

Faith Efforts at the UN to Advance Human Rights Relating to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Intersex Status

This brief paper maps positive contributions of faith advocates to support human rights initiatives explicitly relating to sexual orientation (SO), gender identity (GI) and intersex status (I) at the international level.

Scope

The paper has been prepared with the understanding that **all human rights are interrelated and interdependent**¹. This means that initiatives on any human rights issue potentially affects the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons. Whilst harmful initiatives at the international level on “traditional values” and “protection of the family” were negotiated in a manner to challenge the rights of women and LGBTIQ persons, it is important to note that not all efforts to advocate against such initiatives came with support for SO/GI/I related rights. Thus for the sake of keeping this paper concise, **only initiatives that are primarily focussed on SO/GI/I, or that explicitly mention SO/GI/I have been included**.

Whilst this listing focuses on positive efforts by faith advocates, it may also be helpful to the reader to note that the efforts of conservative organisations that claim a faith framework have previously been documented.²

Civil society submissions to **key UN human rights mechanisms** were researched, where material was accessible. This paper is **not an exhaustive mapping**, but an illustration of efforts undertaken by faith advocates. A more in depth study would be necessary to include engagement with the full range of UN mechanisms and bodies dealing with human rights issues.

Summary of Findings

Research into this topic has uncovered **significant support** by groups working from various faith perspectives for advocacy efforts on a full range of SO/GI/I rights issues at the international level, **particularly in joining national coalitions** for Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submissions or treaty body shadow reports that include SO/GI/I rights issues.

Faith advocates also joined **mass joint statements** to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in particular statements calling on the HRC to take action on SOGI related violations.

Other notable support was given during the **campaign for ILGA’s ECOSOC accreditation**³ to be reinstated, when several faith groups signed a petition, and at the time of the HRC plenary discussion on human rights and SOGI, where groups working on gender and sexuality rights in the context of Muslim societies wrote a letter to the HRC President to **counter the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**’s opposition to the SOGI panel.

A relatively **small number** of faith groups have joined efforts to counter initiatives on “**traditional values**” and “**protection of the family**”.

Nature of Supportive Faith Advocates

Faith signatories to **national coalition statements** tended to be **local or national associations**, many of which were **part of other social movements** such as youth groups; whereas faith signatories to efforts (including statements, submissions and side events) **entirely focussed on SO/GI/I issues** were more likely to come from **faith groups whose primary goal or mandate was to advance gender or sexuality related rights**.

Issues Supported

Side events sponsored by faith groups tended to focus on discussing “**traditional values**” or sexual and bodily rights in the **context of religion and culture**, whereas **written submissions** to the expert or political human rights monitoring mechanisms (treaty bodies and UPR) which were endorsed by faith groups engaged with a **broad range of civil, political, economic and social rights affecting LGBTIQ persons**, including family rights, relationship recognition, bodily integrity, torture, the criminalisation of sex work, freedom of expression, association and assembly and other issues.

For example, the German civil society coalition on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child submitted a report to the UPR containing a chapter on violations of the **rights of intersex people** in Germany, whilst COMANGO, the Malaysian national UPR coalition, dealt with the **politicisation of religion** in relation to SOGI and the **criminalisation of sex work** in their submissions. The national coalition in Mozambique recommended that the authorities speed up the **registration of an organisation** working on SOGI rights. A submission by a church group in Venezuela was concerned about the **interference of the Catholic Church** in State actions on LGBTI rights.

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatAreHumanRights.aspx>

² e.g. NORAD, *Lobbying for Faith and Family: A Study of Religious NGOs at the United Nations*, 2013.

³ Consultative status provides NGOs with access to not only ECOSOC, but also to its many subsidiary bodies, to the various human rights mechanisms of the United Nations. ILGA was accredited with consultative status in 1993 before it was revoked the following year after controversy involving the membership.

The research showed that whilst some faith groups likely restricted the extent to which they were willing to support the full range of rights of LGBTIQ persons, **the overall picture was very positive**, with supportive faith advocates not shying away from the key issues targeted by conservative and fundamentalist religious groups, namely family rights and relationship recognition.

While research into the **International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Council and UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)** was undertaken, little evidence explicitly linking faith groups to SO/GI/I was found. Indeed the UNHCR has lamented the challenges in getting faith groups working on asylum or refugee issues to be inclusive of LGBTIQ persons⁴. This does not mean that no faith groups are supportive of LGBTIQ asylum seekers or refugees, but that such **efforts are not obvious at the international level**.

Regional Spread of Support

Regionally, the most **support given to national coalition submissions dealing with SO/GI/I** was in the Asia-Pacific region where support was given in 8 countries, followed by support in 6 Western countries, 3 in Africa, and 2 in Eastern Europe and 2 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Most of this support was for UPR submissions (88.5%) rather than treaty body submissions (11.5%), likely a reflection of the overall engagement by advocates with the various bodies (the UPR is an easily accessible tool, it reviews all UN member States within a relatively short period, and all human rights issues are up for discussion, whereas the rate of review under treaty bodies is irregular, not all countries come under review, and SO/GI/I issues are not always included).⁵

However, when it came to support for **written or oral statements on SO/GI/I** at the international level, mostly signatures came from Western organisations (around 45%), followed by signatures from Africa (around 15%), then from global organisations and groups from the Asia-Pacific region (around 13% each), Latin America and the Caribbean (9%) and Eastern Europe (4%). This could be due to the fact that regular engagement with bodies such as the HRC or Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is less likely to be a priority for advocates with less funding than those based in Western countries⁶.

Impact of Faith Advocates' Efforts

States and political blocks have repeatedly made claims at the international level that acknowledging human rights for all persons regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity would be contrary to their **religious, cultural and/or traditional values**.⁷ Having global and wide reaching support from faith advocates for the human rights of LGBTIQ persons provides a **much needed counter-narrative to such claims**, and shows that there is room within the context of various world religions to advocate for human rights without discrimination.

Unfortunately the majority of such efforts remain **largely invisible**, particularly those which represent one signature among tens or hundreds to a joint statement. However, having faith groups work with LGBTIQ advocates and support SO/GI/I issues in national coalition submissions can provide **support and solidarity** in the face of government politicisation and manipulation of religion. For example, in spite of being declared unlawful by the Malaysian government and being attacked in the media for supporting the rights of LGBT people in its UPR submission, COMANGO, which included faith groups, stood by its submission and condemned the government for using Islam as a political tool to silence criticisms of human rights violations.⁸

Side events discussing SO/GI/I issues from a faith perspective have been rare although have increased in recent years with new players entering international human rights spaces. Such events have the potential to draw a more **diverse range of State representatives** than other SO/GI/I focussed events, and provide a **platform to address the religious arguments** that are being used by governments and political blocks in justifying a denial of rights to LGBTI persons.

An **increase in the efforts** (and in the *visibility* of the efforts) of faith advocates to support SO/GI/I human rights issues would provide a **uniquely critical response** to the arguments of the highly organised, well funded and powerful **religious right-wing**⁹ who are committed to undermining the **universality of international human rights law** in the name of religious, cultural and moral values.

⁴ J. Riera & M. Poirier, *'Welcoming the stranger' and UNHCR's cooperation with faith-based organisations*, Forced Migration Review:48, Nov. 2014

⁵ ARC International, *How far has SOGII advocacy come at the UN and where is it heading?* 2014 (pp. 13–18)

⁶ *Ibid.* (p.14)

⁷ E.g., in response to a statement by the previous UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, to the HRC on the efforts of her office to combat discrimination against LGBT people, the Arab Group statement claimed that sexual orientation was “against the religious and moral values that we all share” and Saudi Arabia rejected “any attempt to promote certain rights that are not in line with the nature of humanity like the rights of LGBTs, because for us they are against the Islamic Shari’ah” (ARC International, *Report on SOGI related issues at the 25th session of the Human Rights Council*, March 2014 (p.16)). Various countries have used religion to justify rejecting recommendations on sexual orientation and gender identity during the UPR. For example, *Nigeria stated* that “the overwhelming majority of Nigerians objected to same sex relationship based on their deep religious, cultural and moral orientations, against which no government could successfully legislate”; *Samoa stated* that “decriminalizing sexual activity of sodomy is not possible at this time because of cultural sensitivities and Christian beliefs”, and; the *Solomon Islands claimed* that it was too early to discuss decriminalisation of same sex relations because that “would require thorough national consultations to address Christian doctrines and cultural perspectives on the issue”.

⁸ <http://www.awid.org/Library/Coalition-of-Malaysian-NGOs-in-the-UPR-Process-COMANGO>

⁹ See footnote 2.

Side Events

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLURL) was a main sponsor of an event on [Control and Sexuality: Zina laws, human rights & state accountability](#) at the 16th session of the HRC, March 2011.

WLURL was a main sponsor of [Cultures, Traditions and VAW: Human Rights Challenges](#), an event dealing with traditional values and including SOGI issues at the 16th session of the HRC, March 2011.

Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and Muslims for Progressive Values held an event on [Human rights and progressive Islam](#) at the 26th session of the HRC, June 2014

A representative from the World Council of Churches, Women in Church and Society Programme accepted an invitation from ARC International to be on the panel for the event [Universality of Human Rights](#), at the 27th session of the HRC, September 2014. The event dealt with SOGI related issues in discussions on “traditional values” and “protection of the family” initiatives at the HRC.

Muslims for Progressive Values organised the event [Towards Inclusive Post-2015 Development: Defying Discriminatory Laws and Deconstructing Cultural Norms](#) in February 2015 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and included a panellist from IGLHRC.

The UU-UN Office organised an event on [Mental Health Impacts of Global Gendercide and ‘Corrective’ Rape](#) at the 59th session of the CSW, March 2015.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation and the City College of New York held a panel on [Living Cooperation: Sexual and Religious Rights at the UN](#) 59th session of the CSW, March 2015.

NB: Other side events held by faith groups at the UN or in parallel to UN events could potentially have dealt with SO/GI/I issues, but as such events are not consistently recorded or reported, this list is limited to those where SO/GI/I content was noted or recorded.

Statements

Written or oral statements to or on international rights mechanisms are listed here in chronological order:

The [Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies \(CSBR\) released a statement](#) on the 10th anniversary of ICPD (2004).

[CSBR released a statement](#) on the 10th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women (2005).

[HRC3 \(2006\) joint statement on SOGI and human rights](#), signed by Evangelical Fellowship for Lesbian and Gay Christians, Grupo de Convivência Cristã, Integrity/Integrated Fellowship Uganda, Labrystheia Network of lesbian theologians, and Non-patriarchal Inter-faith Organisation LOGOS.

[HRC13 \(2010\) joint statement on SOGI](#) during the Interactive Dialogue with High Commissioner, signed by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Global Justice Ministry, Metropolitan Community Churches (USA).

[HRC14 \(2010\) statement under agenda Item 4 general debate](#) by Rowland Jide Macaulay (House of Rainbow Metropolitan Community Church, Nigeria) on attacks against him and HoR-MCC members.

[HRC19 \(2012\) joint NGO statement](#) to plenary panel discussion on human rights and SOGI, signed by Gay Church Taiwan, Metropolitan Community Church of Quezon City, Philippines, and Open Arms MCC USA.

[HRC19 \(2012\) letter to the President of the HRC](#) in response to [OIC letter expressing opposition to SOGI panel](#)¹⁰, by a small group of organisations including Women Living Under Muslim Laws and the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies.

[Petition to support ILGA's ECOSOC accreditation](#) (2012), signed by Iglesia Cristiana Misionera de Buenos Aires, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, Bolivia, Non-patriarchal Inter-faith Organisation Logos, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Igreja da Comunidade Metropolitana, Brazil, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Pax Romana, Integrity/Integrated Fellowship Uganda, Uganda, and the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, United Kingdom.

The [SOGIE caucus statement](#) at the 47th session of the CPD (2012) was signed by the Fellowship for Reconciliation, USA.

¹⁰ To access the document, log in to the HRC extranet. Username: *HRC extranet*, Password: *1session*

The [joint oral statement by the LBT caucus](#) at CSW57 (2013) was signed by the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, House Of Rainbow Fellowship, Metropolitan Community Churches, USA, and Women Living Under Muslim Laws Solidarity Network.

[HIAS statement](#) celebrating UNHCR guidelines on SOGI (2013).

The [joint oral statement by the LBT caucus](#) at CSW58 (2014) was signed by the European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Christian Groups, the Global Faith and Justice Project, the Metropolitan Community Churches, USA.

[HRC26 \(2014\) mass joint statement on SOGII](#) calling for a resolution, delivered under Item 8 general debate. Signed by CALEM, Ecumenical Working Group Homosexuals and Church (HuK, Germany), Iglesia Comunitaria Metropolitana Misericordia de El Salvador, Muslims for Progressive Values, Musulmans Progressistes de France, National Council of Churches in India, The Inner Circle, South Africa, Unitarian Universalist UN Office, Youth Interfaith Forum on Sexuality, Indonesia, YWCA of Great Britain plus one group from Zimbabwe that wished to remain anonymous.

[HRC26 \(2014\) joint position paper](#) circulated to States on the “protection of the family” resolution (references same-sex relationships), signed by Franciscans International and World Young Women's Christian Association.

The World YWCA was a contributor to a [written statement](#) to the UN General Assembly Special Session on ICPD Beyond 2014 (2014).

[HRC28 \(2015\) joint statement by ILGA and MPV](#)¹¹ under interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief.

[Joint statement in reaction to the CSW59 political statement](#) (2015) signed by The Inner Circle, South Africa, Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), Musulmans inclusifs de France (MIF), Muslims for Progressive Values, St. Paul's Foundation for International Reconciliation, USA.

Submissions and Shadow Reports

Universal Periodic Review

Australia - 1st cycle, 2011

The [National UPR coalition submission \(JS1\)](#) addressed discrimination sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status, and was “endorsed, either in part or in whole, by” a list of organisations including the Australian Bahá'í Community.

Austria - 1st cycle, 2011

The [National UPR coalition submission \(JS2\)](#) addressed some issues relating to sexual orientation and the criminalisation of sex workers. The coalition included Caritas, Caritas Eisenstadt, Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar, Katholische Frauenbewegung Österreich, and SOMM - Selbstorganisation von und für Migrantinnen und Musliminnen.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea - 1st cycle, 2009

[A joint submission](#) by 3 groups including the Catholic Human Rights Committee expressed concern about discrimination against sexual minorities.

Ecuador - 2nd cycle, 2012

A [submission by CMR](#) expressed concern about exclusion and stigmatisation faced by immigrant women in the sex industry. CMR (La Coalición por las Migraciones y el Refugio) included Catholic Relief Services, Pastoral de Movilidad Humana de la Conferencia Episcopal del Ecuador, Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados Ecuador, and Misión Scalabriniana, Ecuador.

Germany - 1st cycle, 2009

[JS2 \(Forum Menschenrechte, joint submission\)](#) expressed concern about discrimination faced by same-sex couples. JS2 was signed by the Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (Stuttgart) and the Vereinte Evangelische Mission.

Germany - 2nd cycle, 2013

¹¹ See footnote 3

[The National Coalition für die Umsetzung der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention](#) expressed concern about human rights violations against intersex people. The coalition included Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend in Deutschland, Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelischer Familien-Bildungsstätten und Familien-Bildungswerke, Bundesverband kath. Einrichtungen und Dienste der Erziehungshilfen, Deutscher Caritas verband, Diakonisches Werk der Evang. Kirche in Deutschland, Evangelische Aktionsgemeinschaft für Familienfragen Katholische Erziehergemeinschaft – Bundesverband, Katholische Junge Gemeinde, Sozialdienst katholischer Frauen

Japan - 1st cycle, 2008

Among stakeholder submissions was a [joint submission on SOGI](#) by a coalition including the Center for Gender Studies at the International Christian University.

Malaysia - 1st cycle, 2009

The [submission by COMANGO](#) addresses human rights relating to sexual orientation and gender identity as well as the criminalisation of sex work. COMANGO, the national coalition, included the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (a coalition of 9 religious organisations), United Dayak Islamic Brotherhood and Sisters in Islam (SIS).

Malaysia - 2nd cycle, 2013

The [submission by COMANGO](#) dealt with various issues relating to the rights of LGBTIQ persons, including the politicisation of religion in relation to SOGI. The coalition submission was endorsed by Christian Federation Malaysia, Good Shepherd Welfare Centre, SIS Forum and the Young Buddhist Association.

Malta - 2nd cycle, 2013

A [joint NGO submission](#) expressed concern about homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools, recognition of same sex relationships, family rights. The coalition included the Jesuit Refugee Service Malta.

Mozambique - 1st cycle, 2011

The [national NGO coalition submission](#) recommended that the authorities speed up the registration of LAMBDA (Association for the Protection of Sexual Minorities). The coalition included the Comissão Arquidiocesana Justiça e Paz – Maputo e Chimoio.

Nepal - 1st cycle, 2011

The [national coalition submission](#) cited widespread discrimination against Dalits, women, Madhesi, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, Muslims and other religious minorities, sexual and gender minorities and other marginalized groups. The coalition included the National Muslim Federation (NMF), the National Muslim Forum Nepal (NMFN) and the Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Society (NMWS).

The Philippines - 2nd cycle, 2012

A submission was made by a [coalition on the situation of LGBT persons](#), which included the Philippine Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC).

Samoa - 1st cycle, 2011

The [national coalition submission](#) expressed concern about lack of discrimination legislation on sexuality. The coalition included the Young Women's Christian Association.

South Africa - 2nd cycle, 2012

A [joint submission on violent hate crime](#) stated that harassment, intimidation and violence related to sexual orientation or gender identity continued. The coalition submitting information included the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

Sri Lanka - 1st cycle, 2008

A [joint civil society report by a national coalition](#) expressed concern about numerous violations against LGBT people and sex workers including criminalisation of sex work and same sex relations. The coalition included the Christian Alliance for Social Action the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Sri Lanka, Father J. J. Bernard, and the Muslim Information Centre – Sri Lanka.

Sweden - 1st cycle, 2010

The [Institute on Religion and Public Policy](#) reported that various discriminatory incidents have occurred which target the gay community.

Switzerland - 1st cycle, 2008

The [submission by the Swiss Coalition for the UPR](#) expressed concern about discrimination based on SOGI and a lack of legislation covering such discrimination. Caritas was a member of the coalition.

Switzerland - 2nd cycle, 2012

The [Swiss Coalition for the UPR submission \(JS3\)](#) expressed concern about discrimination against LGBTI persons. The coalition included the Communauté Baha'i de Suisse and Entraide protestante suisse (EPER).

Thailand - 1st cycle, 2011

A [joint submission by a coalition of Thai organisations \(JS9\)](#) recommended Thailand to implement the requirements of ICCPR, including for recognition of changed “sex” for transsexuals and same-sex relationships. JS9 was “endorsed, in whole or part,” by 92 organisations, including Muslim Student Confederation of Thailand (MUSTCOTH), Youth Association for Culture and Islam, South Thailand (YAKIS), Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT), Islam Burapha Movement, Muslim Student Federation of Thailand, Imaam Association of the Southern-border Provinces, Muslim Attorney Centre Foundation (MAC), Islamic Southern of Thailand Foundation (IST), Thai Islamic Medical Association (TIMA), Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees Thailand (COERR), Jesuit Refugee Service Thailand (JRS).

Ukraine - 2nd cycle, 2012

A [joint submission by a small informal coalition \(JS2\)](#) including the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) reported discrimination and hate crimes against LGBT persons.

Venezuela - 1st cycle, 2011

[La Iglesia de la Comunidad Metropolitana \(ICM\)](#) recommended the government integrate plans and State policies for the rights of LGBTI people, and noted with concern the interference of the Venezuelan Catholic church in State actions on the subject.

Zimbabwe - 1st cycle, 2011

[Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisations joint submission \(ZHRO\)](#) was concerned about discrimination against sexual minorities. The coalition included the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Christian Legal Aid Society.

Treaty Bodies

Organisation LOGOS contributed to a [shadow report to the 2006 Human Rights Committee review of Bosnia & Herzegovina](#).

The Philippine Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) joined a 2011 [shadow report on SOGI to the Human Rights Committee review of the Philippines](#).

The Metropolitan Community Church Metro Baguio City (MCCMB) and the Philippine Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) submitted a [shadow report on SOGI to the 2012 Human Rights Committee review of the Philippines](#).

The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office signed on to a [joint submission on deprivations of the right to liberty and security of the person for LGBTI people](#), to inform the Human Rights Committee in the preparation of a draft general comment on Article 9 of the ICCPR.

Other Mechanisms

The submission by Catholics for Choice to the [OHCHR compilation of “best practices in the application of traditional values while promoting and protecting human rights and upholding human dignity” \(A/HRC/24/22\)](#) noted that Catholic teachings did not allow for discrimination including with regards to LGBT rights.

A [joint NGO written statement \(A/HRC/AC/7/NGO/1\)](#) to the 7th session of the HRC-AC (2011) on the study on traditional values references sexual orientation and was signed by Other Sheep Africa and Women Living Under Muslim Laws.

This paper was written by Sheherezade Kara upon request from ARCUS Foundation to inform a meeting on this topic. For more information please contact sheherezade.kara@gmail.com or acoman@arcusfoundation.org

ANNEX I - Human Rights Council resolution 27/32 (September 2014)

Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity

.....The Human Rights Council,

Recalling the universality, interdependence, indivisibility and interrelatedness of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and consequently elaborated in other human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other relevant core human rights instruments,

Recalling also that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling further that the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action affirms that all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated, that the international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis, and that while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, in which the Assembly stated that the Human Rights Council should be responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner,

Recalling also all relevant Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions on combating all forms of discrimination and violence exercised due to discrimination of any kind, particularly Council resolution 17/19 of 17 June 2011,

Expressing grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination, in all regions of the world, committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity,

Welcoming positive developments at the international, regional and national levels in the fight against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity,

Welcoming also the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the fight against violence and discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled “Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity” (A/HRC/19/41) and of the panel discussion held at the nineteenth session of the Human Rights Council;

2. *Requests* the High Commissioner to update the report (A/HRC/19/41) with a view to sharing good practices and ways to overcome violence and discrimination, in application of existing international human rights law and standards, and to present it to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-ninth session;

3. *Decides* to remain seized of this issue.

ANNEX II - Human Rights Council resolution 21/3 (September 2012)

Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind: best practices

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Reiterating the call of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms by teaching and education, and to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance by progressive measures, national and international,

Guided by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which reaffirms, inter alia, the solemn commitment of all States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter, other instruments relating to human rights, and international law, and that the universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question,

Reiterating that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis and that, while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, all States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, have the duty to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming that all cultures and civilizations in their traditions, customs, religions and beliefs share a common set of values that belong to humankind in its entirety, and that those values have made an important contribution to the development of human rights norms and standards,

Stressing that traditions shall not be invoked to justify practices contrary to human dignity and violating international human rights law,

Recalling its previous resolutions on the issue, in particular resolutions 12/21 of 2 October 2009 and 16/3 of 24 March 2011,

Noting the ongoing work of the Advisory Committee, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 16/3, on the preparation of a study on how a better understanding and appreciation of traditional values of dignity, freedom and responsibility can contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights,

1. *Reaffirms* that a better understanding and appreciation of traditional values shared by all humanity and embodied in universal human rights instruments contribute to promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide;

2. *Recalls* the important role of family, community, society and educational institutions in upholding and transmitting these values, which contributes to promoting respect for human rights and increasing their acceptance at the grass roots, and calls upon all States to strengthen this role through appropriate positive measures;

3. *Stresses* that human rights derive from the dignity and worth inherent in the human person;

4. *Notes* that traditional values, especially those shared by all humanity, can be practically applied in the promotion and protection of human rights and upholding human dignity, in particular in the process of human rights education;

5. *Takes note of* recommendation 9/4 of the Advisory Committee on the progress of work on a study on how a better understanding and appreciation of traditional values of dignity, freedom and responsibility can contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights, and decides to accord it additional time to finalize the study;

6. *Requests* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to collect information from States Members of the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders on best practices in the application of traditional values while promoting and protecting human rights and upholding human dignity, and to submit a summary thereon to the Human Rights Council before its twenty-fourth session;

7. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.