



Norway's mission to the United Nations

Att: Ambassador Geir O. Pedersen

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CC:

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Ambassador Geir O. Pedersen,

We address you with this letter to express our deep concern for the 8 November vote in the General Assembly Third Committee regarding the mandate of the UN Independent Expert to monitor violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

A draft resolution introduced to the General Assembly by Sierra Leone on behalf of the Group of African States, questions the legal basis of the mandate, and proposes to indefinitely defer action on the SOGI resolution. The resolution will be considered during the General Assembly's Third Committee consideration of the annual report of the Human Rights Council.

We encourage the Norwegian mission to vote against the proposed resolution in order to uphold the important role of the UN in the fight for LGBTI rights. Norway has strongly promoted LGBTI rights within the UN system and elsewhere, and this is a crucial moment to take action to preserve the victories gained.

We ask the Norwegian mission to take actions to:

- Reject any attempt at undermining the mandate of the SOGI Independent Expert;
- Uphold the integrity and independence of the Human Rights Council and its decisions;
- Encourage missions of other members of the United Nations to vote against the Sierra Leone proposal, and thereby demonstrate that human rights are universal and that the UN has an important role in strengthening protection of LGBTI person.

When the Independent Expert mandate was created in June 2016, the UN Human Rights Council demonstrated real commitment to end the widespread human rights abuses carried out against some of the world's most vulnerable groups: lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, trans* and intersex persons (LGBTI). Renowned international human rights expert Viti Muntarbhorn, a law professor from Thailand, filled the position from 1 November this year.

The establishment of this position, stemming from tireless efforts of SOGI advocates in cooperation with LGBTI friendly states, was a great achievement. As is well-documented, LGBTI-activists are often subject to brutal repression from state authorities and third parties. Many states still practice criminalization and even death penalty for same-sex acts.

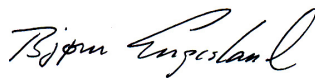
There is therefore strong need for support within the UN system to the human rights of LGBTI-persons as well as for activists raising their issues.

The Sierra Leone proposal challenges the authority of the Human Rights Council and the integrity of the entire special procedures system. If the General Assembly re-litigate decisions taken by the Council then any number of other mandates could be re-opened.

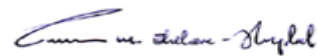
Revoking this mandate would not only be harmful to anti-violence and non-discrimination efforts in relation to LGBT persons, but would also undermine the core principle that LGBTI persons are human beings entitled to all human rights under international human rights law.

Such a move would be destructive to the institutional integrity of the Human Rights Council, and its relationship with the UN General Assembly Third Committee, ultimately undermining trust in the UN human rights system.

Best regards,



Bjørn Engesland
Secretary General



Gunnar M. Ekeløve-Slydal
Deputy Secretary General