



EUROPEAN UNION

EN

Brussels, 17 May 2011  
10302/1/11 REV 1  
PRESSE 139

**Declaration by the High Representative,  
Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the EU, on the occasion of the  
International Day against Homophobia, 17 May 2011**

Today we celebrate the International Day against Homophobia. I want to reaffirm the strong commitment of the European Union – and myself - to the entitlement of all persons to enjoy the full range of human rights without discrimination.

Around the world, gender identity and sexual orientation continue to be used wrongly as the pretext for serious human rights violations. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) persons continue to be subjected to persecution, discrimination and gross ill-treatment, often involving extreme forms of violence. Transgender and intersex persons are a particularly vulnerable group among LGBTI people. Around 80 States still criminalise same-sex relations between consenting adults, and seven even foresee the death penalty. This is incompatible with international human rights law.

The EU calls on all States to end acts of violence, criminal sanctions and human rights violations against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. On this day, we also pay tribute to the David Kato and John Edison Ramirez, prominent LGBTI activists, who were murdered last year, and would like to commend the selection of the Ugandan LGBT-activist Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera as Laureate for the renowned Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

As part of its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, in June 2010 the EU adopted a “Toolkit to Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People”. Also, through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU supports several organisations defending the rights of LGBTI persons or protecting LGBTI human rights defenders.

**P R E S S**

In this context, the European Union has warmly welcomed the Joint Statement entitled “Ending acts of violence and related human rights violations based on sexual orientation & gender identity” on behalf of 85 countries from every continent, at the UN Human Rights Council on 22 March 2011. Fifteen EU Member States were part of the group that worked to prepare this statement, and all EU Member States gave their full support to this initiative. The Joint Statement demonstrates the increasing commitment across the international community to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all persons, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Candidate Countries Croatia<sup>\*</sup>, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>\*</sup>, Montenegro<sup>\*</sup> and Iceland<sup>†</sup>, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

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<sup>\*</sup> Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

<sup>†</sup> Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.