

Human Rights Council – 29th Session (15th June – 3rd July 2015)

General Debate – Items 8

Statement by Ireland

29 June 2015

[Ireland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and adds the following.]

Mr. President,

For many working in the field of human rights, June 1993 marks a hugely important milestone. Almost twenty two years ago to the day, the Vienna Declaration was adopted. Its message was both clear and simple – all human beings are equal.

However, June 1993 also marks an important occasion in the history of Ireland. It was then, by decriminalising homosexuality, that Ireland took its first step in a journey to full equality for LGBTI people.

It is in this context that Ireland commends the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for its report on discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. We believe that this report serves as an important reminder to us all of the situation facing many LGBTI persons around the world and the obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all persons within their jurisdictions, including LGBTI persons.

The litany and gravity of human rights abuses and violations perpetrated on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, as detailed in the report, are truly shocking. These include, but are not limited to, criminalisation of consensual adult same-sex relations, for which the death penalty is a prescribed punishment in some countries, so-called “conversion therapies” and “anti-propaganda laws”, involuntary sterilisation of transgender persons as well as unnecessary surgeries on intersex children. We echo the unambiguous assessment of the High Commissioner that these acts constitute violations under international human rights law.

We also welcome the many positive developments outlined in the report, though fully aware that these are, as highlighted in the study, “overshadowed by continuing, serious and widespread human rights violations perpetrated, too often with impunity, against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity”.

For our part, we are pleased to inform the Council that since the publication of the High Commissioner’s report, Ireland has joined those States which have provided for same-sex marriage and become the first State to do so by way of popular vote. The referendum was passed with an overwhelming majority, demonstrating Ireland’s commitment to equality and sending a strong signal that change is possible.

Mr. President,

Allow me to repeat again our appreciation for the High Commissioner’s report. We remain committed to ensuring the important issue of combatting discrimination and violence against persons on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity continues to receive the appropriate attention at the Council.

Thank you.