



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT ON LGBT RIGHTS IN NORWAY**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile  
to the Permanent Council,  
Vienna, 24 October 2013

Mr Chairman,

I have on several occasions raised issues in the Permanent Council concerning tolerance and non-discrimination against LGBT persons.

I have argued against certain laws pertaining to the LGBT community in some OSCE participating States and I have underlined that LGBT persons are entitled to the same rights and the same protection given to other persons by the universal human rights.

When I last spoke about LGBT rights in the Permanent Council, in June this year, I mentioned that religion has been used to justify discrimination against LGBT persons.

In my statement in June I went on to say that I in my bible find only a message about compassion, understanding and tolerance.

On that occasion one colleague thanked me for an interesting, but personal, interpretation of the Bible. Another colleague regretted my attack on our European Christian heritage.

Mr. Chairman,

I believe that discussions about LGBT among the 12 bishops of the Church of Norway last week would be of interest to members of the Permanent Council.

The Church of Norway holds a prominent position in Norwegian society. 77 per cent of Norway's inhabitants are members. The key to its continued relevance might be found in the Church's openness to debate and change.

While the barrier against women has already been broken down with 4 out of 12 bishops being female; the church is now engaging with the issue of same-sex marriage.

At the episcopal conference last week, 8 out of the 12 bishops argued that there is a doctrinal foundation for same-sex marriage in the Bible. As the bishops in question noted themselves: “When two people wish to spend the rest of their lives together on the basis of mutual love, there is fundamentally no difference between homosexual and heterosexual love, even though there is a difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality (...).” They went on to state that “the Church’ historical condemnation and rejection of homosexual relationships has caused suffering and heavy burdens for those affected. This kind of condemnation has proven to be in conflict with Jesus’ emphasis on the precedence of the commandment of love.”<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to reach a consensus, the 8 bishops now in favour of allowing same-sex marriage in a Church ceremony, suggested that the Church of Norway introduce a prayer of intercession for same-sex couples after their civil marriage. The four remaining bishops rejected this compromise, but did so with reference to an agreement reached at the 2008 episcopal conference, in which they decided that prayer of intercession “may take place on the basis of each priest’s individual pastoral judgment and responsibility.”

Mr Chairman,

The LGBT issue is sensitive in all OSCE participating States, including in Norway. I can think of no better advocate of tolerance towards LGBT persons, than prominent religious leaders.

Thank you Mr Chairman

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<sup>1</sup> Unofficial translation by the Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OSCE