

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, 17 May 2021: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU



Everyone is born free and equal in dignity and rights. On the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), the European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to respect, protect and promote the full and equal enjoyment of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

Around the world, individuals continue to face violence, exclusion and discrimination on a daily basis, because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity or sex characteristics. The EU remains particularly worried that in 69 countries consensual same-sex relationships are criminalised, with 11 of them retaining the death penalty as a legal punishment for homosexuality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to even higher levels of violence and discrimination against LGBTI persons, including domestic violence, hate speech online and offline, and hate crimes. They often face stigma and discrimination in accessing health services. Moreover, the pandemic has led to shrinking civic space and an increase in arbitrary arrests and detentions, physical attacks and psychological trauma for human rights defenders protecting the rights of LGBTI persons. These acts are unacceptable and the EU stresses the importance of ending their impunity.

The EU takes action globally to prevent and denounce all forms of discrimination against LGBTI persons, including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic violence, while promoting their access to equal opportunities in all spheres of life. It is important that discriminatory laws, policies and practices, including the criminalisation of consenting same-sex relations are fought worldwide. Such practices also expose LGBTI persons disproportionately to unemployment, social exclusion and poverty.

The EU will remain at the forefront of efforts to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of human rights of LGBTI persons. Through its renewed internal and external policy framework, notably the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) and the European Commission's first ever LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the EU advances equality in all spheres of life both inside and outside the EU.

In line with this year's IDAHOT theme "Together: Resisting, Supporting, Healing!", the EU will continue to address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, highlighting the vulnerable situation of LGBTI persons in the COVID-19 recovery and calling for fairer, more inclusive

and sustainable societies. It will engage through political dialogue with partner countries and continue to support civil society organisations and human rights defenders for the protection and promotion of the full and equal enjoyment of human rights of LGBTI persons and the respect for diversity.

Ensuring the right of all individuals to be free to be who they are and love whom they choose requires joint efforts by all, every day.