

**Third Committee, 34th meeting – General Assembly, 72nd session
Statements made during interactive dialogue with IE SOGI**

Africa

South Africa - 1:08:12



Chairperson, my delegation wishes to thank the independent expert for his report focusing on the theme ‘embrace diversity and energize humanity’. South Africa concurs with the independent expert’s view in Paragraph 2 of his report that the concepts and notions of sexual orientation and gender identity should not be conflated and are not similar. My government appreciates the independent expert’s willingness to engage with all the relevant stakeholders and

recognition of the sensitivities as outlined in Paragraph 5 to 10 of his report. Chairperson, my delegation fully shares the view of the independent expert on the need to approach the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity from a non-discrimination perspective. The South African Constitution is premised on the fundamental principles on the promotion of human dignity, equality, non-discrimination of all persons and the quest for universal justice. Hence, my delegation views the respect for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights as a critical pillar of our domestic and foreign policy. Equally, my delegation shares the view of the independent expert that there is a need for protection against incitement to hatred in all countries. Hence, my government is in the process of finalizing the Hate Crimes Bill into law in order to protect better. Finally, Chairperson, my delegation would appreciate more clarification regarding the following two issues. One, the best possible approach to enhancing dialogue on the issue, and second, the intersectionality between sexual orientation and gender identity and other issues, including racism, poverty and other factors as referenced in Paragraph 21 of the report, especially bearing in mind that the notions of sexual orientation and gender identity do not only affect one race.

Asia Pacific

Japan - 1:22:14

I would like to thank Professor Muntarbhorn, the independent expert, for his efforts to protect against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. My country will actively support the activities of the independent expert together with the LGBTI Core Group members. As mentioned in the statement of the independent expert, LGBTI persons are often put in vulnerable situations and cannot speak up



about problems they face such as discrimination and violations of human rights. While experts are analyzing the situation of LGBTI persons, I would like to ask your opinion of what efforts are needed for member States to better listen to their voice and experiences.

Eastern Europe

Albania - 1:14:22

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Professor Muntarhorn for his first report. We welcome his work aiming at raising awareness about the violence and discrimination suffered by people based on their SOGI. We also welcome his efforts to strengthen cooperation and dialogue with member States and other stakeholders in order to uphold and protect human rights and



human dignity for all individuals, including those for their actual or perceived sexual orientation different from the specific norm in our society. Albania deplores and condemns the acts of violence and discrimination that continue to be massively committed against LGBTI persons in all the regions of the world. It is the responsibility of member States to protect vulnerable and often marginalized communities in our societies. In this context, LGBTI communities should be treated fairly and equally and we should ensure that no one is left behind as we pledged to do when we adopted the 2030 agenda. Albania attaches the utmost importance to the universal nature of human rights and its fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination. Everyone is entitled to enjoy all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and I quote, “without distinction of any kind”. Although this is a sensitive issue for some countries, we strongly believe that no one should be subjected to violence or discrimination just because of who they are. I’d like to conclude by saying that Albania stands in solidarity with the LGBTI persons that have been victims of unacceptable violence and discrimination simply based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Let’s not forget that LGBTI rights are not a special category of rights.

Slovenia - 1:37:56



Mr. Chair, we thank the independent expert for his report and presentation today. Mr. Independent Expert, Slovenia would like to commend you for your valuable and committed work which has already positively contributed in raising awareness [about] discrimination and violence faced by LGBTI persons around the world. We believe that continued dialogue and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders on international and national levels is needed to

further address human rights violations and abuses that affect LGBTI persons in everyday life. We also appreciate your emphasis on the key role of civil society and human rights defenders,

which in our view importantly contributes to combating social stigmatization. Reality shows that no country is immune to issues such as stigmatization, discrimination or violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTI individuals encounter many obstacles in all spheres of life - in the workplace, schools, the healthcare system, even within families and society at large. We believe that human rights education is an important tool to raise awareness and acceptance of diversity in societies from an early age. Human rights are universal regardless of personal circumstances. In your report, you touched upon the plight of LGBTI children and youth in relation to violence and discrimination such as bullying in school and even home. In your view, how can we approach this issue which is often hard to tackle given deeply rooted social stigmatization? In conclusion, Slovenia remains a strong supporter of your mandate and looks forward to working with your successor. Finally, we would like to wish you well in your future endeavors.

Latin America and Caribbean

Argentina - 1:05:29



In addition to the statement made by the distinguished permanent representative of Chile on behalf of our country which we endorse, we would like to add in the remaining part of his statement we agree with what was done by the independent expert and congratulate him on his first interactive debate with the Third Committee. We would also like to thank in public that Argentina was the first country visited by the independent expert and add that we look with great interest on the publication of his report on

his visit, in particular recommendations of his proposals to strengthen legislation and national mechanisms for the promotion of human rights of LGBTI persons. We regret that he is resigning and we would also like to reiterate the support to the mandate of the independent expert. We hope that the next mandate holder will continue the excellent work which has been done to date to increase protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We would like to thank you for your report focused on decriminalization and the fight against penalization, all of which covered by the Human Rights Council resolution. This is a policy of Argentina and we are pleased with the comprehensive approach on the specter of human rights because of sexual diversity. We would like to express our satisfaction with the conclusion of his report which identifies a trend towards decriminalization of sexual relations between people of the same sex and I would like to ask you how States could help strengthen that tendency.

Chile (on behalf of LAC8) - 1:01:51

I have the honor to speak on behalf of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, and Uruguay, sponsors of Resolution 32/2 in the Human Rights Council and members of the LGBTI Core Group in New York. We welcome the first report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual

orientation and gender identity to the General Assembly. We warmly welcome the approach of maintaining an open and constructive dialogue and collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders. We need to continue advancing in the recognition that violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are global phenomena that require effective and coordinated, international, regional and national actions to confront and overcome them. Our countries supported the recommendation of the independent expert that the Sustainable Development Goals represent an opportunity to combat violence and discrimination also in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. As it is stated in his report, this opportunity should be seized to the fullest to ensure that no one is left behind, without exception or distinction of any type. Likewise, we reiterate the call we made last June on the occasion of the interactive dialogue in the Human Rights Council to other mandate holders of Special Procedures, treaty bodies, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to the Secretary General of the United Nations and authorities of other agencies so that in cooperation with the independent expert, continue advancing in the fight against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Mr. Chairman, we agree with the independent expert in his call for all States to urgently adopt effective measures to combat discrimination, including specific legislative and political reforms and other initiatives that promote a broad, inclusive perspective, which takes into account human rights. In his report, the independent expert suggests the inter-American system has made numerous contributions to the fight against violence and discrimination, in particular the appointment of a regional Rapporteur to address specifically the issue of LGBTI persons.



Colombia - 1:23:17



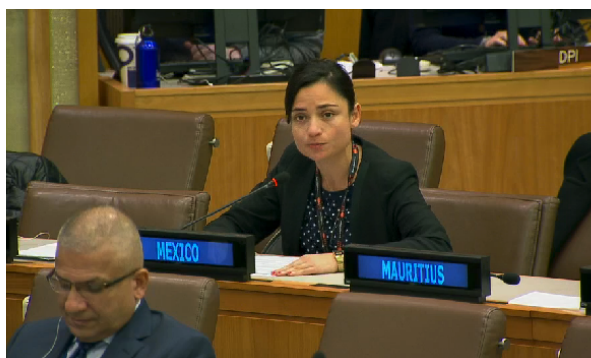
We are grateful to the Special Rapporteur for the presentation of the report. We agree with what was said by the delegation of Chile representing several Latin American countries. We renew our commitment to protect against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We wish international instruments to be implemented, identification of good practices, the need to allow for sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as

identifying many forms of violence and discrimination. The dialogue is a fundamental tool to face the many interrelated and aggravated forms of discrimination which persons are faced with because of their SOGI. We recognize that sexual prejudice is a social problem which has to be dealt with by public authorities and they should be [combined with] different rights and intersectional validity. We have adopted a series of affirmative actions, including the protection

for social groups who are victims of discrimination because of sexual orientation in order to guarantee their human rights and full implementation of the principle of equality. Thanks to political empowerment, public awareness and training on human rights, and the position of inclusion of persons of different sectors who are LGBTI, their concealment and silence has been gradually reduced.

Mexico - 1:10:33

The government of Mexico welcomes the independent expert and thanks him for his first report to the General Assembly recognizing the well-balanced, constructive way he has worked. We wish to speak about the work provided in his mandate focused on analysis, dialogue and capacity building. We think it is positive that the independent expert encourages an open dialogue with regard to his work. The government of Mexico believes



that in our country, persons [regardless of] their social religion or sexual orientation or gender identity shall have the possibility to [have their rights] be fully realized and developed. The Constitution does not allow for any discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and it cannot allow this to take place. We have the best willingness to continue to work with the independent expert, including by means of the sending of information for the preparation of reports and urges other States and other interested parties to do the same. The independent expert [states that] the question of violence and discrimination based on SOGI both local and global. In that respect, the Mexican State wishes to know about the scope and what the expert has done with regard to international cooperation as well as the role that the UN can play on this subject and what are his proposals to increase this cooperation and make it more effective.

Western Europe and Others

Australia - 1:27:20



Australia remains strongly committed to promoting equal human rights and non-discrimination for LGBTI individuals. Our international advocacy includes a commitment to work towards decriminalization of consensual same-sex relations. We agree with the independent expert's conclusion that criminalization violates commitments to protect privacy and to guarantee non-discrimination - commitments that 169 State parties to the

International Convention on Civil and Political Rights have accepted as obligations. Australia also shares the concern regarding the situation of individuals facing the death penalty connected to consensual same-sex relations. We call on all States to decriminalize consensual

same-sex relations and upon those States that impose the death penalty in these cases to remove the death penalty, to cease all executions and to establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. Australia shares the independent expert's views that effective responses to violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals must be grounded in international human rights law and involve partnerships between government and civil society. We also agree that responses to challenges facing LGBTI individuals should be context-specific. In Australia, despite having comprehensive anti-discrimination measures, there remains more to do to remove structural barriers that discriminate against LGBTI individuals in practice. In this regard, we welcome the contribution that our national human rights institution made to your report, which highlighted areas where issues remain and we would encourage all national human rights institutions to engage with your mandate in the future. Mr. Chair, we thank the independent expert for his commitment to the role and we reaffirm our commitment to the mandate of the independent expert. We would be interested to hear what the independent expert considers as the most common structural barriers facing LGBTI persons with existing effective anti-discrimination measures.

Belgium - 1:12:28

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU and would like to add the following in its national capacity. Belgium welcomes the report of the independent expert and reiterates its strong support to his mandate. We are also very grateful for the way the mandate was conducted by the independent expert and thank him for his work and dedication. Human rights are universal and indivisible. That is why my country will remain engaged on the issue of protecting individuals against violence and discrimination regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or belief, gender identity or indeed sexual orientation. No one should hide in fear for his or her life or for criminal prosecution because of who they are or whom they love. We share the concern voiced in the present report on the criminalization of consensual same-sex relations, as well as gender identity and its expression. We take this opportunity to call on all countries to cease these policies. LGBTI persons do not represent a danger to society like such legislation seems to suggest. On the contrary, they contribute in many ways to diverse, prosperous and stable democracies. Steps taken to fight discrimination are also of crucial importance in this respect. Belgium acknowledges that change cannot happen overnight and without buy in and support of States concerns, their experience and sometimes their diverging views that are of particular importance if we want to achieve tangible and long-term progress in the protection of human rights of LGBTI persons. In this respect, we commend the open and consultative working methods of the independent expert and hope his successor will also take this on board. Alongside a number of other countries, Belgium will continue to work in support of UN human rights mandate holders, in particular the independent expert, to ensure access to a wide range of countries while fostering a climate of dialogue.



Canada - 1:20:09

Mr. Chair, Canada and Chile are co-chairs of the Coalition for Equal Rights which aims to



promote the inclusive development and to defend the basic rights of LGBTI persons. Last week in New York, Canada and Chile co-chaired a meeting of the coalition together with the member States of the coalition, civil society and multilateral bodies. This meeting has enabled us to strengthen our common determination to cooperate in order to protect LGBTI persons. We would like to express our gratitude to the independent expert for his second report. We also think that each

member State of the United Nations has to continue combating against violence and discrimination that LGBTI persons are facing and this applies to Canada as well. As was mentioned by the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister, Canada was for a long time a country where discrimination, homophobia, transphobia and biphobia were encouraged by the State. Serious problems continue, in particular for indigenous and transgender people. We support the fact that the expert mentioned our new law on gender identity and its expression. We also note with satisfaction the advances made by various countries in this area. We would like to have the opinion of the independent expert on the best practices to make sure that LGBTI people are included in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

France - 1:29:19

Your mandate in 2016 by the Human Rights Council was a historic advancement and we firmly support the mandate. In one year's time you undertook remarkable and constructive work and your successor will have to build on that because the commitment of the United Nations to fight against any violence and any kind of discrimination, including those against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity is, and I quote,



inescapable. I have two questions. As underscored by your report, criminalization of homosexuality exists in more than 70 countries and sometimes it results in the death penalty. How can we move collectively in order to universally decriminalize homosexuality that we would very much wish to happen? You underscore the work being done by LGBTI persons in this area and who pay a very high price for that. How can we protect them at the United Nations from the threats that they are facing? Despite the advancement in your mandate, LGBTI persons are still being arrested, killed and tortured in impunity. Your report paints this grim picture and [calls for] decriminalization in many countries and many discriminatory laws. It is essential for them to be repealed but in the meantime, not to apply them. We remain mobilized with the Coalition for

Equal Rights. Sir, once again France congratulates you on your work and would like to thank you.

Ireland - 1:33:06



Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. We wish to extend our appreciation to the independent expert for his presence here today as well as for his ongoing work and ensure him of our full support for this important mandate. We understand that you have indicated that you will be stepping down from the role at the end of this month and we would like to take this opportunity to wish you well for the future. Ireland welcomes your

appointment by the United Nations Human Rights Council as the first independent expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The creation of this role and your appointment sent an important message of solidarity to members of the LGBTI community. We are therefore very concerned and disappointed at efforts made by some States to defer implementation of your mandate. We hope that a new appointment is made to fill the position of independent expert as soon as possible to continue your valuable work and we look forward to continuing a positive working relationship with your successor. We thank the independent expert for his recent report and fully agree with his recommendations. We hope all States will endeavor to implement these recommendations. We note the report’s conclusion that the phenomenon of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is both local and global and requires strong national and international countermeasures to promote respect for sexual and gender diversity under the umbrella of international human rights law. Can you give some examples of best practices and measures that can achieve that goal?

Israel - 1:43:59

Israel warmly welcomes and supports the independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and congratulates him for his first and last report to the Third Committee of the General Assembly. In just a few months, Israel will celebrate its 30th anniversary of the decriminalization of consensual same-sex relations. Israel joins the independent expert with a call to governments to take this path of decriminalization and adopt anti-discrimination measures with the understanding that these measures will help prevent violence against the LGBTI community. While we celebrate three decades of progress of LGBTI rights in Israel, we know that there is more to be done in that area. Therefore, we partner with civil



society organizations in Israel in order to ensure the guaranteeing of rights to all LGBTI persons fighting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, raising public awareness and educating youth about the importance of acceptance and tolerance. In addition, as a member of the United Nations LGBTI Core Group and a member of the Equal Rights Coalition, Israel is at the forefront of the struggle to end violence and discrimination against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Mr. Chairperson, unfortunately LGBTI persons are still victims of violence and discrimination in many parts of the world, including in the Middle East. It is clear that there is still a long way to go. The previous Secretary-General has described the fight against homophobia and transphobia as one of the great neglected human rights challenges of our time. Fighting discrimination and violence against LGBTI persons does not imply creating new rights to a new group but rather guaranteeing the same rights to all people equally. It is a struggle that the whole international community should be involved in without politicizing the issue. On a personal note, as an openly gay man, I want to thank the independent expert and wish you good luck.

Malta - 1:46:06

Mata aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and would like to thank the independent expert for his presentation and the report which Malta welcomes with great interest. You rightly mentioned that to date, Malta is just one of two States whose Constitution explicitly includes both sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for non-discrimination. This was not the case up to a few years ago but we have now made significant achievements. In 2013, Malta in fact stood at the 18th position on ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index with a score of just 35 percent. Today, we top that index and enjoy a score of 91 percent, while being made



aware that more needs to be done for Malta to bridge the remaining 9 percent. The lack of adequate legal protection against discrimination and violence based on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity around the world, exposing various people to grievous violations of their human rights, is of deep concern. Often times, the rights of trans, intersex and gender varying people are overlooked in gender equality

discussions. To address this, during the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Malta hosted a side event on legal reforms to protect the human rights of trans, intersex and gender varying people with the intention to raise awareness and indicate actions that member States can take to respect the human rights of these persons. Further to this, in 2015, Malta adopted the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act, through which all persons are able to change their name and align their gender on official documents following a notarial declaration. We have also protected all persons against unnecessary, unconsented and uninformed medical and surgical intervention on their sex characteristics. Consequently, Malta introduced laws affirming all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions as equally valid, banned conversion practices and de-

pathologized sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression across the board. While change in Malta happened rapidly, it did not just happen overnight. It took determination, perseverance, leadership but also political will.

Netherlands - 1:34:55

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union



as well as the statement by Canada who is co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition, of which the Netherlands is co-founder and a proud member. We would like to add the following question and comment in our national capacity. In his report, the independent expert mentions that the 2030 agenda offers the opportunity to tackle violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We

would like to ask the independent expert how he thinks we could integrate that element into the work on the SDGs without feeling the existing controversy on the matter. In view of his impending resignation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to voice its deep appreciation and gratitude for the independent expert, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn who has discharged his mandate with commitment and dedication. We wish him all the best. In line with our strong support for the mandate of the independent expert, we look forward to continuing the dialogue with his successor.

New Zealand - 1:39:52

We congratulate the independent expert on a productive and successful year of work under this important mandate, which reflects the obligations and commitments we have all made to non-discrimination and the prevention of violence for all. We welcome the recommendations of the independent expert and call for urgent action by all States to prevent and overcome violence and discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, including by reforming laws, policies and practices which criminalize consensual same-sex relations. In

New Zealand, in 1986 the Homosexual Law Reform Act decriminalized sexual relations between men aged 16 and over. In 1993, reforms to the Human Rights Act prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and same-sex marriage was legalized in 2013. This year, the New Zealand Parliament formally apologized to men convicted under old laws that criminalized homosexuality and passed legislation to expunge convictions



for historical homosexual offences. This recognized the arrests, the imprisonments and the fear under historical laws caused immense shame, stigma and hurt, ruined lives, destroyed potential

and caused violence and death, including through suicide. In the apology, the Minister of Justice explained that these men should never have been burdened with criminal convictions. We are recognizing the continual effect these convictions have had on their lives and the lives of their families. It is never too late to apologize. While we can never erase the injustice, the apology is a symbolic and important act that we hope will address the harm and right this historical wrong. New Zealand strongly supports equal rights for all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and we consider that the high frequency of State-sanctioned or State-tolerated violence and discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity around the world today is completely intolerable and unacceptable and shames the conscience of this world.

Spain - 1:31:12

At the outset, Spain would like to express its thanks for the work which you've done this year. Spain will continue to be committed to the independent expert's mandate and will work constructively with its successor. Spain thanks the independent expert for the report [which] as well as having a picture of the progress made this year raises important questions like the checks and balances to prevent abuses of power and violations of human



rights, the necessary cooperation with civil society, and the importance of education as a tool for prevention and awareness. My country is happy that you have mentioned what we have done in our country and this is mentioned in our report. Spain believes that education is a fundamental factor in fighting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and we would like to know practices which accept diversity. I would also like to share with you and the rest of the audience that Spain has started work for the elaboration of State strategy for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. With regard to the existing legislation, the goal is to eliminate any manifestation of discrimination [against] LGBTI persons, in particular for transgender persons, promote social and legal acceptance of this family and specific measures for LGBTI persons and anti-discrimination laws.

Sweden (Joint Statement) - 1:36:03

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and my own country Sweden. Let me begin by expressing our heartfelt sympathy for Mr. Muntarhorn and his family. Mr. Chair, we remain gravely concerned that consensual same-sex relationships are still criminalized in over 70 countries. Some States even continue to apply the death penalty. We are deeply concerned by reports of torture and forced disappearances, arbitrary or summary detentions and killings of LGBTI persons. We strongly condemn these actions. Furthermore disheartening is authorities denial of or attempts to cover up violations against LGBTI persons, often leading to impunity. It shouldn't be controversial to say that we all enjoy the same rights, the same human rights, regardless of whom we love or



our gender identity. Mr. Muntarbhorn, we fully echo your call on States to ensure adoption of capacity building measures in regard to sexual orientation and gender identity. In your view, what would be the most suitable way to approach this issue, in particular in terms of human rights education? Furthermore, we fully share your view that civil society helps to energize the path to legislative reform. What are the main obstacles for NGOs, human rights defenders

and others, in particular those working to achieve reform of discriminatory legislation? Finally, we again thank you for your efforts and achievements and the valuable work done during your tenure and wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Switzerland - 1:41:54

Mr. Chairman, we would like to thank Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn for his report and the presentation for his vision of the mandate which he explained in six points. We hope that this will be continued by his successor. In fact, we learned with regret that the independent expert is stepping down. Mr. Chairman, my country welcomes and supports the constructive dialogue carried out by the independent expert in order to fight against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. He shares his view that the respect of human rights implies extending protection to all persons. In this regard, we regret the fact that sexual orientation and gender identity and its expression are still used as a motive for arbitrary detention, physical and/or psychological violence, and discriminatory measures which are frequently compounded by incitement to hatred. We would like to also thank the independent expert for having recalled the importance of paying special attention to decriminalizing homosexual relations and behaviors related to gender identity and its expression and to the adoption of effective measures to combat against all kinds of discrimination. Independent Expert, you underscore in your report the growing role played by social media when used as a platform for hate speech and incitement to violence and you say that the basic condition needed to fight discrimination is empathy. How can we develop, in this context, an environment that would be conducive to greater empathy and above and beyond empathy, what are other specific pathways that you recommend are to be undertaken as a priority in order to fight discrimination? You mention also that the commitment to fight against violence and discrimination is something that is universal and inescapable. How specifically can the Agenda 2030 contribute to the implementation of your mandate and how can the international community help here?



United Kingdom - 1:18:14

The United Kingdom sees the appointment and work of the independent expert as an intricate

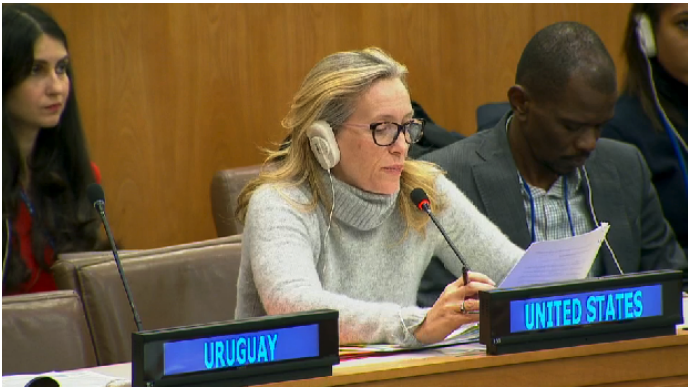


element of international efforts to tackle violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and to deliver on the 2030 agenda commitment to leave no one behind. We would like to thank him for the significant contribution he has made to this groundbreaking mandate and for his inclusive and consensus-building approach. We support the recommendations in his report and and

particularly welcome his recommendation that States reform the laws, policies and practices which criminalize consensual same-sex relations and reform the laws that criminalize transgender persons in relation to gender identity, as well as other laws used to arbitrarily detain and harass lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. The UK supports the recommendation that pending repeal of discriminatory laws, the preferred policy is to desist from applying such negative laws and policies. Human rights are universal and should apply equally to all people everywhere. The international community must work to address discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We are deeply concerned by all reports of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons being arrested, detained arbitrarily or tortured on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity, both real and perceived. Those States who commit to combating violence against individuals must fulfil their commitments and protect everyone equally. Mr. Chair, the report of the independent expert states that the role of UN bodies is pivotal in raising the issue of violence and discrimination. We would like to ask the independent expert to expand on the process he envisages between violations being identified in-country and the appropriate response of a UN country team.

United States - 1:16:29

The United States thanks the independent expert for his service as the first ever UN independent expert on protection from violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This is a mandate that is of critical importance to the United States, especially at a time when LGBTI individuals around the world are being murdered, tortured and attacked. Dignity and equality are core universal human rights values, and they are American values underpinned by our Constitution. The United States will continue to stand up for the human rights of all persons. The United States opposes all forms of discrimination



and we appreciate the independent expert's focus on grave human rights violations. In 2017, it is unacceptable that LGBTI persons face criminal charges related to LGBTI status or conduct in around 80 countries. It is intolerable that same-sex conduct is punishable by the death penalty in some countries around the world. We appreciate the independent expert's focus on this important issue. When we receive reports of the murder, kidnapping and torture of LGBTI individuals, we must all call out these violations and the governments perpetrating them. The recent cases in several countries of arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and crackdowns on the fundamental freedoms of LGBTI persons are incredibly disturbing. Our question is: What are the tools you have employed as you engage with governments that criminalize same-sex conduct, and what more do you believe the international community can do to ensure these issues remain a priority?

European Union - 1:25:16

On behalf of the European Union, I would like to thank the independent expert for presenting his report here today. The EU remains deeply concerned about the alarming rates of violence and discrimination committed against LGBTI persons worldwide, including reports of torture, summary or arbitrary detentions or even killings.



These human rights violations are unacceptable and in stark contrast to the universality of human rights. The EU wishes to reaffirm that cultural, traditional or religious values cannot be invoked to justify any form of discrimination or violence against any individual, including LGBTI persons. The report emphasizes that laws criminalizing same-sex relations between consenting adults and gender identity or expression lead to violence and discrimination. It is concerning that consensual same-sex relations still remain criminalized in over 70 countries. Government together with civil society should commit to working together in changing these laws. The same cooperation is needed to make anti-discrimination measures more effective. In June 2013, the Council of the European Union adopted guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTI persons, listing decriminalization and combating discriminatory laws and policies amongst our priority areas. Support and protection for human rights defenders is another EU priority according to our guidelines and we would like to ask the independent expert whether he could share some best practices in this regard. Mr. Chair, this is not only the first but also the last time Mr. Muntarhorn is presenting his report before this Third Committee. We want to wish him the very best and hope that he will face his own personal challenges with the same enthusiasm, zeal and tenacity he has shown in taking up his mandate. The EU will continue the dialogue with his successor in the same spirit as in the past as well as seek ways to continue UN human rights mandate holders, in particular the independent expert to make progress.