



## **29th Session of the Human Rights Council**

### **Panel discussion on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl**

#### **Statement by the International Lesbian and Gay Association<sup>1</sup>**

Education is not only a right but a passport to human development, and it must be provided without discrimination. Neither culture nor religion may justify denying girls full right to education.

As a result of challenging gender stereotypes and sociocultural norms, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex (LBTI) girls often face violence, discrimination, harassment and bullying in schools, or they may be forced out of the education system itself. As adults, they face huge obstacles in accessing and retaining employment, and may be forced into unskilled labour or sex work. LBTI youths experience disproportionately high levels of mental health problems and the data rarely reflects the challenges of the LBTI girls.

Similarly, in Nigeria and Afghanistan (amongst others), religious extremists or armed groups impose rules and violence that have the effect of limiting or denying education to girls. Elsewhere, for example in France, laws that restrict religious dress also hamper girls' access to education under the guise of secularism.

Mr. Vice President,

States must repeal any laws, including state-enforced religious or secular laws that reinforce patriarchy and limit girls' access to education. All efforts to uphold the right to education of girls must take into account intersectional discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status and many other grounds including faith. School curricula must also include comprehensive education on sexual health; reproductive rights; sexuality; the diversity of genders, identities and bodies; and family life – including non-traditional families.

In the post-2015 development agenda, how do we enable girls to make healthy, informed decisions over their bodily autonomy, allowing them to realise their full potential, as Ban Ki Moon stated in the 2015 World Education Forum, so that “no one is left behind”?

Thank you Mr. Vice President.

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<sup>1</sup> Delivered by Shafferan Sonneveld of Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV). This statement has been made in consultation with MPV, Organization Intersex International Australia Limited and United and Strong Inc.