



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# Statement on International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Gary Robbins  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 17, 2012

Today, May 17, marks the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, or “IDAHO.” In honor of this day, we celebrate the diversity and efforts of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community and individuals around the world. We commend the NGOs that are organizing special events in more than ninety countries worldwide, including in the OSCE region, we equally appreciate our fellow participating States who have enshrined the protection of the rights of LGBT persons in their policies and their legislations.

Specifically, we commend Ireland’s Education Minister, Ruari Quinn, who recently announced plans to address bullying in schools, particularly homophobic bullying. We applaud his commitment to safe and supportive schools that welcome and nurture young people, including young LGBT persons. We also extend our praise to those NGOs in the United Kingdom, Canada, and France which will target the issue of homophobia in education as part of their IDAHO efforts.

In our country, we have witnessed how such harassment and violence can end in the tragic loss of life—through suicide as well as murder. As part of an initiative to prevent bullying, President Obama and Secretary Clinton joined other officials and public figures last year to share a message of hope with LGBT youth through the ‘It Gets Better’ campaign. No one should live in fear of harassment or violence due to sexual orientation or gender identity.

We are disappointed that numerous OSCE participating States continue to silence the voices of LGBT persons and their allies. We remain gravely concerned that numerous OSCE participating States restrict the fundamental freedoms of all persons, including LGBT persons, in blatant disregard of their OSCE commitments on equality, tolerance and non-discrimination that guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms to everyone, without distinction of any kind. We reject the disturbing practice of legislation that impinges on the fundamental freedoms of all persons, particularly LGBT individuals, to exercise their freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and belief under the guise of banning so-called “gay propaganda.”

People continue to be killed, arrested, and harassed in the OSCE area because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. With the persistence of hate crimes and other forms of prejudice, we urge participating States to implement all of their OSCE commitments and specifically Ministerial Decision No. 9/09 on Combating Hate Crimes.

The United States recognizes the broader responsibility we share to end human rights violations against all people, especially those who are marginalized, and we take this opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the fight against discrimination and intolerance in all their forms.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.