

STATEMENT IN REACTION TO POLITICAL STATEMENT
OF THE 59TH COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
MARCH 2015

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations and activists working for the promotion and protection of human rights and empowerment of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or intersex status, would like to express both disappointment and cautious optimism on the occasion of the adoption of the Political Declaration at the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

We are deeply disappointed with how the process leading up to the adoption of this year's Political Declaration of the Commission on the Status of Women has unfolded, as the closing of negotiations before the formal start of the Commission has meant there has been no effective process of consultation with civil society.

It is important to ensure that all UN processes include meaningful participation of civil society and that a diverse array of voices informs all UN processes. Lesbians, bisexual women, trans and intersex persons have been involved in organizing in UN women's spaces, prior, during, and after the development and implementation of the Beijing Platform. We are here to remind you that, twenty years ago in Beijing, sexual orientation was discussed openly and extensively. In other UN fora these issues are still discussed openly and supported widely. We demand the same level of inclusion at the Commission on the Status of Women.

Even in the face of this disrespect for our rights, we are cautiously optimistic that this Political Declaration can help guide States as they move forward towards a fuller and more equal implementation of the Beijing vision.

- We are optimistic because many governments expressed concern with the uneven progress towards Beijing priorities, in part because of the persistence of intersecting forms of discrimination, marginalization, and vulnerability that affect different groups of women and girls.
- We are optimistic because governments pledged to take concrete actions to overcome gender stereotypes, transform discriminatory norms and strengthen implementation of laws and policies for all women and girls.
- We are also optimistic because the Political Declaration acknowledges the need to empower all women and girls through a transformative Post-2015 negotiation process.

None of this is enough.

Moving forward, we call for bold leadership from governments in implementing a true vision for transformative development and empowerment that also benefit lesbians and bisexual women, and trans and intersex persons.

Our realities, work, and organizing demonstrate dire need for this leadership. Individual women and girls, as well as specific groups of women and girls, are excluded from social benefits and the protection of the law because of whom we love, what we look like, the work we do, or because we exercise bodily autonomy and choice. This exclusion constitutes a violation of our most basic rights, and is incompatible with the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

We have insisted that the Post-2015 agenda acknowledge the devastating impact of intersecting discrimination and marginalization in our lives everywhere. Study after study concludes that individuals stigmatized or targeted because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity face discrimination, violence and bullying that can force them out of schools; people assumed to be lesbian, bisexual, trans, or intersex are kicked out of housing or denied employment; legal and socially condoned discrimination against our communities marginalizes many of us, putting us at additional risk of violence, HIV, and other health problems. Discrimination and stigma further prevent us from seeking needed care. Too often, the result is preventable suffering and poverty.

We demand that governments move towards a truly transformative Post-2015 agenda. Such an agenda must address the devastating effects of high levels of violence, climate change, unsustainable and unjust economic systems that affect us all, in particular vulnerable and marginalized groups such as LGBTI persons. This agenda must be human rights based, ecologically sustainable and adhere to global development partnership agreements based on historical responsibility and common but differentiated responsibilities of all countries. The agenda must also overcome social and structural barriers that exclude persons on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and intersex status.

As the Post-2015 negotiations continue, we demand to be recognized in these negotiations that directly impact our communities and lives. We refuse to be rendered invisible, or to have development policies touted as progress even as they ignore, marginalize or create further risk for us. Going forward, we demand accountability and transparency in negotiations, and meaningful and equal recognition in education, work, governance, economy, social security, health care and all other areas of concern. We will continue our work and organizing to see these demands met.

Our lives are nonnegotiable.

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Canada

Action Chapter 2, South Africa

Advocates for Youth, United States

Akahata-Equipo de Trabajo en Sexualidades y Género, Latin America region

AIDS Accountability International, South Africa

Associação ILGA Portugal - Intervenção Lésbica, Gay, Bissexual e Transgénero

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, United States
Balance, Mexico
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Canada
Centre for the Development of People, Malawi
Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, Peru
Clóset de Sor Juana AC, Mexico
COC Netherlands, Netherlands
Diverlex Diversidad e Igualdad a Través de la Ley, Venezuela
Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, Fiji
Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives, Romania
The Fellowship of Reconciliation, United States
Fokus Muda, Indonesia
Freedom House, United States
Gamacca Community, Indonesia
Gender Proud, United States
Global Inklusi untuk Perlindungan AIDS, Indonesia
Global Justice Institute, United States
Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries, Netherlands
IDAHO-T International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia Committee,
Global
The Inner Circle, South Africa
Instituto Runa de Desarrollo y Estudios sobre Género, Peru
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, United States
International Lesbian and Gay Association, Global
International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student
Organisation, Regional European
International Women's Health Coalition, United States
Just Associates, Americas regional
Komunitas Sehati Makassar, Indonesia
Metropolitan Community Churches, United States
Micro Rainbow International, United Kingdom
Muslims for Progressive Values, United States
Network of European LGBT Families Associations, Belgium
The Norwegian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organization, LL.H., Norway
Pathways of Women's Empowerment, Global
Rainbow Action South Korea, Republic of Korea
RFSL, the Swedish Federal for LGBTQ Rights, Sweden
Sexuality Policy Watch, Brazil
Solidarity Alliance for Human Rights, Nigeria
St. Paul's Foundation for International Reconciliation, United States
Swiss Rainbow Families Association, Switzerland
Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBT) Hotline Association, Taiwan
United and Strong Inc, St. Lucia
United Belize Advocacy Movement, Belize
Urgent Action Fund for Women, Global
Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative, Nigeria

