

Statement at 26th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 2: General Debate on the Update of the High Commissioner

ENDING LGBT DISCRIMINATION AND COMBATING REPRISALS

Mr President, Madame High Commissioner

We welcome the High Commissioner's statement and the invaluable work that she, and the dedicated staff of the Office, undertake.

High Commissioner, throughout your term you have sounded the alarm bell on abuses, provided protection to victims, and pursued accountability for perpetrators. We thank you and look forward to your successor following the outstanding example you have set.

I turn now to address some themes from your statement.

Discrimination and violence against people on the basis of their **sexual orientation or gender identity** remain a scourge.

We join the High Commissioner in welcoming the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights resolution on this subject. The time has now come for this Council to follow up on its own Resolution 17/19 by mandating a special procedure, or establishing a process, to systematically monitor and report on violations against LGBT persons and to advise States as to how best to respect and protect universal rights.

The High Commissioner's statement referred to **hate speech** being on the road to gross human rights violations.

This is particularly the case when hate speech is licensed by law. In this respect, we are alarmed at the reported increase in harassment and attacks against LGBT persons and their advocates in Nigeria, Uganda and Russia since the adoption of anti-homosexuality laws in those States. We implore other States which may be considering such bills – such as Kenya, Tanzania, Liberia and Kazakhstan – to desist from doing so.

Madame High Commissioner, **civil society activists and human rights defenders** continue to experience intimidation and reprisals for engaging with the UN.

Since the last session alone we have received reports of reprisals against human rights defenders from Vietnam, for their engagement with the UPR, and Russia and China, for their engagement with the treaty bodies. We reiterate our call for the Presidency and Bureau, the Council, and Member States to discharge their legal obligations to ensure that all persons can exercise the right to unhindered communication with the UN, and to protect against, investigate, and promote accountability for reprisals when they occur.

Madame High Commissioner, we thank you again for your outstanding support and service.