

Civil Society calls on Government of Canada for Greater Action on LGBTI Rights Globally
The world will be watching as Vancouver hosts international conference next week

Ottawa, August 2, 2018 – As Canada prepares to host the international Equal Rights Coalition Global Conference from August 5-7 in Vancouver, the Dignity Network calls on the government of Canada to transform its verbal commitments into concrete actions to strengthen human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people around the world.

“This high-level conference is a critical opportunity for the federal government to truly demonstrate leadership in advancing human rights protections for LGBTI people both here at home and globally — it’s time to walk the talk,” said Helen Kennedy, Executive Director of Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, which organized civil society participation in the conference. “LGBTI people around the world continue to experience staggering levels of discrimination, criminalization, persecution, harassment, and violence. Strong government support is needed to confront the pervasive state-sanctioned hate we see in so many parts of the world.”

“We are calling on Prime Minister Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland to advance LGBTI rights protections by funding LGBTI groups and movements; supporting LGBTI human rights defenders; ensuring protections for LGBTI refugees; and making a long-term commitment to multilateral engagement in support of LGBTI rights via the Equal Rights Coalition,” said Marie-Pier Boisvert, Executive Director of the Conseil québécois LGBT (LGBT Council of Quebec), a member of the Dignity Network’s Steering Committee.

The Dignity Network brings together more than 20 Canadian civil society organizations to advocate for the rights of LGBTI people in Canada and around the world. The Dignity Network calls on the federal government to advance human rights protections for LGBTI people around the world by:

- Committing new funding to move Canada into the leading tier of countries who support LGBTI human rights work globally, including dedicated new funding to support Canadian human rights organizations promoting LGBTI rights globally, as well as direct support to LGBTI human rights defenders, organizations, and social movements around the world;
- Articulating how Canada is supporting and will continue to support LGBTI rights through the implementation of its feminist approach to foreign policy, Feminist International Assistance Policy, and Voices at Risk guidelines to support human rights defenders; and
- Confirming dedicated support for the Equal Rights Coalition including funding for Canada’s work as co-chair of the coalition, and beyond.

“At this conference we expect strong, bold words in support of LGBTI rights from Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland,” said Kimalhi Powell, Executive Director of Rainbow Railroad, a member of Dignity Network’s Steering Committee. “The Dignity Network calls on the federal government to back up those words with firm commitments of decisive, concrete action and

funding to transform Canada’s rhetoric into transformative change that will help ensure the rights of LGBTI people around the world are respected, protected, and upheld.”

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BACKGROUND:

The Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) is the first intergovernmental coalition, with 39 member states including co-chairs Canada and Chile, dedicated to the protection of the rights of LGBTI people around the world. The theme of this year’s Global Conference is *Leaving No One Behind*, and it brings together states, development cooperation agencies, civil society organizations, private donors, and other relevant stakeholders to advance LGBTI human rights and inclusive development around the world. This is the first time that Canada has hosted a Global Summit of the ERC.

#ERC2018 #EqualRightsCoalition