

**Joint Statement on the International Day Against Homophobia,
Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia**

as delivered by Ambassador Kristín A. Árnadóttir

at the 1423 Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, 18 May 2023, Vienna.

Mr. Chair

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States and my own country, Iceland.

May 17th marked the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).

The theme for this year's international day is "Together Always: United in Diversity." It is a day to affirm our commitment to the human rights and dignity of all people and a recognition that diversity in our societies should be recognized as a strength and not a weakness.

While we have made progress in securing legal rights and advancing social acceptance and protection against discrimination for LGBTI+ persons, the fight for equality, inclusivity and safety is far from over. Still today, individuals are criminalized, tortured, and even killed, with impunity, for who they are and who they love.

There are, moreover, several actors, including states, that are mobilising narratives which appeal to "traditional values" to justify new anti-LGBTI+ legislation.

One of the most egregious examples in the OSCE region is the situation in Russia, where LGBTI+ persons live in fear of harassment, arrest, and violence.

The Moscow Mechanism of September 2022 affirmed that Russia's legislative restrictions "on the promotion of . . . non-traditional sexual relationships" impairs the realisation of human rights of LGBTI+ individuals and contributes to intolerance and discrimination in the society.

Since December 2022, new restrictions have effectively outlawed any public expression of LGBTI+ behaviour in Russia in a further attempt by the authorities to create a climate of fear and intimidation and restrict the freedom of expression of all people in Russia. This is appalling and contrary to the universal values of equality, dignity, and respect that we share as human beings.

It is all the more abhorrent because President Putin has also sought to use this discrimination in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and his assault on democracy and human

rights, seeking to justify the unjustifiable by painting himself as the global defender of so-called “traditional values”.

Regrettably in some parts of the OSCE region, we are witnessing a backlash against both gender equality and the rights of LGBTI+ persons, and a frightening wave of violence against LGBTI+ persons.

In many of our societies, transgender, non-binary and intersex persons still face significant challenges. Not everyone accepts these persons’ gender identity, and they face discrimination, harassment, and violence as a result.

Governments, decision-makers, and the general public must do all they can to build more inclusive and just societies.

We urge all OSCE participating States to uphold their OSCE commitments and international obligations and protect and respect the human rights, and address the needs, of all , including LGBTI+ individuals.

This means actively ensuring non-discrimination and equal access to education, employment, and health services.

This means ensuring that civil society organisations, human rights defenders, and community leaders are able to work and advocate on LGBTI+ issues without undue restrictions or fear of reprisals.

This means taking into account intersecting forms of discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, disability, and other factors.

Within this organization, this means supporting the efforts of ODIHR to assist in combatting discrimination and hate crimes against all people, including LGBTI+ persons.

On this IDAHOBIT, we stand in solidarity with LGBTI+ persons everywhere who are fighting for recognition of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also celebrate the diversity and resilience of LGBTI+ communities around the world.

Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics should never be bases for discrimination or abuse.

We must work together to create a world where everyone can live freely, without fear or discrimination. Because how can a society be considered to be free if people do not have the freedom to love who they want or be who they are?

I thank you.