

## **On Importance of Combating Intolerance and Discrimination on the Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the OSCE Region**

ILGA-Europe recognises the progress made within the OSCE political context with regards to combating intolerance and discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. ODIHR does important and courageous work on collecting data on hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. More and more participating states express their concern with acts of discrimination and violence against lesbian and gay people, as well as express their support for an explicit inclusion of sexual orientation in the tolerance and non-discrimination mandate of the OSCE. These are very positive developments, which we hope will result in concrete actions by the participating states.

Famous contemporary musician Moby said that today intolerance exists and has its voice heard because others are silent, and thus complicit in their silence.

So, while we recognise significant positive developments, we believe there is a lot of work still to be done in order to give sexual orientation and gender identity same recognition as is given in the OSCE context to race, ethnicity, religion and belief, and we call upon the participating states to make this recognition explicit. As an NGO we can only bring to your attention cases of hate crimes, violence, and discrimination. But we do not have the right to vote, it rests with delegations of the participating states. And we do not have a direct voice in internal discussions. Therefore we call upon the participating states that are supportive of our cause to be our voice in the OSCE, not to give up before the opposing parties, negotiate for the cause.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mrs. Louise Arbour has given a speech during the International Lesbian and Gay Rights Conference in Montreal in defence of the rights of lesbian and gay people, and while speaking was biting her lips, because she knew the danger and price for her courage. Hina Jilani, UN Secretary General Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders is constantly making statements in favour of the most vulnerable activists, including lesbian and gay activists, and for that she has received death threats, and some member states of the UN such as Sudan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe have called for her resignation. OSCE includes 25 EU member states with explicit anti-discrimination policies, 46 members of the Council of Europe that have signed up to the European Convention of Human Rights, plus two of the world's leading democracies – USA and Canada. In the UN despite fierce opposition from countries, which have death penalty or life sentences for consenting homosexual acts, empowered people have the political will and courage to explicitly combat violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. And yet the OSCE participating states have not, even a single time, agreed on explicit commitment on sexual orientation.

We have seen over the last days of this HDIM the same political will and courage among a growing number of participating states to take this issue forward. We are confident that this political will will translate into concrete actions and commitments. ILGA-Europe and its allies and partners are open for dialogue in this regard, and believe that dialogue is very important for further progress.

Thank you.