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LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

I should begin stating that the name of my organization, Finnish Organization for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights, is a misnomer. We are not arguing for any special rights, but for the universally recognized human rights for all people. Human rights belong equally to all people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. This has been clearly demonstrated by the so called Yogyakarta principles and duly noted by United Nations Secretary General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and treaty and charter based human rights bodies, as well as by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Yet when I read the Meeting Manual of this gathering I cannot find any mention of sexual orientation or gender identity. It would seem that gays, lesbians, bisexual or transpeople have no fundamental rights, or that they are of so minor importance that they are fit to be discussed only in some side events. I may be a naïve NGO representative, but I would like to hear why OSCE cannot accept that human rights belong to all. Especially I would like hear from the representative of the Holy See, if violence and discrimination of some people is really not a proper subject for OSCE.

Secondly, I must thank ODIHR for the opportunity to speak to this highly regarded audience and express my gratitude for its impressive work on preventing and monitoring of hate crimes. The various guides ODIHR has published relating to hate crimes are very useful and the monitoring data it has gathered are quite instructive. We might note, that some countries which diligently apply ODIHR guidelines have reported shockingly high number of hate crimes against all kinds of minorities including gays, lesbians, bisexual and transpeople. Consequently these countries are also able to effectively fight these crimes. On the contrary, some countries appear to be quite uncaring.

An example of the latter is the Russian Federation. It seems that its government is not interested on the human right of gays, lesbians, bisexual or transpeople. Recently many Russian regional legal bodies have accepted laws that appear to prohibit any positive information about sexual orientation or gender identity, despite the fact the Russia accepted the Council of Europe's Recommendations to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Russian authorities also forbid any so called Pride events, contrary to the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. I would like to hear from the representative of the Russian Federation, would it really hurt to follow the international community and recognize that human rights belong to all.