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Human Rights Council: 23rd Session

Item 8 General Debate: Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

10th June 2013

Delivered by Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera

Thank you Mr President.

Over the past two years this Council has made significant progress in discussing human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity. In her report on Discriminatory Laws and Practices and Acts of Violence against Individuals based on their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, the High Commissioner noted that indeed the Council was required to address incidents of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity given its mandate to promote "universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner".

Continuing serious violations, repeated acts of discrimination and violence around the world, demonstrate the importance of addressing this matter. In the East and Horn of Africa, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons continue to find their basic rights and freedoms under severe attack, as well as those HRDs who are working to protect their rights. They are subjected to physical violence and sexual abuse, excluded from accessing healthcare, education and employment opportunities, as well as being the target of a continuing media witch-hunt. In the last year, we have also seen the interruption of gay pride parades, the closure of human rights workshops, illegal arrests of activists, and a crackdown on the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity with bans on plays touching on issues of sexual orientation. Organisations working on these issues have been threatened with closure.

This situation is real; these abuses are unacceptable.

We call on states to take concrete action to allow LGBTI people to live lives of dignity and to enjoy their inherent fundamental rights like any other human being, by reforming discriminatory laws and holding perpetrators of violations to account.

The Human Rights Council must also continue to play its role and keep a sustained focus on this issue.

I thank you Mr President.