

**SOGIESC REMARKS DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 37TH SESSION OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
(26TH – 28TH FEBRUARY 2018)**

This report contains all SOGIESC remarks made during the High-Level Segment of the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council.

The report is based on notes taken by ILGA during the High-Level Segment.

INTRODUCTION

The 37th Session of the Human Rights Council brings exciting opportunities to ensure that LGBTI voices are heard in the UN space and that SOGIESC issues are brought into the international human rights agenda.

The Council officially opened its 37th Session on Monday 26 February 2018. During the opening session, the President of the Human Rights Council, the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the UN and the High Commissioner for Human Rights addressed the Council.

Among other important issues, the President of the Human Rights Council addressed in his [statement](#) some upcoming reforms of the Council, such as the shortening of panels. He also addressed the situation of reprisals and shared the priorities for his mandate, such as prevention, dialogue and efficiency measures.

The President of the General Assembly addressed the Council and highlighted in his [statement](#) the role of the Human Rights Council in reinforcing norms and its impact on the ground, as well as the importance that human rights have in other areas of the UN.

The Secretary-General of the UN addressed in his [statement](#) the situations in Syria and Myanmar and talked about equality and dignity for all human beings.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights delivered what would be his last [statement](#) at the High-Level Segment. The statement was powerful, welcoming the recent resolution on Syria and highlighting the abuse of veto power in the Security Council. The High Commissioner addressed the importance of human rights and his concerns with regards to the rise of oppression in some parts of the world. He also addressed his concerns with regards to artificial intelligence.

The High-Level Segment saw representatives from regions across the world make remarks on the protection of LGBTI persons – from Argentina, to Malta, to Pakistan. This shows that SOGIESC issues are of true global importance. We invite you to take a look at these remarks below.

SOGIESC REMARKS DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2018

Mr. Miroslav Lajcak, President of the General Assembly



And, here I want to note that there are people, out there, now, who are counting on us to work even harder. (...) They are in physical or emotional pain because of which person they love, or which god they worship.

Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations



Wherever we live and whatever our situation or place in society, our gender or our sexual orientation, our race, our religion or our beliefs, we are all equal in rights and dignity.

Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, High Commissioner of Human Rights



Perhaps we have gone mad, when families grieve in too many parts of the world for those lost to brutal terrorism, while others suffer because their loved ones are arrested arbitrarily, tortured or killed at a black site, and were called terrorists for simply having criticized the government; and others await execution for crimes committed when they were children. While still more can be killed by police with impunity, because they are poor; or when young girls in El Salvador are sentenced to thirty years imprisonment for miscarriages; when transgender women in Aceh are punished and humiliated in public. When Nabeel Rajab is sentenced to five years for alleging torture; or when 17-year-old Ahd Tamimi is tried on 12 counts for slapping a soldier enforcing a foreign occupation. When journalists are jailed in huge numbers in Turkey, and the Rohingya are dehumanized, deprived and slaughtered in their homes – with all these examples bedeviling us, why are we doing so little to stop them, even though we should know how dangerous all of this is?

General Sir Peter Cosgrove, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia



Australia will maintain its strong advocacy of equal human rights, non-discrimination and non-violence for LGBTI persons.

Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland



We will also continue to speak out in this arena and elsewhere on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [persons]. At home, my government aims to pass ambitious legislation on self-determination based on gender awareness. Abroad, I am happy to that say we plan to accept an invitation to join the Equal Rights Coalition, a partnership of 35 countries, where we hope to work with other like-minded countries to promote and protect the fundamental rights of the LGBTI individuals.

Mr. President, last autumn, Iceland chaired the UN General Assembly Third Committee, and in that capacity, we were proud to welcome to New York for the first time the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, a function wisely established by this Council recently.

Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands



An open space for civil society, freedom of expression, religion and belief. These are all goals that cannot be achieved if we do not comply with fundamental human rights standards for all, including women and LGBTI.

(...) The evidence is mounting that excluding groups on the basis of religion, gender, sexual orientation, race or social determinants, or other factors, is more than a breach of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If human rights are truly to be universal, there is no space to declare 'us' or 'them'. It is only 'us' – all of us, at all times. This is human rights for all.

Let me cite some of the evidence from other sources, in terms of loss to society, reversal of gain, including 'economic folly', as dubbed by some. The World Bank Group has found that the exclusion of the LGBTI community causes severe social and economic harm. Lost labour time, lost productivity, underinvestment in human capital, and an inefficient allocation of human resources -- caused by discrimination in education, in hiring, in recruitment -- cost countries several percentage points on their GDP.

Mr. Claudio Bernardo Avruj, Secretary of Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism of Argentina



In this regard, as members we will continue to support the strengthening and independence of the special procedures, guaranteeing full freedom for the holders of the mandates, to which, it should be noted, my country maintains a permanent and open invitation. By virtue of this in 2017, we have received visits from the "Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity," and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. In addition, we will receive three special procedures during the course of this year.

(...) Thus, the Argentine Republic accompanies the process of improvement in the promotion and protection of human rights, through concrete actions, such as promoting the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons against Enforced Disappearance; the recognition of the right to the truth as an autonomous right; the establishment of a Special Rapporteur for the promotion of Truth, Justice and Guarantees of non-repetition; resolutions on business and human rights, protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, negative impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights, promoting the prohibition of child, early and forced marriage, cultural rights and cultural heritage, rights of the elderly, human rights and transitional justice, the use of forensic genetics for the identification of victims of serious violations of human rights, among others.

TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2018

Mr. Martin Stropnický, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechia



How can we celebrate human rights anniversaries while humanitarian law is ignored and so many civilians die from horrible attacks? How are freedoms safeguarded when journalists and bloggers are attacked for telling the truth and fact-checking? How do we respect human rights when lawyers defending their clients or activists who dare to speak up are put behind bars for allegedly threatening the state? Whose human rights are protected when people are discriminated against for their gender, color of their skin, belief or sexual orientation?

Mr. Alfonso María Dastis Quecedo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain



We'll fight for gender equality, and fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and fight to defend the rights of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Malta



For democracy to thrive, it needs to be supported by different types of legislation aimed at safeguarding the human rights of all individuals, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

(...) We should not let democracy become a tyranny of the majority, as a number of philosophers used to warn. A healthy and stable democracy depends on how well its minorities are integrated: be they religious, racial, or ethnic minorities, or those in terms of a different sexual orientation or gender identity.

(...) For Malta, protecting minorities also means the right to equality for LGBTI groups. When my government took office in March 2013, Malta stood at the 18th position on ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index, with a score of just 35 per cent, whereas today we are at the very top of the list. In its external relations, Malta stands ready to support any country that wants to follow in our footsteps, by sharing best practice so that LGBTI minorities are better protected worldwide.

Mr. Félix Braz, Minister of Justice of Luxembourg



All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. This truth must apply to each and every human being, whatever their sexual orientation or their gender identity. It is my pleasure to announce here that Luxembourg intends to become a member of the Equal Rights Coalition at the forthcoming meeting of the Coalition on the 26th March in Washington following an invitation from our partners, Canada and Chile. My country shall continue to be resolutely committed to the recognition and the protection of the rights of all LGBTI persons at the national and international level. At the national level, there is currently a new law which will make sex change and change of first name a simple administrative act in the full respect of self-determination.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada



In Canada, we believe our diversity is our strength. We believe that countries are strongest when all of our citizens are fully included. That is why we are so proud of our feminist foreign policy. And that is why we are honoured to co-chair the Equal Rights Coalition with Chile. Everybody deserves to live free of persecution and discrimination, no matter who they are, or whom they love.

Mr. Ciarán Cannon, Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development of Ireland



We also want to see more promotion and protection of the rights of LGBTI persons. Ireland was the first country in the world to recognise marriage equality by popular vote and we are proud to have progressive legislation on transgender rights. As Minister for Ireland's diaspora, I am especially pleased that our citizens overseas may self-identify in their preferred gender in our official register of foreign births.

Ms. Patricia Scotland, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

WEDNESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2018

Ms. Battsetseg Batmunkh, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia



To be truly 'common' our future must be inclusive. This requires that respect for the dignity and equality of each and every one of our citizens should be equally recognised by all members of the Commonwealth. Therefore, while we acknowledge that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity persists, often in the form of laws criminalising homosexuality, we remain resolutely opposed to unequal and differential treatment and will continue to work with our member states towards full inclusiveness.

Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, European Union Special Representative for Human Rights



Dear friends, at some point in our lives or another, we are all minorities. Even in this room, some people may be a majority in terms of their gender or the colour of their skin, but, within their own "majority" group, a minority in terms of their sexual orientation, their political beliefs, their religion, or their disability. If, when in the majority, we are tolerant when "minorities" we may not "like," or that may not be "like us," are repressed, then beware: We are opening the floodgates to our own future repression and discrimination as well.



The new Criminal Code abolishes the death penalty and contains provisions on the prohibition of torture as defined in the Convention against Torture. It has also established increased penalties against perpetrators of crimes against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq, Member of the Senate Committees of Pakistan on Foreign Affairs, and Law and Justice



Following the principles of an open democratic society, and with the judicial process taking its due course, the transgender community was able to secure the governmental recognition of their separate status. As a result, special passports and identity documents were issued to transgenders to enable their mainstreaming into the society in full consonance with the ideas of human dignity.