

Human Rights Council 32nd session

Check against delivery

ITEM 8 - GENERAL DEBATE, 27 JUNE 2016

Thank you Mr President,

The VDPA reaffirmed that principles of universality and non-discrimination are central to human rights. The vital and valuable work of LGBT rights defenders in this regard cannot be understated.

Harrowing accounts of systematic judicial harassment, arbitrary arrest and murder of human rights defenders working to protect the rights of LGBT people have been documented by the Communications report of the Special Procedures. Most of these cases are treated with impunity. The cases currently taken up by existing mandate holders are only the tip of the iceberg.

More than 500 NGOs from 132 countries around the world have appealed to this Council that such instances of violence and discrimination occur in every country, and the Council must to act now to address this protection gap at the international level.

We call on member States to adopt draft resolution L.2, which would create an Independent Expert to ensure the systematic and institutionalized response that this issue deserves and needs. It is in the interest of all States to ensure that this Special Procedures mandate is created to raise awareness of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, engage in dialogue and consultation with States and other stakeholders, and facilitate provision of advisory services, technical assistance, capacity-building and cooperation to help address violence and discrimination on these grounds.

This draft resolution presents an opportunity for this Council to make a commitment towards beginning to understand the root causes of such violence and discrimination so as to design effective policy measures. It presents an opportunity to show victims of human rights violations – from that LGBT NGO in Zambia who is repeatedly denied registration, to those LGBT persons targeted and shot in the United States – that the world's peak human rights body is capable of addressing their cases with maturity and sensitivity. It presents an opportunity to apply universal human rights standards to a particularly marginalized group of people.

We remind this Council that it is the 'duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms', and we ask that you do not let yourselves down.