

Human Rights Council 31st session

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ITEM 8 - GENERAL DEBATE, 21 MARCH 2016

Thank you Mr President,

The VDPA reaffirmed that principles of universality and non-discrimination are central to human rights. Yet, time and again, civil society has raised its alarm of ongoing, systematic violence and discrimination against persons based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics. The majority of these cases are treated with impunity.

The Communications report of the Special Procedures, presented at this session, documented a disturbing trend indicating the targeting of individuals and organisations working on these issues. In the **Kyrgyz Republic**, an NGO working to protect the rights of LGBTI people was subjected to attempted arson. In **Ukraine**, a human rights defender working on the rights of LGBTI people received threats in connection with his advocacy and was brutally assaulted by unidentified men. We are especially concerned that in **Honduras**, the Special Procedures responded to allegations of the killings of 5 Honduran LGBTI activists since 23 June 2015.

We recognise the important and valuable work of LGBTI rights defenders, particularly given the climate of social exclusion to which LGBTI people are subjected to in a great number of countries. 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'

The Yogyakarta Principles affirm that international legal standards to which all States must comply are applicable in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. We urge all States consider this set of Principles in ensuring universal implementation of human rights obligations.

We welcome the call by the UN Secretary General at this session, as well as the joint statement by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay, for the Council to maintain its attention on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity. However, we stress that the violations and abuses are systematic, and therefore reiterate the urgent need for an institutionalized response by this Council.