

LGBTTTI COALITION OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING AT THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)

CELEBRATES THE APPROVAL OF THE SEVENTH RESOLUTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION AT THE OAS

The Latin America and Caribbean Coalition of lesbian, gay, bisexual, travesti, transgender, transsexual and intersex organizations (LGBTTTI Coalition) comprised of organizations from over 20 countries of the region shares in this statement its review and assessment of the events at the 44th General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Asuncion, Paraguay, June 3-5, 2014:

The OAS 44th General Assembly approved its seventh, “Human Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity and Expression” Resolution which condemns all forms of discrimination, acts of violence and human rights violations based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

The Resolution invites member states to:

- Eliminate barriers to equal access for LGBTTTI persons with regard to political participation and other areas of public life as well as eliminate interference in their private lives.
- Adopt public policies against discrimination that help prevent violence against LGBTTTI persons and ensure equal judicial protections for the victims of violence motivated by sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- Research and publish statistics on violence motivated by homophobia and transphobia, and ensure adequate protection for human rights defenders.
- Ensure adequate protection for intersex people and to implement policies and procedures, as appropriate, to ensure the conformity of medical practices with recognized human rights standards.

This year, fundamentalist and anti-human rights groups organized a concerted lobbying effort both inside and outside of the General Assembly sessions to oppose the approval of the above Resolution and to support pro-life and “traditional family” agendas. They received support from Paraguayan senators and legislators. In light of this strong opposition, the LGBTTTI Coalition’s participation at the General Assembly was a decisive factor in achieving the Resolution’s approval.

Advocacy Events Prior to the General Assembly

In the days prior to the 44th General Assembly, the Coalition organized preparatory advocacy events that involved a number of OAS officials.

On June 3rd, the Coalition organized a panel discussion titled, “Human Rights Dialogue – LGBTI Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean.” The President of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, Tracy Robinson, who is also in charge of the recently established Rapporteurship on the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Persons participated in the dialogue. Dr. Rosa María Ortiz, IACHR Commissioner and Rapporteur on the Rights of Children and Adolescents also participated, and both commissioners spoke on the prevailing situation across the region with regard to the human rights of LGBTI persons. Commissioner Robinson noted that the IACHR has received a number of reports about the violence that LGBTI persons - in particular trans women and young gay men (between 20 and 30 years old) – experience. Likewise, she expressed her concern regarding the targeting of LGBTI human rights defenders, noting that governments of the region are not doing enough to address these issues. Commissioner Ortiz spoke about the “taboo” within the region surrounding the idea that lesbian, gay and trans children and adolescents exist. Given this lack of recognition, hundreds of thousands of children face bullying in school as well as physical and verbal violence at home, leading to suicidal ideation and suicide. Dr. Ortiz affirmed that it is critical to raise attention to the high levels of violence that these children suffer.

The alternative representative of the government of Brazil before the OAS, Mr. Marco Kinzo Bernardy, also participated in the dialogue hosted by the LGBTTTTI Coalition. Mr. Kinzo Bernardy provided a summary of the recent advances with regard to integrating sexual orientation and gender identity within the OAS system, and noted the particular importance of the General Assembly and the IACHR's mandate to research and prepare a report on legislation across the region that prevents the full recognition of the human rights of LGBTI persons.

In order to evaluate the LGBTI rights advances and civil society's participation within the OAS, the LGBTTTTI Coalition also organized a side meeting with Ambassador Alfonso Quiñónez, OAS Secretary of External Affairs; Dr. Dante Negro, Director of the OAS Department of International Law; and Dr. Fanny Gómez-Lugo, Rapporteur on the Rights of LGBTI Persons at the IACHR. Another meeting was held between the LGBTTTTI Coalition and Mr. Edgar Carrasco, Regional Advisor on Human Rights and Gender Equality of the Latin American Regional Office of UNAIDS; Mrs. Clarisa Brezzo, UNAIDS Program Officer; and Mrs. María Tallarico, Regional Practice Team Leader on HIV/AIDS for UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Civil Society Dialogue at the OAS

During the informal dialogue between the OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza and civil society held June 2, LGBTTTTI Coalition members thanked the Secretary General for his efforts and support for the approval of the Inter-American Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance at the 43rd OAS General Assembly, and requested that he continue his efforts to ensure that member states sign and ratify the Convention. The environment at the dialogue was polarized and polemic given the intolerant positions of the pro-life and other groups in opposition to sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTI rights. Mr. Insulza, however, gave strong remarks in support of LGBTI rights, insisting that the realities of families within the region is much more diverse than the type of family that these groups are trying to defend, and reiterated that governments do not have the right to interfere in the personal decisions of their citizens with regard to their private lives. He insisted that we must find a way to respect the rights of every person, and emphasized the importance of combatting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in the region. Lastly, he recognized the important work of LGBTTTTI civil society organizations in achieving important advances on these issues within the OAS system to date.

On the following day during the formal dialogue between civil society representatives and member states' delegation heads, Camila Zavala – a lesbian activist from Paraguay – represented the LGBTTTTI Coalition. Ms. Zavala spoke on the situation of violence and social exclusion of LGBT persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. "There can be no real development if LGBTTTTI persons continue to be marginalized and excluded from their right to education, work, health and justice," Ms. Zavala explained before the Assembly delegates who were convened at the 44th General Assembly with the theme of "Development with Social Inclusion." Ms. Zavala also requested that member states sign and ratify the Conventions on Racism and against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance approved by the previous General Assembly in Antigua, Guatemala in 2013.

At the formal dialogue, ambassadors and delegation heads from Belize, Uruguay, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador, the United States and Colombia reaffirmed the commitment of their countries toward the promotion and protection of the human rights of LGBTTTTI persons. However, the civil society dialogue was particularly controversial due to the participation of pro-life activists who openly opposed the recognition of any right with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity.

The government of Panama signed the Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance, joining the ranks of Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, and Argentina which all signed the previous year upon the Convention's approval.

Panamá, al final, firmó la Convención contra la Discriminación y todas las formas de Intolerancia, sumándose así a Brasil, Uruguay, Ecuador y Argentina, países que la firmaron el año anterior cuando fue aprobada.

Acknowledgements

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Participating Organizations

The following organizations participated on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean LGBTTTI Coalition of Organizations Working at the OAS.

Argentina	AKAHATA Equipo de Trabajo en Sexualidades y Género
Belize	United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM)
Bolivia	Red Nacional de Mujeres Trans en Bolivia (REDTREBOL) Fundación Diversencia
Chile	Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (OTD) Sindicato Amanda Jofré
Colombia	Asociación Líderes en Acción Colombia Diversa
Costa Rica	Mulabi - Espacio Latinoamericano de Sexualidades y Derechos
Ecuador	Asociación Alfil Taller de Comunicación Mujer
El Salvador	Asociación Aspídh Arcoiris
Guatemala	Organización Trans Reinas de la Noche (OTRANS)
Guyana	Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD)
Honduras	Colectivo Unidad Color Rosa
Mexico	Letra S SIDA, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana
Nicaragua	Red Nicaragüense de Activistas Trans (REDTRANS)
Panama	Asociación Panameña de Personas Trans
Paraguay	Aireana Grupo por los Derechos de las Lesbianas Asociación Escalando
Republica Dominicana	Colectiva Mujer y Salud
St. Lucia	United & Strong
Suriname	Women's Way
Trinidad and Tobago	Coalition Advocating for Inclusion of Sexual Orientation (CAISO)
Uruguay	Asociación Trans del Uruguay (ATRU)

Regional Partners of the Coalition:

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- Caribbean Forum for Liberation and Acceptance of Genders and Sexualities (CARIFLAGS)
 - Global Initiative for Sexuality and Human Rights - Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights (GISHR-HA)
 - Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Personas Trans (REDLACTRANS)
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Asuncion, Paraguay
June 5, 2014
