

Allied Rainbow Communities International; Amnesty International; Centre for Reproductive Rights, Inc; European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Federation; Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot Integratie van Homoseksualiteit – COC Nederland; Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries; Human Rights Council of Australia; International Planned Parenthood Federation; International Service for Human Rights; Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany; OutRight Action International; Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights

**Statement at 41st session of the Human Rights Council
Item 8 General Debate**

*Speaker: Helen Nolan
Check against delivery*

Mr President

This is a joint statement.¹

The Vienna Declaration affirms that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated – to undermine one set of rights is to undermine them all. This includes sexual and reproductive health and rights, women’s rights and the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex persons.

The Vienna Declaration also condemns gross and systematic violations of human rights. Yet 26 years since its development, people continue to suffer systemic violence and discrimination due to their gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics.

Often, those who face the most severe violations are the persons at the forefront of combatting these abuses, standing up and speaking out for equal rights: human rights defenders. We are deeply concerned that striving for a more inclusive world and greater human rights protection puts these defenders at risk of killings, attacks, arbitrary detention and harassment online and offline in many parts of the world.

These violations should be examined within the wider context of multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination; occurring within a prevailing culture of social stigma around issues of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. The challenges often overlap and intersect with the threats and backlash that women human rights defenders and those working to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights also face. With the rise of anti-rights groups, the risks are escalating.

¹ This statement was prepared in consultation with ASEAN SOGIE Caucus; Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW); Access Chapter 2; Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, Fiji, Pacific SIDS; Egale Canada; ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey; FRI - The Norwegian Organisation for Sexual and Gender Diversity; GIN-SSOGIE; Human Rights Council of Australia; IGLYO – International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex Youth and Student Organisation; Iranti; LEGAL Liberia; MantiQitna Network; Micro Rainbow International Foundation; Pacific Feminist SRHR Coalition, Pacific; Pan Africa ILGA; Planet Ally; Solidarity Sisters Network of Liberia; Transvanilla Transgender Association.

It is the duty of States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms,² and we call on States to create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders to carry out their work.

Mr President,

We welcome the work of the Independent Expert to speak out regarding threats against human rights defenders combating violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

We call on States to work with the Independent Expert to examine the situation of human rights defenders in greater detail and to seek his guidance on good practices to ensure better protection of these individuals, organisations and their allies.

We close by calling on all States to support the renewal of this crucial mandate so this work can continue.

Thank you.

² Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.