

Davos: UN rights chief stresses leading role of businesses in ending LGBTI discrimination

26 January 2018 – With major companies joining the growing list of early adopters of United Nations standards to promote equality for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, the UN human rights chief on Friday highlighted the private sector's crucial leadership role in ensuring the dignity and equal opportunities of LGBTI employees in the workplace and beyond.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said that companies that take action to end discrimination and support LGBTI communities can be a motor for change.

The standards, developed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), draw on good practice from around the world, setting out actions that can be taken by employers.

These include eliminating unfair treatment against LGBTI people in the workplace, making sure business operations do not contribute to discrimination against customers, suppliers or members of the public, and working with business partners to address discriminatory practices up and down the supply chain.

They also encourage companies to stand up for the rights of LGBTI people in the countries where they operate including through advocacy and support for local organizations.

These standards provide the most comprehensive set of benchmarks for responsible corporate behaviour on LGBTI issues. A company of any nationality, size and location or sector can find no better vehicle to correct inequities and end discrimination brought about by prejudice, Mr. Zeid said.

The High Commissioner was speaking at a panel discussion titled "Free and Equal: Standing Up for Diversity", which also included Vittorio Colao, Vodafone Group Chief Executive Officer, and Jin Xing, Choreographer and Founder of the Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai, and was moderated by Zanny Minton Beddoes, Editor-in-Chief, of The Economist magazine.

The Standards of Conduct build on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. They are the product of a year-long process of consultations facilitated by the OHCHR and the Institute for Human Rights and Business.

Nineteen more companies have joined a growing list of early adopters,

including Airbnb, Airbus, AXA, Barilla, Bloomberg L.P., Cisco Systems Inc., Gol, Hermes Investment Management, Lloyd's, Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics – North America, Marriott International, MAS Holdings, Nasdaq, New York Life, Santander Group, Tesco, Trillium Asset Management, Unilever, Vert Asset Management, and Xerox.