



# UN Racism Conference Affirms Multiple Grounds of Discrimination

*States must do more to explicitly protect LGBTI people*

**APRIL 24, 2009**

(Geneva)- Governments endorsing the conference declaration should do more to address multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination by protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and intersex (LGBTI) people from criminalization, torture and beatings.

In a joint statement, a coalition of NGO's called upon governments to recognize the importance of addressing multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination, to include sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds that are inextricably linked to racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia.

“Although the current declaration does not explicitly provide protection to human rights abuses on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity,” said Akim Adé Larcher, Director of Policy and Research at Egale Canada. “The adoption of this document means States have an obligation to address contemporary forms of discrimination, which in light of today’s realities represent’s the grave human rights abuses faced by racialized LGBTI people.”

The Durban Review Conference (20-24 April 2009) started this week in Geneva, Switzerland. It evaluated the progress towards the goals set by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. From the onset the Conference was marred with controversy, when Iran’s president used the conference to give a hate filled speech prompting a walk out by many States and by the fact many Western democracies still decided to boycott the conference despite the adopted texts upholding freedom of expression and avoids singling out Israel.

At a side-event co organized by ARC-International, COC Netherlands, Egale Canada, IGLHRC, ILGA, Mulabi, RFSL, on the intersectionality of race, sexual orientation and gender identity, panellists called upon States to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which articulates that “all human beings are free and equal dignity and rights”- not some, not even most, but ALL. They said it was an urgent call for States to recognize the human rights abuses faced by LGBTI people and to respect the current spirit and intent of the adopted text to protect multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination, such as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

“The interwovenness of identities not the intersectionality of them is perhaps a better picture to paint in our struggle,” said Lindiwe Nkutha a cultural activist, representing the Coalition of African Lesbians. “Recognizing this indivisibility of human rights within this adopted text has the potential of opening up space for new formulations of doing struggle and recognises these connections.”

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