

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1107th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

7 July 2016

On lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons

In this important period for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, which is seeing an increase in the number of “pride parades”, the European Union would like to recall its support for LGBTI persons throughout the world against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

These events offer us an opportunity to turn to the situation of LGBTI persons in the OSCE area, where discrimination or violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity remain frequent, including in the countries of the European Union. Homosexuality is still criminalized in some participating States. The horrific attack in Orlando was aimed at the LGBTI community. We should like to reiterate our most sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the people of the United States of America as a whole for this tragedy.

We are also disturbed by the existence and recent adoption of laws restricting the rights of LGBTI persons or the recent ban on “gay pride” events in some participating States. While we understand that the gay pride and trans pride parades in Istanbul were not authorized for security reasons, we stress the responsibility of authorities to protect parades in the event of threats to their security and we regret the use of force by the police to disperse the participants who were seeking to demonstrate on 19 June and to make a statement to the press on 26 June.

The EU would like to recall here that human rights and fundamental freedoms apply to all human beings, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. As Pope Francis recently stressed, LGBTI persons should be respected rather than discriminated against.

A number of recent events nevertheless give us reason to be hopeful about progress in the rights of LGBTI persons in the world. We welcome the organization in numerous cities in the OSCE area, in some cases for the first time, of pride parades. We also welcome the adoption on 30 June by the United Nations Human Rights Council on the initiative of a group of Latin American States of a resolution deploring acts of violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and creating a mandate for an expert independent of the UN on these matters. Finally, we welcome the UN’s Free & Equal campaign intended to promote greater respect for LGBTI persons throughout the world.

The EU is aware of the importance of a strong civil society and of respect for human rights to combat violence and extremism and permit all citizens to live without

discrimination. As illustrated by the smooth organization of pride parades across the OSCE area, the right to peaceful assembly and association are important elements in this regard.

In conclusion, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the equality and dignity of all human beings regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.