

## **Statement by a group of African activists, SOGI panel, HRC19**

*- delivered by Kasha Jacqueline. 7 March 2011*

Madame President,

We African activists speak on behalf of the people throughout the continent who continually face persecution and violence on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. We also speak in solidarity with the sentiments of the Women Living Under Muslim Laws in their letter addressed to the President of the HRC.

We have received with joy the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that highlights the deplorable state of human rights for LGBT people. We commend the leadership of South Africa in opening dialogue around the human rights of people with non-conforming sexualities and identities. We urge member States to take this opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue on this important issue. The African continent has reason and continues to rise against all oppressive structures like colonialism, apartheid, despotism and dictatorships.

LGBT persons, however, continue to experience oppression and violence that derive from archaic and barbaric colonial laws against adult consensual sex, colonial Victorian ideas of morality disguised as African traditional values, patriarchal notions of gender and gender expressions, religious fundamentalisms, and strongly held social constructs that contradict the African values of Ubuntu, acceptance, peace, and shared coexistence.

LGBT persons in Africa continually face stigma and discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrest, alienation from family and faith, lack of access to social services including health, justice, housing, education and dignified livelihoods.

All this despite African States being signatories to the UDHR, the ACHPR, particularly article 2, and the AU values of equality and non-discrimination.

We as African LGBT activists are not asking for any new or special rights. We urge you, our African governments, to live up to your obligations under international and regional instruments and your own national constitutions, all of which recognise equality and non-discrimination for all persons. We call upon all African States to end violence and discrimination against LGBT citizens, abolish all discriminatory laws in existence. We call upon those States currently considering legislating such laws to cease. We call upon all African States to create legal and social environments conducive to the equality, full enjoyment of all rights for all citizens.

I thank you.