



United Nations Human Rights Council: 25th Session (3rd to 28th March 2014)

Item 3

Friday 14th March 2014

Speaker: BHA Representative, Amelia Cooper

Thank you Mr President.

The recent spate of anti-homosexuality legislation in Nigeria, Russia, and Uganda has rightly caused international uproar.

Russia's bill ostensibly targets '*propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations*¹, on the basis that it endangers minors and undermines so-called '*traditional values*'.

Nigeria attempted to justify its anti-homosexuality laws with vague references to '*cultural and religious beliefs*².

In Uganda, President Museveni approved the anti-homosexuality bill based upon his interpretation of a scientific report, stating that homosexuality could not be traced to a single gene, despite the paper affirming the genetic influence on physiological functions which ultimately determine sexuality³.

There is *no* legitimate justification that can be used to undermine the universality of human rights.

Fetishizing the origins of homosexuality negates from the fact that imprisoning someone on the basis of their sexual orientation is a violation of human rights, including freedoms of expression, association and assembly.

The global increase in homophobic aggression led one gay man to remark that '*a hunting season is open, and we are the hunted*⁴.

During the ID with the High Commissioner, a number of states said that there was not an international agreement on equality for homosexuals, and that there was '*no legal foundation*⁵ for these rights. Frankly, this is untrue.

- Article 1 of the ICCPR states that there will be no distinction '*of any kind*⁶ in the application of human rights.
- Human Rights Council Resolution 17/19⁷ is the international agreement to prioritize equality for LGBT⁸.
- The High Commissioner herself noted that there is no room in international law or UN Documentation for exclusion⁹.

We urge all States to respect their roles as guarantors of human rights, to remove constitutional and penal obstacles to equality, and to end the climate of impunity regarding the persecution of LGBTI. Failure to do so undermines the principle of equality that this Council is founded upon.

Thank you.

¹ Text of the law, as quoted by the Russian LGBT Network <http://www.lgbtnet.ru/en/content/state-duma-passed-bill-non-traditional-sexual-relations>

² Reuben Abati, spokesperson for President Goodluck Johnson, told the Associated Press news agency. Quoted by numerous media outlets, including Al Jazeera Africa <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/01/nigeria-passes-law-banning-gay-marriage-2014113151626685617.html>

³ Ugandan Scientific Report on Homosexuality, 10th February 2014 <http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/btb/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/UgandaScientificReportOnHomosexuality.pdf>

The paper states that sexuality is "*a function of psychology, sociology, and...culture...[and that] these functions are determined by genes and their interactions with the environment.*"

⁴ Dima, a Russian homosexual man who was left blind in one eye after an armed group stormed a gay community centre. Quoted by Channel 4, and featured in their documentary 'Hunted'. <http://www.channel4.com/news/gay-russian-sochi-hunting-season-we-are-the-hunted>

⁵ Zamir Akram on behalf of the OIC, June 2011, as quoted in many media outlets including The Journal <http://www.thejournal.ie/un-backs-gay-rights-for-the-first-time-ever-158408-Jun2011/>

⁶ Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

⁷ A/HRC/RES/17/19, adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2011.

⁸ '*Expressing grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination, in all regions of the world, committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity...How international human rights law can be used to end violence and related human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity...Further decides to remain seized of this priority issue.*' A/HRC/RES/17/19 <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/148/76/PDF/G1114876.pdf?OpenElement>

⁹ Navi Pillay in her response to the States during the Interactive Dialogue, 6th March 2014

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