held its first dedicated discussion on the issue of discrimination and violence on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. In a moving speech to the Council on March 7<sup>th</sup>, UN Secretary-General Ban observed that "discrimination directed at people just because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender . . . is also a violation of international law." UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay also noted that laws that criminalize same-sex relations, or contain vague prohibitions that are applied in a discriminatory way to prosecute lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people not only breach international human rights law, but also cause unnecessary suffering, reinforce stigma, fuel violence and undermine efforts to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS.

In light of the wide-ranging OSCE commitments described above to which all participating States have agreed, we urge relevant authorities in Russia and Moldova to reverse these actions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.