

# UN Human Rights Council 41: general comment on sexual orientation and gender identity

The UK reaffirmed support for the Independent Expert's mandate and explained how they fully backed the resolution and opposed any amendments.

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Thank you, Mr President,

The UK attaches great importance to the enjoyment of universal rights by all people, on a free and equal basis.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the benchmark: human rights apply equally to all people, at all times, in all places. The resolution under consideration is a powerful reminder of this truth.

It is a fact that no state has perfected the promotion and protection of these universal rights. My own country has worked hard, and continues to work hard, to play a leading role on LGBT rights – and yet we know that there is still much more for us to do. We are working hard to deliver our domestic LGBT Action Plan to improve rights in our own country. And as the co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition, alongside Argentina, we are working with the Coalition's growing membership to achieve LGBT equality.

This resolution to renew the mandate of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity by this Human Rights Council represents a landmark moment – almost as much as it was three years ago. Its renewal will send a message that will resonate and amplify far beyond this chamber.

It will send a crucial message of support to those living in the 69 countries

where people live in fear of arrest, prosecution and imprisonment because it remains a punishable offence to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender. Laws that criminalise sexual orientation or gender identity are unjust, and serve no acceptable purpose. Criminalisation creates a vicious cycle, creating a climate of intolerance that fosters violence and stigmatisation, discrimination and division.

The UK strongly supports the efforts of the core group of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay to ensure that the work of the Independent Expert will continue. It is with deep – and colourful – pride that we remain a committed and strong partner to the core group, and will work with the Independent Expert for as long as it takes to create a world where his mandate is no longer needed.

The United Kingdom supports this resolution in the strongest terms and opposes all the amendments to it.

Thank you, Mr President.