



## PERMANENT MISSION OF NORWAY

Human Rights Council, 23<sup>rd</sup> Session, Geneva, 10 June 2013

Item 8: Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Statement by ambassador Kongstad on behalf of a group of countries

Mr. President,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of \_\_ countries from different regions: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, *Uruguay.*  
*+ Czech Rep, Estonia, Switzerland.*

On this 20th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, we recall that while 'various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms'. The VDPA declares that 'human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings'.

We recall Human Rights Council resolution 17/19, the report of the High Commissioner and the panel discussion last year. This has provided a solid foundation on which to build a framework for addressing discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Mr. President,

The International Conference on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity held in Oslo, 15-16 April of this year, co-chaired by South-Africa and Norway, gathered more than 200 participants from 84 countries of all regions of the world.

The Conference was the result of a cross regional process, initiated by South Africa and supported by Norway, Brazil and other friends of the resolution 17/19.

In all countries of the world, individuals are subjected to discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We would like to thank partner countries for the good collaboration in conducting the consultative regional seminars in Kathmandu, Paris and Brasilia early this year leading up to the concluding international conference in Oslo in April. We would also like to thank civil society for the invaluable contributions to this process. We also extend a special recognition to ARC and ILGA for organizing the side event here in

Geneva on 5 June (cosponsored by Brazil, France, Norway, Poland and South-Africa), an event which gave an overview of the process undertaken on the basis of the plan presented by South Africa to the Group of Friends in 2012.

In this regard, we draw attention to the report distributed on 5 June, entitled 'International Conference on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Summary and Toolkit'. This contains the Co-Chair's Summary and Conclusions; Report from the Oslo Conference (15-16 April); Report from Paris (26 March); Report from Kathmandu (22-23 March); Report from Brasilia (4-5 April); input from Africa; statements by Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, High Commissioner Pillay, ASG Simonovic; as well as key reference documents in the UN context (resolution 17/19 and the High Commissioner's report on the issue).

Mr. President,

In Oslo, the Co-Chairs together with the regional organizers drew up and issued a set of agreed conclusions. These are contained in the Co-Chairs' Summary and Conclusions. Of particular relevance for the work on the global level, we reaffirmed the responsibility of the Human Rights Council to address human rights violations against all persons, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We recognized the ongoing work of treaty bodies, special procedures and under the Universal Periodic Review, and encouraged continued and strengthened efforts in this area. Together we found that the identified gaps and challenges are pervasive in all regions and require systemic solutions.

Against this background, we concluded that there is a need to integrate the issues systematically in the work of the United Nations, through the establishment of a relevant mechanism, at the appropriate time. The Co-Chairs' Summary and Conclusions specifies the objectives of such a mechanism, in essence the need to study and document the situation; recommend concrete steps and encourage good practices; work collaboratively with other UN bodies; present reports to the Human Rights Council and engage its members in interactive dialogue; and offer technical assistance to states.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by stating that the countries behind this statement remain committed to working with all partners in keeping the issue of human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity on the agenda of the United Nations through an appropriate decision of the Human Rights Council, in accordance with the spirit of resolution 17/19 and drawing upon the outcome of the process as outlined in the report just described.

Moving forward we support further efforts and dialogue among all parties, on the national, regional and global levels. We believe that the United Nations and the Human Rights Council provide a useful framework for such a dialogue on the global level.

Thank you.