



## STATEMENT IN OBSERVANCE OF PRIDE MONTH

Delivered by Ambassador Natasha Meli Daudey at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 22 June 2023

Mr Chair,

I give this statement on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and my own country Malta.

We thank the delegation of the United States for raising the issue of Pride Month. Promotion of human rights for all, and efforts to end discrimination and violence against LGBTI persons, is a priority for us.

As OSCE participating States we have committed ourselves to the principle of equality, to combatting all forms of discrimination and intolerance, and to addressing and combatting hate crimes. This Saturday, our delegations joined others in proudly participating in the Vienna Pride Parade, where people came together to celebrate love and diversity, inclusion, and equality. Pride continues to be an important annual event that celebrates LGBTI people and highlights the challenges they continue to face on the realization of human rights and equality.

All States, regardless of their political, economic, and cultural systems, have a legal obligation under international law to protect the human rights of all persons without discrimination. Protection should include tackling a deeply concerning rise in anti-LGBTI sentiment across the OSCE region, often fueled by misinformation. Such anti-LGBTI sentiment has already led to violent attacks and parallel anti-Pride demonstrations.

In several participating States, we see continued, and in many cases worsening, discrimination and hostility against LGBTI persons. There is an increase in discriminatory rhetoric, also at the highest levels of politics and society. Some governments instrumentalize anti-LGBTI sentiments for domestic policy gains. Russia's efforts in this area are particularly alarming.

Mr. Chair,

We know that LGBTI persons face specific risks during armed conflict, and Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion is endangering LGBTI persons in Ukraine. UNWomen and Care International last year released a gender analysis on Ukraine, stating that: (quote)

“Wars and armed conflicts in other parts of the world confirm that cases of persecution, threats, sexual violence and ‘corrective rape’ against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual persons increase during violent escalations. Thus, the protection and safety of people with different sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as an



appropriate response to such cases of discrimination and violence, is necessary in this context”.

Civil society organizations that serve LGBTI displaced persons have specialized knowledge on how sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics create specific exposures to risk during conflict and know how best to respond to these risks and needs accordingly. These organizations must be among our partners in the response to Russia’s war in Ukraine. We also encourage efforts through the OSCE Support Programme Ukraine to ensure inclusive programming and to create safe spaces for LGBTI refugees and internally displaced in Ukraine.

Mr. Chair,

Distinct and sometimes intersecting challenges are faced by lesbian and bisexual women, gay and bisexual men, transgender persons, intersex persons and other LGBTI persons. The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA) in Europe *2023 Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia* describes a continuing trend of rising hate speech, much of it related to trans people, in many of the OSCE participating States. There has been not only a stark rise in violence against LGBTI people, but also in the severity of that violence.

Laws are introduced restricting the human rights of LGBTI persons, the work of human rights defenders, and the right of children and youth to access to information. Attempts are being made to restrict diversity education in school curricula. In parallel, however, ILGA finds growing support for LGBTI among societies across the OSCE despite several governments’ efforts to instrumentalize anti-LGBTI feeling.

Mr. Chair,

We support ODIHR’s work on tolerance and non-discrimination, including on the further developments of the hate speech registry and the continued training of criminal justice professionals treating hate crime victims.

We encourage all States to start at home to protect and advance the human rights of marginalized groups, and to support international efforts to promote tolerance and to end the discrimination and exclusion of LGBTI persons. We call on all participating States to eliminate laws and policies that discriminate against persons based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics, and to combat all acts of violence targeting LGBTI persons.

Thank you