

Inter-American Commission strengthens protection of LGBT rights

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(Geneva) - The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has become the world's first inter-governmental human rights body to establish a high-level position dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

The position was established to respond to what the Inter-American Commission referred to as extensive and ['troubling information'](#) it continues to receive on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Welcoming the establishment of a Rapporteur on the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Persons, Dr Heather Collister of the International Service for Human Rights said, 'It is pleasing to see a regional human rights body exercise such principled leadership particularly at a time when the international human rights system has been dragging its feet on this issue'.

'2013 marked a missed opportunity for the world's peak human rights body, the UN Human Rights Council, to strengthen and institutionalise the protection of LGBTI persons. Next year the anticipation will be no less, with added determination that the opportunity must not be lost a second time. Many NGOs will be hoping and expecting that the Council will establish a procedure or mechanism to ensure sustained and systematised attention to violations of LGBTI rights,' Dr Collister said.

The Inter-American Commission's Rapporteur will continue and build on the work of the Commission's dedicated LGBTI Unit, which has operated since November 2011 to give specialised attention to the promotion and protection of the rights of LGBTI persons in the Americas.

'As the IACHR's experience shows, the creation of a dedicated procedure or mechanism ensures a targeted response to the particularly egregious and intrusive violations that LGBTI persons face,' said Dr Collister.

'The visibility that the LGBTI Unit and now the Rapporteur will bring to this issue makes it clear to governments that they cannot shirk their duty to ensure that all citizens, without exception, enjoy the full protection of the law,' she said.

The Commission has had notable successes with governments including Jamaica, Belize and St Kitts and Nevis recognising that violence, discrimination and stigmatisation are not acceptable on any basis.

'Without this degree of sustained attention it is all too easy for governments to continue to exploit this issue for political gain and ignore the message that human rights are for all persons. The successes of the Inter-American Commission in this regard must urgently be translated to the international level,' Dr Collister said.

'The Inter-American Commission must be commended for its progressive and principled leadership on this issue. It is beyond time for the Human Rights Council to do the same.'

Dr Heather Collister is a Programme Manager at the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva